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THE APPEAL OF TABLOID TELEVISION TO ITS VIEWERS:

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS/QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Science

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Phyllis Roxel Hyman

August 1991

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents

Virginia Ann Hyman

and

Philip LeeChester Hyman

who have always given me the love, motivation and support needed to continue my education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank God for giving me the strength and determination to finish this project.

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Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their tremendous support and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

This research investigated the appeal of the tabloid television genre to its viewers. Three small focus groups comprised of college students from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and a follow-up survey (to check focus groups' responses) were used to find out what elements people said they liked and disliked about the tabloid television genre. This study asked whether it was the violence, re-enactments, or some other element that made the genre attractive to its viewers.

Results showed respondents had various reasons for watching the genre; they include: in order to see someone that they know; to relieve boredom; because they found the genre interesting; and for its entertainment. Also, results showed that the re-enactments on tabloid television interested respondents most, and made them feel involved in the tabloid television programs. In addition, results showed that tabloid television hosts, thought to be a central element within the genre, generally were not a determining factor in the enjoyment of the tabloid television programs for the respondents.

This study suggests that possible reasons for participants' enjoyment of the re-enactments were the gratifications they received from them, such as: the curiosity of wanting to "peep" into the lives of other people; and the sense of security in knowing that it didn't happen to them, i.e., because they were safe at home.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I. INTRODUCTION 1
Overview 1
Summary 9

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE 11
Television Use/Gratifications 12
Audience Activity 15
Types of Viewers 16
Summary 21
Television Medium/Tabloid Genre 21
"America's Most Wanted"/
"A Current Affair"/"Geraldo" 26
The Networks 27
Summary 29

III. METHODOLOGY 31
Problem 31
Focus Group Discussions/Follow-Up Survey 31

IV. RESULTS 35
Demographic Features 35
Television Viewing Habits 36
Tabloid Television as a Genre 37
Description 37
Information/Believability 38
Reasons for Watching 38
Staying Power as a Genre 43
Tabloid Television Programming Content 46
Sensationalism 46

Re-enactments 50
Conflicts/Violence 50
Hosts 54
Acknowledgement of Tabloid Television Viewing/ Others' Opinions of Tabloid Television Programming 58
Summary 59

V. CONCLUSIONS 63
Discussion 63
Recommendations 65

BIBLIOGRAPHY 67

APPENDICES 72

Appendix A. FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM 73

Appendix B. FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS 74

Appendix C. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE COVER SHEET 76

Appendix D. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE 77

VITA 81

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE PAGE

4.0 Attitudes Toward Information Obtained From Tabloid Television Programs 39

4.1 Reasons For Watching Tabloid Television Programs 41

4.2 Reasons For Watching Tabloid Television Programs Again 42

4.3 Attitudes Toward Missing A Tabloid Television Program 44

4.4 Tabloid Television Staying Power 45

4.5 Reasons For Tabloid Television Genre To Stay Around ... 47

4.6 Elements That Will Stay If Genre Doesn't Last 48

4.7 Attitudes Toward Sensational Language Used On Tabloid Television 49

4.8 Attitudes Toward Teases On Tabloid Television Programming 51

4.9 Attitudes Toward Re-enactments On Tabloid Television 53

4.10 Attitudes Toward Conflicts On Tabloid Television 55

4.11 Attitudes Toward Physical Violence On Tabloid Television Programs 56

LIST OF TABLES (continued)

4.12 Attitudes Toward Hosts Of Tabloid Television Programs 57

4.13 Responses To Being Kidded About Watching Tabloid Television 60

4.14 Respondent's Friends' Attitudes Toward Tabloid Television 61

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The idea of the "tabloid" in the history of the print medium, as it refers to the presentation of information in a concise, visual and high sensational manner, directly relates to the genre of tabloid television.

Sensationalism is defined as "the use of strongly emotional subject matter, or wildly dramatic style, language, or artistic expression, that is intended to shock, thrill, excite, etc." As far back as 1823, the Illustrated London News had demonstrated the possibilities of pictures in the vitalization of news by covering the Weare murder case with five illustrations. They included such now familiar shots as "the scene of the murder" and "the pond in which the body was found." In 1833, the American penny newspaper or "penny press" tapped a reservoir of readers it called the "common man" and enjoyed great success. After a successful start in England, the penny newspaper began in America with Benjamin H. Day's New York Sun.

Crime news treated humorously or sensationally was the stock in trade of the numerous papers which sprang up in imitation of the Sun. Their popularity flourished by "appealing to the reader's emotions rather than to his/her intellect" (Bessie, 1969).

According to Jazz Journalism: The Story of the Tabloid Newspapers, the character of these papers is best indicated by the nature of their greatest story, the Jewett murder case:

> Helen Jewett, a (woman of ill repute), was found murdered in her room in a New York brothel in April, 1836. There was nothing violently extraordinary about the case; just a typical bordello killing at a time when neither bordellos nor killings

> were particularly rare. But, (women in her profession) were just as fascinating then as they have always been and no tabloid could abandon itself more gleefully to sordid details than did the penny press, in exploiting this tragedy. Court testimony was printed in full and special articles covered the conventional "angles" of the case. The New York Transcript considered the matter of such importance as to necessitate a special Sunday extra; this when the print medium and newspapers were looked upon as being...almost "anti-Christ." So horrified was the Boston Times at the shameful debasement of its New York colleagues, that it was moved to devote twelve of its sixteen columns to the story, after an explanatory note deploring the necessity of airing such things in the press (Bessie, 1969).

According to the historian William Bleyer, the circulation of James Gordon Bennett's New York Morning Herald rose from five to fifteen thousand during the excitement.

By 1883, America was just awakening to the economic and social realities of industrial life and needed leadership in its struggle to realize a modernized democracy; and from the very outset, European born Joseph Pulitzer's aim was to design a newspaper for that purpose. Pulitzer purchased the New York World in 1883 and used sensationalism because he believed it to be the only means of broadening circulation and reaching the people on whose behalf he was struggling editorially, "the common man."

Crusade followed crusade within the pages of the World, and the issues of privilege, corruption, vice, oppression and apathy were raised. In one year alone, the World took on the topics of bribery, faulty tenements, rape and white slave trafficking. Pulitzer felt that mass newspapers must advocate popular causes, but first of all, they must attract mass attention and the World did, by manipulating the themes of Love, Death, Sin, Violence and Money.

The foundation of the World's popularity was featured material written in the exaggerated, sentimental style of the day. Pulitzer advised his staff to concentrate on what is "unique, thrilling, distinctive, romantic, dramatic, curious, humorous, odd and apt to be

talked about" (Emery, 1984). One of the technical advances Pulitzer used was the huge, eye-filling headlines, which became daily features and showed little regard for the story which they claimed to describe (Bessie, 1969). Another technical advance (and by far the most successful) for Pulitzer, as well as William Randolph Hearst and his daily The New York Journal, was the increased use of illustrations and photographs. By September of 1886, the World was selling 250,000 copies daily, the largest circulation ever attained by any American newspaper, up to that time.

By 1890, industrialization had provided journalism with every tool needed for turning out huge-circulation dailies--high speed linotypers and presses, typewriters, metal for type, wires to make news instantaneous, swift transportation and huge accretions of capitol to turn journalism into big business. And about one-third of the metropolitan dailies were following what was called "yellow journalism" (Emery, 1984).

The term "yellow journalism," was taken from a popular comic strip of the late 1890's by R.F. Outcault, called the "Kid of Hogan's Alley" (a strip of sketches colored yellow). Yellow journalism was defined as "cheaply sensational journalism, with large black headlines, highly emotional and often risque human-interest copy, and gory pictures" (The Language of Journalism).

The circulation race of the metropolitan dailies led to abundant stories about sin and corruption, sensational pictures, and expanded use of popular comics. To attract consumers, both the World and the New York Journal practiced the yellow journalism technique, and engaged in shrill debate and jingoistic coverage of the Spanish-American War.

Prior to the 1900's, America had been a nation of avid news consumers, but newspaper circulation had been limited to fairly small groups, due primarily to the relatively narrow scope of elementary education among Americans. Although this country had prided itself upon its democratic educational system, the actual number who mastered the fundamentals sufficiently to develop the

reading habit had been small. But by 1900, there was a rapid increase in national literacy, which was estimated as more than ninety per cent, as a result of a national campaign for widespread elementary education (Bessie, 1969).

"Equipped with the three R's and little more, these new readers naturally did not advance immediately to the upper rungs of the literacy ladder. As yet, the average American had not advanced in his formal education beyond the fourth of fifth grade of elementary school," according to Jazz Journalism. This "average American" or "common man," as stated earlier in this chapter, was considered attracted only to printed matter of the simple striking sort, which aimed at the lowest common denominator. He was perfectly tailored for the uncomplicated sensationalism of mass journalism, called "jazz journalism."

The first jazz journalism tabloid appeared in New York City in 1919. Its name was the Illustrated Daily News, and it was as different as it was new. At first glance, it resembled a magazine and its page was barely more than half the size of the traditional newspaper page. With the exception of a single headline and some small type, it was covered entirely with pictures. The style was new to America, but in England it had already become the most popular newspaper form, called "tabloid" because of its smallness and its concise presentation of the news.

Experts of the era were almost unanimous in declaring that the first American tabloid could not last a month. They declared the tabloid too small, with too little news and "just another fad" (Bessie, 1969). However, two years later, the Daily News had acquired the largest following of any newspaper in New York City and by 1938, its circulation had soared to more than 1,750,000 on weekdays and 3,250,000 on Sundays. Both figures were much greater than those obtained by any other daily newspaper in America (Bessie, 1969).

In large cities and small towns all over the country, tabloids sprang up and became accepted parts of the American scene, due in part to the arresting pictures and bold headlines. One of the oldest

and most recognized of the tabloids is the 61-year-old National Enquirer, which also publishes the smaller (circulation 900,000) but spicier Weekly World News. It is currently the market leader with 4.5 million newsstand and supermarket sales every week, and about 400,000 subscriptions (Barnash, 1987, p. D7 (col.3). Stories in the Enquirer are written simply, tightly and with a direct appeal to the emotions.

Currently, the six major supermarket tabloids (the term supermarket used here to suggest where they are usually sold) are: The Sun, Weekly World News, The Globe, The National Examiner, The Star and The National Enquirer. These six tabloids reach an estimated 50 million readers a week in the United States (Nordheimer, 1988, p. A1 (col. 6).

In the past, most buyers of tabloids were men, and they bought the tabloids at newsstands and tobacco shops; hence, the emphasis was on sex, crime and gore, but much has changed in recent years (Nordheimer, 1988, p. A18 (col. 1). Demographics show that 65% of Enquirer readers are female high school graduates, with family incomes of about $24,000. Sixty-six percent of Enquirer readers are in the nation's top 25 markets or in the group just below that. For example, the Enquirer led the tabloids' move to the supermarkets, toning down its content initially to appeal to more upscale advertisers as well as women shoppers (Nordheimer, 1988, p. A18 (col. 1).

Whereas in 1969, the subject of one story confessed, "I'm Sorry I Killed My Mother, but I'm Glad I Killed My Father" and in 1977 a lead article carried the headline "Madman Cut Up His Date and Put Her Body in His Freezer," in the most recent issues, stories about celebrities and topics of family are emphasized more. In a recent New York Times article, it was stated that "sensationalism (in the print industry) has been toned down" (Barnash, 1987).

Founded in late 1983, The Sun, published and packaged by The Globe, is the fastest growing tabloid, and devotes about 80% of its editorial pages to non-celebrity information. Current figures

estimate the Sun has a circulation of 500,000 (Nordheimer, 1988, p. A18, (col. 1).

Most recently the concept of the "tabloid" in the print industry has combined with the television medium to establish a genre referred to as "reality TV," "info-tainment," "sleaze TV," or "tabloid television."

The tabloid television genre has three main sub-genres: the news format; the talk show format; and the mystery format. An example of its news format includes "A Current Affair," discussed in Chapter II, which resembles the format of "60 Minutes," (in which an investigative reporter covers stories in the field and relies heavily on the visual and emotional aspects of the story); but with its content placed heavily on sex and violence. An example of the sub-genre of tabloid television talk shows is "Geraldo" (also discussed in the following chapter) which is hosted by Geraldo Rivera. Tabloid television talk shows offer topics which may otherwise be viewed as "abnormal," "psychotic" or "weird." An example of the mystery tabloid television sub-genre is "America's Most Wanted" which combines elements of two popular TV formats--the crime show and the quiz show, but instead of playing word games, the home audience plays informat by reporting at-large kidnappers, rapists and thieves. This sub-genre relies heavily on re-enactments (Thomas, 1990).

Tabloid television is not a new genre. After research into television programming history, it was found that several television programs, and one radio program (beginning in the 1940s and continuing through to the middle 1960s) could have easily been called "tabloid" programs, or influenced or fed into this present day genre.

Previous television/radio programming which may have influenced or fed into the present day genre of tabloid television include: "Roller Derby," nightly wrestling matches, "You Are There," "CBS Views The Press," "The Joe Pyne Show," "The Alan Burke Show" and "60 Minutes."

"Roller Derby," was a favorite evening sports attraction for millions of viewers during the 1940's and 1950's. According to Remember Television, "The collision of human bodies and knock-down-drag-out fights provided more entertainment than the incredible swift skating."

Another popular television programming attraction during this time was the nightly telecasts of wrestling matches, aired in the 1950's, which were made especially popular by the lady wrestling events and midget wrestling. Year after year, the wrestling matches became splashier and splashier--with contestants making "grand entrances" complete with entourages of slave girls, fan bearers and sedan chair carriers.

In comparison to the sensationalism of the tabloid television format of today, according to Remember Television, "no one seemed to take the (wrestling) matches seriously, however, since everyone knew that all the howling and grunting were being staged strictly for the benefit of the viewing audience" (Lackman, 1971, p. 13). Television audiences were captivated by these staged wrestling matches, just as today's television audiences are captivated by the staged re-enactments of murders and suicides present in today's tabloid television genre.

Another example of television programming which may have influenced or fed into the present day genre of tabloid television is "You Are There." Broadcast in the early 1950's, "You Are There" featured CBS reporters who played themselves, interviewing famous characters who stepped out of re-created historical events. They might interview Louis WIV at Versailles; other newsmen might interview a member of the mob outside the Bastille.

In "CBS Views The Press," radio took on the printed press. Narrator Don Hollenbeck might assail into New York gossip columns, or lash into New York newspapers for exaggerating a relief scandal.

The "Joe Pyne" show was a television program which offered controversial issues in a debate format. Its host was combative and edgy, who, to the shock and delight of his audience, insulted his

bizarre assortment of guests whenever he disliked what they said. The "Joe Pyne" show was syndicated in 1966.

The feisty temperament and aggressive flair for bad manners of Joe Pyne were matched by another 1966 syndicated program, "The Alan Burke Show," which also specialized basically in indignity. Both the "Joe Pyne Show" and the "Alan Burke Show" lasted for only one season.

One of the most widely recognized and most imitated shows on television, that may have fed into the tabloid TV genre, is "60 Minutes." Originally broadcast on Tuesday, September 24, 1968, and still airing today, this "newsmagazine format" show combines both hard and soft features, with an occasional investigative piece. This show may have fed into the genre of tabloid television programming because of the use of its highly visual, highly emotional content.

While some critics view today's tabloid television as "teleporn," (as reported in a Washington Post article) others see it as the programming mode of the future (Thomas, 1990, p.43).

The first quarter of the 1990 Nielsen ratings (published in Broadcasting) showed five programs from the tabloid television genre: Unsolved Mysteries; Rescue 911; Reporters; America's Most Wanted; and Cops. Although other programs that are televised may fit into the tabloid television genre, only the ones which showed up in the Nielsens were used to discuss. Two of the five programs which showed up on the Nielsens, are televised on two of the major networks (Rescue 911--CBS and Unsolved Mysteries--NBC). The three remaining programs are on the Fox network (Reporters, America's Most Wanted, Cops). Rescue 911 was within the top 50, and the remaining three Fox network programs within the bottom half of the Nielsen ratings.

The average rank (as compared to other television programs) for all tabloid television programs, that were reflected within the first quarter for 1990, is 53. The average rating (how much they are liked/disliked by the viewer) share (percentage of households watching TV) for tabloid television programs for the period is

10.5/17. According to the data, Unsolved Mysteries is the only tabloid television program to show up in each rating period. Rescue 911, America's Most Wanted and the Reporters had a showing in all but one rating period each. In addition, Fox network's "A Current Affair" was found to be syndicated to 1,350 stations nationwide.

Summary

The idea of the "tabloid" has its roots in the history of the print medium, as far back as 1823 and the Illustrated London News. In 1833, the American penny newspaper or "penny press" enjoyed success through tapping a reservoir of readers it called the "common man."

In 1833, Joseph Pulitzer purchased the New York World and used sensationalism to increase circulation and appeal to the "common man." Pulitzer felt that mass newspapers must advocate popular causes, but first, must attract mass attention. One of the technical advances Pulitzer used was hugh, eye-filling headlines, and along with William Randolph Hearst and his daily The New York Journal, introduced the increased use of illustrations and photographs. By 1886, the World had the largest circulation ever attained by any American newspaper, up to that time.

By 1890, due to industrialization and high speed linotypers and presses, typewriters, etc., about one-third of the metropolitan dailies were following what was called "yellow journalism." Yellow journalism, or cheaply sensational journalism with large black type, led to abundant stories of sin and corruption, sensational pictures and used comics. Both the World and the New York Journal practiced the yellow journalism technique.

By 1900, with the rapid increase in literacy of the "average American" or "common man," a new type of journalism called "jazz journalism" was introduced. Jazz journalism was as different as it was new, and found success by being printed in a simple style which aimed at the lowest common denominator. It resembled a magazine

with its pages barely more than half the size of the traditional newspaper page. Except for a single headline and some small type, it was covered entirely with pictures. Although the style was new to America, in England it had become the most popular newspaper form, called "tabloid" because of its smallness and its concise presentation of the news.

Tabloids sprang up in large cities and small towns and became accepted parts of the American scene, due in part to the arresting pictures and bold headlines. One of the oldest and most recognized of the tabloids is the 61-year-old National Enquirer, whose stories are written simply, tightly and with a direct appeal to the emotions.

Most recently, the concept of the "tabloid" in the print industry has combined with he television medium to establish a genre referred to as "reality TV," or "tabloid television."

After research into television programming history, it was found that tabloid television is not a new genre. In addition, it was found that several television programs, and one radio program aired from the 1940's to the 1960's could have influenced or fed into this genre.

Nielsen ratings for the first quarter of 1990 showed five tabloid television programs. Two of which were televised on two of the major networks, with the remaining three on the Fox network. The average rank for the programs, which showed on the Nielsens, was 53, and the average rating was 10.5/17.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews related studies/literature pertinent to the present study and is divided into two sections: 1.) related studies on television use/ gratifications, as applied to audience activity, and television viewing; and 2.) related literature on the genre of tabloid television programming.

The first section reviews the relationship between the television medium and its viewers. In addition, it addresses viewer orientation to particular program types and follows the path of earlier studies that are similar to the present one. The first section also gives a better understanding as to the question of why the viewer watches what he/she watches, and why it is important to understand the "relationship" between the television medium and its viewers when researching attitudes toward specific genres. In addition, this section addresses the concept of the "active audience," as it relates to television program selection.

The second section of this review focuses specifically on tabloid television programming. It gives a better understanding of the techniques used in tabloid television production and of the impact that cable, the videocassette recorder industry and deregulation have had on network television program content. In addition, this section also discusses distinguishing characteristics of the tabloid television genre, and gives a better understanding of why this genre is attractive, not only to the viewing audience, but to producers of tabloid television programs.

Studies in uses and gratifications research were used as a part of this review as a basis for better understanding the motives for television usage and the rewards that are sought from specific programming on that medium.

Although the present study's methodology was different from the standard methodology of uses and gratifications research (i.e. statistical techniques--factor analysis), the study still solicited motives for television usage and the rewards that were sought from a specific genre by the use of a focus group discussion and follow-up survey.

Television Use/Gratifications

While all the studies reviewed were related to this study, the findings of Rubin (1984), Stanford (1984), Becker (1979), and Galloway and Meek (1981) were more closely related. However, no study was found which analyzed (through theory or practice) gratifications from this genre.

The theory of uses and gratifications has followed a rather unsystematic path of development for most of forty years, according to Rubin (1984) and Bantz (1982). Early studies of uses and gratifications research primarily sought to explore audience needs and interests as intervening variables within the process of mass communications impact; (Meine, 1942; McCandless, 1944; Arnheim, 1944; Herzog 1944; Warner and Henry, 1948; Wolfe and Fiske, 1949; Berelson, 1949) and both social and communication influences competing for the attention of the individuals, were ignored (Rubin 1981).

In other words, investigators have explored the generalized uses of a medium such as television, but not of a specific television program (Rubin 1981). In addition, investigators have explored specific "genres" such as the daily soap operas. But according to Rubin (1985), content analysis has been the dominant method of television soap opera research, which he reports "assume" that program content affects the attitudes and behavior of those who use it. Swanson (1977), explained the study of uses and gratifications as "confusing," basically due to the concept of "media use" and the difficulty of understanding other major concepts and terms

employed in uses and gratifications studies. In addition, Swanson (1977) added,

> ...Until the concepts and terms which define the uses and gratifications approach are given precision and their relations are specified within some cogent theoretic structure, we will continue to be unable to evaluate particular research efforts and to know what we should make of the approach itself.

"As is apparent from the literature on needs and gratifications, to understand the uses of a product or service from the consumer's point of view, it is useful to obtain data on the psychological needs satisfied when it is used (Frank and Greenberg 1980; Domzal and Kernan 1983)."

Rubin (1981), who administered questionnaires to 626 respondents at a mid-western university, found that different people use the television medium in different ways. He found that individuals who used television as a means of excitement, passing the time of day, or forgetting about personal problems had a considerable affinity with the television medium. Information viewers, or those who used television as a source of learning, perceived the content of television to be a rather accurate reflection of life. Habitual viewers who were either not very purposeful in their viewing or simply used television as a means to pass the time or relieve boredom did not regard television content to be wholly realistic.

Bantz (1982), who went a step further in exploring uses and gratifications and incorporated "favorite program type" into his studies using questionnaires, found "no sharp differences in media use and media content." Bantz stated: "Such a finding necessitates (1) assessment of the relationship of medium and content by techniques other than those employed here, (2) pending that, caution in evaluating uses and gratifications reports that do not consider medium and content as related variables and (3) a careful theoretical

analysis of the meaning of the judgements evoked by uses and gratifications questionnaires."

In an investigation by Kubey (1986), viewers who dealt with solitude and/or unstructured time, were more inclined than others to use television as to avoid the negative moods brought on by being less affluent, divorced or separated.

Recognizing the importance of audience expectation in regards to the television medium, Galloway and Meek (1981) noted "expectations about gratifications" as one of the assumed basic concepts of uses and gratifications research. Galloway and Meek (1981) concluded that "Media and media content are more likely to be attended to if gratifications consequent upon interaction with the media are both highly expected and highly valued."

Lometti, Reeves and Bybee (1977) looked at two issues concerned with media gratifications: The first issue concerned the determination of which gratifications are sought from the media; the second was if people are capable of distinguishing between communication channels and messages based on the gratifications they sought.

Lometti, Reeves and Bybee (1977) administered questionnaires which categorized eight communication channels, to 117 middle school students, 135 high school students, and 200 college students in the Madison, Wisconsin area. Subjects then judged the perceived similarity among all possible nonrepetitive pairs of communications channels such as books, family, film, newspapers, radio and television. For example, respondents were asked: "How similar are radio and TV?" Possible responses ranged from "very similar," to "very dissimilar" on a five-point scale.

The results of this study revealed three gratifications sought from interpersonal and mass communication channels: surveillance/entertainment, effective guidance, and behavioral guidance. In addition, the results found that respondents did not differentiate channels based on the characteristics of electronic, interpersonal, and print and that there was a possibility that the

attributes of electronic, interpersonal, and print channels enabled the respondents to fulfil certain gratifications.

Audience Activity

According to Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974), many of the differences between current and past investigations of audience gratifications lie within the realm of methodology. They conclude that (within the methodology) there is a risk that large numbers of people, known to compose "the audience" uniformly seek the gratifications inferred from a small scale qualitative study. At the other extreme, Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) stated that there has been a tendency, in previous uses and gratifications research, to feed respondents single-sentence descriptions of media functions for endorsement--without first ensuring their fidelity to the language and range of experience of the population under study.

Swanson (1977) described the idea of the "active audience" as being perhaps the most basic tenet of the uses and gratifications approach--that people were active in forming intentions, creating expectations of certain media, and constructing lines of action to achieve gratifications.

According to Becker (1979), the very nature of the gratifications concept is audience, rather than researcher oriented, and one of the most difficult problems facing scholars conducting empirical research (on gratifications of the media) is measurement of the gratifications themselves.

Katz (1979) suggested that the concept of selectivity (as it relates to audience activity), was central to gratifications studies. He derived the concept of selectivity from the finding that selective exposure, selective perception and selective recall intercepted the flow of influence.

Both Rubin (1984) and Stanford (1984) described the concept of the active audience (as it applied to audience behavior), as the subject of some debate, noting that the notion of activeness lead to a

picture of audience as superrational and very selective "a tendency which invites criticism."

In a study by Rubin (1984), 300 respondents filled out questionnaires on their motives for viewing television, their viewing levels, the programs they watched, and their affinity for television. The results indicated that television viewing is not a singular type of behavior, and that we (communication researchers) needed to observe more objectively the meaning of audience activity as it applied in a certain content and operationalize the concept within the process and content.

Stanford (1984) related the concept of the active audience to test the relationships between general orientations to television and gratifications received from favorite programs named by survey respondents. The results indicated that orientations corresponding to the gratifications that were received were powerful, but not unique in the prediction of program gratifications.

Types of Viewers

According to Domzal and Kernan (1983), television viewers are no longer dependent on the programming choices of networks and local stations, and increasingly viewers have the option of watching what they wanted to watch and when they want to watch.

In an area of uses and gratifications research begun by Greenberg (1974), in which he identified and examined correlates and consequences of motivations for television viewing by British children and adolescents, Rubin (1976, 1979) continued in partial and varied replication by examining correlates and consequences of motivations for television viewing by American children and adolescents. Rubin (1976, 1979) adapted Greenberg's television use scales and typologies to analyze their sociodemographic, television behavior, and television attitudes. In addition Rubin (1977, 1979) reported age to be a rather consistent demographic predictor of viewing motivations.

In an attempt by Rubin (1981) to transcend the limited application of the motivation typologies and to expand systematic integration of findings, Greenberg's (1974) and Rubin's (1979) television use scales were further expanded and refined in Rubin (1981). In addition, the relationships between viewing motivations and previous demographics and viewing behaviors and attitudes present in Rubin (1981) (measured similarly to those of the previous studies) were explored for an expanded age sample.

Rubin (1981) categorized nine types of viewers, which seemed to emerge from his investigation motivations:

1. Social Viewers--younger, have a definite affinity with the medium, see it as being somewhat realistic, do not view excessive amounts of television, and avoid news and talk shows;
2. Entertainment Viewers--all age levels, watch a good deal of television, are attracted to the medium, perceive it to be realistic, and prefer or avoid no programs in particular;
3. Escapist Viewers--younger, view moderate levels of television, exhibit a great affinity with the medium, regard its content to be only mildly realistic, and reveal no particular program preferences;
4. Program Content Viewers--all age levels, watch ample quantities of television, or are not particularly attached to the medium, see it as being somewhat realistic, seem varied in their program viewing with no observable preferences;
5. Informational Viewers--watch fairly substantial amounts of television, are moderately attached to the medium, see its content as being more realistic than any other type of viewer, and prefer talk and game shows;
6. Relaxation Viewers--exhibit affinity with the medium, view moderate levels of television, do not regard it to be realistic, and prefer comedies;

7. Companionship Viewers--watch considerable amounts of television are attached to the medium, perceive it to be only somewhat realistic, prefer adventure-dramas, and avoid talk shows;
8. Arousal Viewers--younger, watch high levels of television, are more attached to the medium than other types of viewer, regard it to be quite realistic, prefer sports and adventure drama programming, and avoid public affairs programming;
9. Pass Time Viewers--younger, prefer comedies, shun news and talk programming, views larger quantities of television than any other type of viewer, exhibit a great affinity with the medium, and perceive it to be only somewhat realistic.

In addition, Rubin (1981) investigated relationships among television viewing motivations and age, viewing levels, television attitudes, and program preferences, with results showing negative correlations among age and escapist viewing, viewing to pass the time, arousal viewing, and social viewing.

In an investigation into viewer types, Rubin (1981) examined audience viewing motivations of "60 Minutes." Personal interviews with 534 respondents in a local mid-western University community were conducted in 1979. The questionnaire which was used, consisted of five main sections: "60 Minute" viewing motivations, sources of information, television viewing behaviors, television attitudes and demographic characteristics. The results of this study showed that there were two distinct viewer types for this program: those who watched to be entertained and those who watched to seek information. In addition, the results showed that the desire to seek "journalistic information" as not being a predominant reason for watching the program.

According to Bower (1973), education, along with race with education, and the changes in life style involved in aging all help to shape attitudes towards television. A ten year study (1960-1970) by Bower (1973), drawing on Gary Steiner's 1960 survey, published

as The People Look At Television (1963), showed responses of the 1960 and 1970 populations to a list of fifteen reasons, rearranged according to frequency of choice, as to "why" they watched television.

People said that they watched for the reasons of general enjoyment, to see particular programs, and (somewhat less) to "learn something." In addition, it was reported as "personal motivations," the desire for background noise, a fear of missing something, an escape from other activities, and reasons of pure sociability.

Among minor changes that did occur over a ten-year span, were fewer people in 1970 than in 1960 watched because it was a pleasant way to spend an evening. The reasons were a mystery, but it did seem to have a sex-linked association with the decline in high enthusiasm for television.

In a study by Bower (1985) he retained most of what had been adopted or added from Steiner's 1960 study to his 1970 study, with revisions of time-bound questions and a few additions to cover cable television and other developments. As in 1970, the exact wording of reused questions was repeated, as was the sequence in which they were asked in the interview.

Bower (1973) found that what changed most between 1960 and 1970 was the view of television as almost exclusively an entertainment medium; this was in contrast to the 1980 survey, which showed that television was perceived to be providing most of the world news the public received, and was starting to be used, rather heavily, as an information medium.

In each of the three surveys (Steiner's 1960 and Bower's 1970 and 1980 surveys) the reason "to see a specific program I enjoy very much" led the list. The second in frequency in the1960 study, "because it's a pleasant way to spend an evening," appeared at least to be sensitive enough to reflect a trend. The drop of 20 percentage points between 1960 and 1980 in acceptance of that as a usual reason for viewing could very well be associated with the general decline in enthusiasm for television as a provider of entertainment,

said Bower (1985). He stated that by 1980, it was no longer felt to be quite such a pleasant way to spend an evening.

A few of the changes in the selection of reasons for viewing, over the 20 years, suggested quite different lines of speculation. Two of the reasons that showed significant decreases, for example, were viewing "to be sociable when others are watching," going from 17 percent to 10 percent, and because a spouse was interested or "seems to be," 21 percent to 16 percent. During the same period, turning on the set "to keep me company while I'm alone" increased slightly from 20 to 23 percent. Bower (1985) explained that the differences could have very well been associated with the increase over the years in the solitary viewing of television. Bower (1985) also noted that only one of the fifteen reasons increased to a statistically significant degree ("because there is nothing else to do"), while most of them declined. Overall, Bower (1985) found far fewer reasons were chosen in 1980 than in 1960. He reported that this could be because television watching has become such an ordinary activity, and is so taken for granted, that people no longer think about reasons for watching.

According to Bower (1985) it was safe to assert that higher education decreases admiration for television as an institution. In addition, race (continued through the 1970 and the 1980 studies) was found to be an important audience division. Blacks were found to be more favorably disposed to the medium than were whites (they watched somewhat more overall) and college-educated blacks watched considerably more than their white counterparts. In addition, it was strongly suggested by Bower (1985) that it was the age-related demands of various stages of life that determined the attitudes and uses of the medium, rather than the continuity of views that were formed early in life and persisted.

The lack of a stronger relationship between expressed attitudes and patterns of viewing led Bower (1985) to speculate about an "audience of opportunity," in which he followed Bogart's idea of TV watching as a "pastime" not requiring much motivation; borrowed

from Berelson's finding from research on newspaper reading as "ritualistic;" and adopted Ehrenberg's idea of sheer "availability" as a reason for the public watching what they do.

Summary

The idea underlying the present study was that by finding out about television use/gratifications, audience activity and types of viewers, this researcher could formulate ideas on the role that television plays in our society, thus, giving a better understanding to what the appeal of tabloid television is to its viewers. The review of related literature on uses and gratifications research is relevant to the present study, in that like the present study, uses and gratifications research seeks to solicit motives for television usage and the rewards that are sought.

From the review of related literature, it was believed that different people use television in different ways and that there were no "sharp" differences in its use and content.

In addition, it was believed that program selection was to be found in viewers, and that they (viewers) could be placed into various categories depending on certain variables (age, amount of television watched, etc.)

It was also believed, from the review of related literature, that the audience, (the very nature of gratifications concept), and the concept of "audience activity" played an important role in the future of uses and gratifications research.

Television Medium/Tabloid Genre

This section reviews related literature pertinent to the present study of tabloid television programming, by focusing on the tabloid television genre. While all of the articles reviewed were related to this study, Thomas (1990) provided the basis for this review. Other articles used in this review were Finney (1988), Jacory (1989),

Leerhsen (1988) and Weiss (1989). No article or research study was found which analyzed (through practice) gratifications from this genre.

The television industry has always been a form of show business, according to Thomas (1990). He stated that industry executives know that even the most important news programs will lose viewers--and revenue, if they aren't entertaining and that re-creating the news to make it more appealing was symptomatic of commercial television's need to attract an audience. In that respect, news programs were no different from sitcoms, quiz shows and soap operas. Thomas (1990) also stated that if people were to stop watching, ratings would fall, and sponsors would take their business elsewhere.

Ian I. Mirtroff, co-author of The Unreality Industry: The Deliberate Manufacturing of Falsehood and What It Is Doing To Our Lives , explained that warnings, like "This is serious" or "This is fun" were virtually meaningless, that "people don't read television; they watch it, and that visually there's no distinction between shows that sell products with news and news personalities, and ones that do it with sex and violence."

Thomas (1990) stated that because television is a "visual medium," interest in many important stories had in the past fallen off sharply when television coverage was restricted and interest in much less trivial events had leapt to the forefront because dramatic pictures were available. Tom Rose wrote in Freeing The Whales, a book about the event:

> Take the October 1988 story about three California gray whales trapped in the icy waters off Barrow, Alaska. The helpless whales often eclipsed the presidential race and the World Series...Only the immediacy of television could convey the whales' almost hypnotic allure, somewhat in the same way that a cat stuck in a tree could mobilize an entire town, three gray whales stuck in the arctic ice mobilized the entire world.

According to Thomas (1990), tabloid television was television's fastest growing form of information/entertainment. Thomas (1990) defined tabloid television as "a blending of factual material, with elements of advertising, publicity and show business, usually with distinct emphasis on the latter." Tabloid television was seen as the programming mode of the future, and according to Thomas (1990), as networks became more permissive, entertainment would inevitably broaden to include shows and material that would have been unheard of a few years ago (for example):

> Last year, Fox's "A Current Affair" showed a home video of convicted "preppy" murderer Robert Chambers frolicking, while out on bail, with several young ladies at a slumber party. That was followed by a film clip that showed a re-enactment of Chambers' murder of Jennifer Levin, with a look-alike actress playing the victim.

Finney (1988) reported that to explain why tabloid television programming has become viable now is complex. He said that some American academics had written the trend off as simply a cultural legacy, while others pointed to the easy-to-follow formula the programs depend upon and the fact that the classic tabloid theme that "terrible things can threaten normal people" was present. The play on fear, expressed by Finney (1988) was neatly captured by the catchline: "This could happen to you."

The researcher found that generally the daily tabloid television programs aired three segments a night and used home video, handheld cameras, police video, answering machine tapes, and even pornographic video in its television programming (Finney 1988). According to Weiss (1989):

> Through video sleights, the programs frequently fade from one face to another, often from a victim to an innocent person--as if to suggest that the former's fate could just as easily befall the latter. These gestures are of a piece with the dramatizations these shows employ so ruthlessly; shadows on the wall of a

> woman taking a hammer to her husband, a faceless actor grabbing a tin of kerosene to blow up his son, a corpse in a wheelbarrow with hand dangling from a blanket, a detective opening the trunk and reeling away from the smell of the decomposing body.

"In television," said journalist and Public Broadcasting System (PBS) commentator Bill Moyers, "good visuals sometimes are more valued than good journalism. That idea has not been lost on television executives, who lately have tried to revitalize 'talking head' news shows with attention-getting production techniques. The most controversial of these is the use of actors to perform in simulated news stories, based on interviews, research, and in some cases, guesswork" (Thomas 1990).

According to Weiss (1989), adding dramatic touches to otherwise dry news stories made them more visually appealing, and surveys indicated that visual interest was what drew viewers to any TV show. Jacory (1989) stated "Viewers can't get enough of the lurid re-creations of the abductions, stabbings and shootings."

Aside from the use of visual re-enactments on television news, visual re-enactments were found to play a major role in tabloid television programming. Fox television, the biggest network producer of news re-enactments, said that it had no plans to curtail their use of re-enactments on such tabloid television programs as "The Reporters," "Cops" and "America's Most Wanted," which sometimes cast the actual victims to play themselves in recreations of robberies, murders and rapes.

With re-enactments being used in both news and tabloid television programs, a recent poll by Times Mirror indicated a confusion among viewers as what to call a"news show" and what to call an "entertainment show." Half of those surveyed said they believed "America's Most Wanted" (tabloid television show) was a news show, while 28 percent said it was entertainment. The response was roughly the same when people were asked what they

would call other "tabloid-TV" programs, such as Fox Network's popular evening series "A Current Affair."

Various themes run throughout the tabloid television programs, and according to Weiss (1989), the "untrustworthy family" was the central narrative of much of this (tabloid television) journalism.

Many of the family-deceit stories, according to Weiss (1989), confirmed a deranged view of existence with an actuality few non-fiction media approach. Some actually undermined the very idea of family. For example:

> When a woman living with the boyfriend who shot her, crippling her from the waist down, says matter of factly, "we've had our ups and downs, like everybody has--we've fought." We're to understand that the two are like us. And when a deeply alienated man, charged with trying to kill the wife who's just said she still loves him, says for his part: I'm inclined to believe that I'm thinking about a person and continuing to love a person who no longer exists.

We're pressed to identify with his dissociated state of mind. Weiss (1989) stated that whenever a piece began (on tabloid television) with the image of a happy couple, you could be sure someone was about to be "betrayed, flayed, made a fool of or burned to a crisp after a visit to Disneyland."

Those narratives suggested that the family was an unstable unit and full of lies: "In ten years I had ten lovers... That's not very many; " said a jailed "Inside Edition" interviewee who turned out to have shot her children. "I thought she was having a weight problem," a mother said on "A Current Affair" of the pregnancy of her daughter concealed from her for nine months, but typically the reporter doesn't believe it and undercuts the interviewee with doubting lines.

Sociopolitical angles in these pieces were suppressed. For example, "A Current Affair's" exclusive on Jazz pianist Billy Tipton, who on his death was revealed to be a woman, might have had

sociological impact--the music world didn't welcome women so she became a man. Instead, the focus was placed on his former wife's anatomical ignorance of his gender (Thomas 1990).

Finney (1988) stated that despite being knocked by the critics, tabloid television was enjoying enormous success with audiences that producers argued had become bored with fictional violence and tired of "hard news."

With the readership of newspapers dropping yearly, tabloid television has pushed itself to the top of the ratings ladder. According to Jacory (1989), the "tabloid television trend seems to be spreading all over the dial."

"America's Most Wanted"/"A Current Affair"/"Geraldo"

The following three tabloid television programs were chosen to review because each had a different format. "America's Most Wanted" had a mystery format; while "A Current Affair" had a news format and "Geraldo" a talk show format.

According to Thomas (1990), "America's Most Wanted" used a simple, two-step technique, capturing viewers' attention with a recreation of the crime, then flashing what, according to managing editor of the show Margaret Roberts, was "an indelible image" of the suspect's face. It combined elements of two popular TV formats--the crime show and the quiz show. But instead of playing word games, the home audience played informat by reporting at-large kidnappers, rapists and thieves. The reward wasn't money or prizes, it was revenge.

In addition, Thomas (1990) stated that in its first year on the air, the program re-enacted more than 150 crimes, from muggings and murders to the case of a middle-aged aspiring addict who had stolen a half-million dollars in change from pay telephones. Nearly half of the featured suspects (44 percent) were subsequently apprehended.

According to Thomas (1990), Tom Shales, TV columnist, greeted the debut of "America's Most Wanted" by observing that it sensationalized crime and gave criminals undeserved media status. In addition, Thomas (1990) stated that the tabloid television show has been copied by a half-dozen call-in crime shows, including NBC's "Unsolved Mysteries."

In addition to "America's Most Wanted," "A Current Affair" stated Thomas (1990), was a pioneer in the field of packaging sensationalism. "A Current Affair," hosted by former Washington, D.C. anchorman Maury Povich, was found to be syndicated by Fox to 1350 stations nationwide. Its format resembled that of "60 Minutes" but the content placed a heavy premium on sex and violence, including "dreamy" re-enactments of actual crimes.

According to Thomas (1990), the real cutting edge of what many called "trash TV" was the television talk shows. Often airing between daily soap operas and the evening news, talk shows had displayed whole new realms of strange behavior to public acceptance. In their search for material, Thomas (1990) said that tabloid television talk shows had made the "abnormal" the "psychotic" and the "weird" acceptable for everyday chitchat and that one such tabloid television talk show was "Geraldo."

According to The Village Voice, "Geraldo," hosted by talk show host Geraldo Rivera, was "an exercise in hysteria," and according to The Washington Post, it was "Dirty-minded teleporn." Thomas (1990) noted that prior to hosting a daily talk show (which featured such guests as female boxers, former prostitutes and sexual abuse cases) a documentary, in which Geraldo Rivera covered the topic of devil worship, turned out to be the highest rated two-hour documentary ever presented on network television.

The Networks

According to Leerhsen (1988), Finney (1988) and Weiss (1989), the videocassette and cable industries have had an impact on the content of network television programming.

Leerhsen (1988) stated that because the television industry was competing with cable and home vcr's, it was fervently embracing a radical survival tactic: "Anything goes as long as it gets an audience." In addition, he noted that tabloid television, previously confined to the fringes of syndication, was gradually infecting primetime network programming and that every major network now aired at least one tabloid-TV show.

Finney (1988) said that battered by the encroachments of cable and home videocassette recorders, the United States television mass market was now saturated with some 500 talk shows, game shows, tabloid magazine shows and series reruns.

Weiss (1989) reported that the network share of the television audience had slipped rapidly in the last ten years, due to videocassette players, cable and independent stations and that tabloid TV would never have caught on--were it not for this bold, new, deregulated marketplace.

According to Bill Carter of the New York Times, "Network bosses, who prided themselves on avoiding sensational stories, claim they're being forced into the tabloid trade by cable competitors an local affiliates that fill their schedules with syndicated courtroom, crime and rescue shows."

Richard Salant, former president of CBS News, now retired, referred to tabloid-TV shows like "Geraldo," as "supermarket check-out counter journalism," and stated that "Nothing on television surprizes me anymore. There would be none of this stuff if it did not have an audience."

On the other hand, "60 Minutes" producer Don Hewitt suggested that "The networks are simply taking their cues from their affiliates. For years the networks prided themselves that they would never go tabloid. What's happened is that the local stations have gone tabloid without us--they bought all these shows. It's one big porno shop"

Leerhsen (1988). Both Carter and Hewitt agreed that in an audience driven marketplace, you gave the viewer what he/she wanted to see. In the words of Don Hewitt, "...Am I going to tell someone who wants to watch it (tabloid television) not to watch? No. It's democracy. It's the marketplace."

In addition to the audience acceptance of tabloid television, it was found through this review of related literature that another advantage of this new genre was the low cost to the networks to produce. Tabloid television shows cost between $25,000 and $50,000 an episode to produce, which was 10 percent of the average cost of an episode made for the average network series, and advertisers have been quick to spot the specific market lured to tabloid television: women between the ages of 18 and 49, who typically control a major part of the family budget in the U.S. (Finney 1988).

It was stated that one of the structural reasons behind the new programming was the financial belt-tightening all three networks have implemented since January 1987. New programming that fits well within the bottom line was likely to be enthusiastically embraced not just by producers, but by penny-pinching senior executives keen to cut corners (Finney 1988).

Thomas (1990) reported that feeling the push from their own news departments to explore topics like child molestation and gang rape, network entertainment divisions were showing made-for-TV films that were hard to distinguish from the latest tabloid-news stories, which often served as the working models for their scripts.

Summary

The review of related literature on tabloid television programming was compiled to better understand the tabloid television genre; therefore, better understanding the topic of this study.

This literature suggests that visually there is no distinction between shows that sell products with news and news personalities, and ones that do it with sex and violence; hence, tabloid television. In addition, this literature suggests that to explain why tabloid television programming has become viable now was complex.

In addition, this literature suggests that aside from the visual re-enactments on television news, visual re-enactments played a major role in tabloid television programming. And that there may be confusion, as to what to call a "news show" and what to call an "entertainment show" with re-enactments being used in both news and tabloid television programs.

It was found that economically, the tabloid television programs were extremely cheap to produce (generally 10 percent of the average cost of an episode made for a network series), thus making the genre attractive to producers.

And it was also found that deregulation and the cable and videocassette recorder industries had a profound impact on network television programming. The latter meaning--networks had felt the pressure of competition for audience shares.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Problem

Over the years, the sensationalism of the print medium has transferred very successfully to the television medium. Most recently, the sensationalism of the print medium's "tabloid" has combined with the television medium to establish the genre of "tabloid television." Tabloid television, which is highly visual (including re-enactments), highly emotional and often risque in content has proven successful, as a television genre.

The researcher investigated what elements people said they liked and disliked about the tabloid television genre. This study asked whether it was the violence, re-enactments, or some other element/s that made the genre attractive to its viewers.

The value of this study was to provide a better understanding of the audience's perception of various elements of the tabloid television genre.

Focus Group Discussions/Follow-Up Survey

The focus group, or group interviewing, is a research strategy for understanding audience/consumer attitudes and behavior. Some of the advantages of using this type of research are that it allows the collection of preliminary information about a topic or phenomenon and can be conducted quickly. In addition, a focus group discussion allows for flexibility in question design and follow-up, and more complete and less inhibited responses than those from individual interviews. Some of the disadvantages of using focus group discussions are that some groups become dominated by a self-appointed group leader who monopolizes the conversation, the lack

of quantitative data, and the heavy dependency on the skills of the moderator. Also, because the small focus group samples are composed of volunteers, they may not necessarily represent the population from which they are drawn.

The methodology of focus group discussions include: defining the problem (in all types of scientific research) either on the basis of some previous investigation or out of curiosity; selecting a sample (based on the purpose of the focus group); determining the number of groups which are necessary; preparing the study mechanics (i.e. arranging for the recruitment of respondents and reserving the facilities at which the groups will be conducted); and deciding what type of recording (either audio or video) will be used.

In conducting the focus group sessions, a variety of settings may be used, from professional conference rooms to motel rooms rented for the occasion. Generally, the focus group session begins with some type of shared experience, so that the individuals have a common base from which to start the discussion. Usually the final step is analyzing the data and preparing a summary report.

In the present study, three small focus groups comprised of college students from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, participated. A total of seven women and one man between the ages of 21-31 participated. The researcher attempted to increase the size of the focus groups by asking students from two classes (comprized of approximately fifty students total) to participate. Although many students seemed interested when approached, the researcher did not get the expected attendance. The focus group discussions were held in a room in the Communications Building, at the University of Tennessee, in which a very relaxed and informal atmosphere was provided for the participants.

Prior to the start of the focus group investigations, the moderator asked focus group members to give a very brief introduction. This was done to relieve any tension, thus, allowing focus group members to be more relaxed during the sessions. After introductions were completed, the moderator informed participants

that the session was being audio taped for future reference, that the audio tape would be stored at the moderator's home and that the tape would be destroyed after it had first been transcribed and the results compiled and analyzed for conclusions/summary. The moderator then let participants know that their identity would be kept confidential and that no last names would be used during the audio taped discussions (thus, further assuring participants of confidentiality). Next, the moderator explained that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions, and that they (participants) should treat the discussion as a very informal gathering. The moderator then identified the purpose of the group and summarized the goals and value of the project.

To start the focus group discussions (which were conducted over a three day period), participants viewed videotaped openings of three sub-genres of tabloid television programs (day 1: "A Current Affair;" day 2: "Geraldo;" and day 3: "Unsolved Mysteries"). This was done to set the mood of the discussions (by refreshing participants' minds as to the format of each), and as a "shared experience," so that the participants had a common base from which to start the discussions (as stated earlier in this chapter).

After viewing each of the videotaped openings, the moderator addressed questions to the group, such as: Why do you watch this program? What do you like about this program? Are there any aspects of this program that you dislike?

After an analysis of the focus groups' responses, in which the investigator looked for patterns, inconsistencies, etc., the moderator/investigator formulated research questions from the focus groups' responses for a follow-up survey. For example, focus group participants were asked "how do you feel about the sensational language used on tabloid television programming?" Responses were as follows: "like it," "it's necessary, appeal to audience's senses," "piques curiosity," "think it's funny--I laugh," "don't think it's necessary," "think it's entertaining," and "makes it more entertaining." From these responses, the researcher derived

the following statements: "Sensational language on tabloid television programs enhance the programs," "The sensational language on tabloid television programs is much too graphic," "The sensational language on tabloid television programs pique my curiosity," "The sensational language on tabloid television programs make them more entertaining," "I don't like the sensational language on tabloid television programs." Results were then combined from the focus groups' responses and survey for conclusions.

The follow-up survey (see Appendix D) was implemented to compare and check focus groups' responses. The survey consisted of questions/statements pertaining to tabloid television content, tabloid television viewing habits, others' opinions of tabloid television programming and respondent demographics. Statements in the questionnaire survey were applied to a 5-point Likert scale which ranged from 1-strongly agree to 5-strongly disagree. The survey was distributed in three classes to college students of various majors. Of 100 survey questionnaires sent out, 86 were returned for a response rate of 86%.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results of the focus group discussions and follow-up survey are summarized in this chapter. The findings are presented under five main sections: demographic features, television viewing habits, tabloid television as a genre, tabloid television programming content and acknowledgement of tabloid television viewing to others/others opinion of tabloid television programming. When appropriate, responses pertaining to lack of interest in and appeal of tabloid television programming will be addressed.

Demographic Features

This section demographically profiles the participants of the focus group discussions and respondents of the follow-up survey.

FOCUS GROUPS--There were seven (7) female subjects and one (1) male subject who participated in three small focus group discussions. Subjects ranged from 21-31 years of age, and all were students, except for one who had graduated six months prior and managed a restaurant. The majority of the focus group participants were from hometowns located in the Southeast region of the United States. One subject was from a hometown in the Southwest and one was originally from the Midwest. With the exception of one subject (who had lived in Knoxville for 5-10 years), all subjects had lived in Knoxville for fewer than four years. Seven subjects had incomes of less than $5,000 a year. One subject had an annual income of between $11,500-$16,500.

SURVEY--Of those who responded to the questionnaire survey, over half or 55% (47) were female, 40% (34) were male and 6% (5) chose not to respond to the question of gender. The majority of those who responded or 45% (39) were between the ages of 17-20. Thirty-

one percent or 27 were between the ages of 21-24. Ten percent or 9 were between 25-28 and 2% (2) of respondents were between 29-32. Only 1% or 1 respondent was between the age of 33-36, while 5% (4) were between 37-40. No respondent was 41-over and 5% (4) chose not to respond on the question of age.

The largest percentage of survey respondents were Freshman (30% (26)). Both Sophomores and Seniors were represented equally with 20% (17) each. Those of Junior status were represented in this survey with 14% (12) and Graduate students accounted for 10% (9) of respondents. Six percent (5) chose not to respond on the question of year in school.

On the question of Major, the "no response" percentage was high 22% (19). This may have been due to a percentage of survey respondents being undecided about their major. In addition, this may have been due to the placement of the question, which was last (no. 78) on the survey questionnaire. The majority of those who did respond to the question of Major were in "Broadcasting" (17% (15)). Thirteen percent (11) stated their major as "Communications," and 8% (7) of those who responded were "Psychology" majors. Six percent or 5 respondents stated that they were "Journalism" majors and "Advertising,""Public Relations" and "Business" majors were represented with 3% (3) each. "Geology,""English,""Finance" and "History" majors accounted for 2% (2) each. Other majors represented in this survey were "Human Services," "Physics," "Sociology," "Accounting," "Health and Physical Education," "Biology," "Education," "Logistics," "Speech," "Marketing" and "Speech Pathology."

Television Viewing Habits

FG--All focus group participants said "yes" when asked if they liked the television medium. All agreed that they watched television because it was "habit forming" and for its "information" and "entertainment." Focus group subjects watched television for an

average of 2.5 hours per day and the majority of subjects watched television during the evening hours. The majority of focus group participants watched television while studying. Other settings included "while lounging," "with friends" and "while eating."

S--The "favorite program type" of focus group participants was the "situation comedy." "Drama" was second in appeal to subjects, "network news/information," "variety shows," and "game/quiz shows" were also mentioned by focus group subjects as their favorite program type.

Of 100 survey questionnaires sent out (in which a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1-strongly agree to 5-strongly disagree was applied to all statements), 86 were returned for a response rate of 86%. Over half of those who responded or 63% (54) said that they watched tabloid television programming, 37% or 32 did not. Of respondents who watched tabloid television, 72% (62) said that they watched under two hours per week, 9% (8) watched between 2-4 hours per week, 15% (13) watched between 4-8 hours per week and 3% (3) chose not to respond to this question.

Tabloid Television as a Genre

Description

FG--When focus group subjects were asked to describe the tabloid television genre, the majority described it as "entertainment" programming or a combination of both "news and entertainment."

S--When survey respondents were asked to describe tabloid television programming, only 2% (2) stated that they thought of it as news, whereas 37% (32) described the genre as entertainment. Forty-eight percent (41) described tabloid television as a combination of both news and entertainment and 13% (11) had no response.

Information/Believability

FG--When focus group subjects were asked if they felt that they learned important information on tabloid television programs that they didn't hear anywhere else, the majority of responses were positive, such as "yes," "only from re-enactments," and "I learn safety tips from Unsolved Mysteries... (I) learn what not to do." The negative responses to this question included those such as "no," and "not really important information."

When focus group participants were asked, "Which do you believe more, what you hear on tabloid television programming or network news?" The overall response was "network news" Participants stated "credibility" in network news as being a determining factor in their choice.

S--As seen in Table 4.0, survey respondents generally had no opinion as to the information gained from tabloid television viewing. However, it was interesting to notice that 40% (34) disagreed with the statement "I learn nothing from tabloid television programs." Although respondents could not pinpoint exactly what they learned from this genre, a large percentage felt that they did learn something.

When respondents were asked "What do you believe more, what you hear on tabloid television programs, or what you hear on network news?" Eighty-six percent (74) said that they believed what they heard on network news more than what they heard on tabloid television. Only 2% (2) believed what they heard on tabloid television more than what they heard on network news and 12% (10) had no response.

Reasons for Watching

FG--Focus group participants cited the appeal of watching other people, as a reason for watching tabloid television. For example, "seeing what's going on with other people," "may see someone you

Table 4.0

Attitudes Toward Information Obtained From Tabloid Television Programs

Statement (a)	Survey Respondents						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/R	(N=)
"I find that I learn important information on tabloid television programs that I don't hear anywhere else."	5%	20%	27%	20%	13%	15%	(72)
"I learn nothing from tabloid television programs."	10%	10%	19%	40%	8%	13%	(75)
"By watching tabloid television programs, I learn what not to do."	2%	16%	48%	13%	7%	14%	(74)
"Tabloid television programs give me food for thought."	1%	24%	44%	7%	8%	16%	(73)

(a) The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

know," and "may have seen this person," were responses given by focus group members. Other responses included watching tabloid television programs because they "are not like the rest of TV," because of the "curiosity" and "reality" aspects of these shows, because of the genre's "sensational" and "mystery elements" and "to relieve boredom."

When focus group subjects were asked how they felt when they had to miss a tabloid television show, responses ranged from "(It) depends upon the show" and "(I get upset) only when (I) see a good commercial and miss the show," to "(I) don't get upset" and "If I have something to do, I will do it."

S--Forty-four percent (38) of survey respondents agreed that they watched tabloid television programming because of their "curiosity," while many respondents agreed that they watched because they found it "interesting" (38% or 33), or "because it was different than other TV programs" (38% or 33). A somewhat lower percentage of respondents agreed that they watched tabloid television to "relieve boredom." The findings are shown in Table 4.1.

Although almost half of the respondents to this survey (48% (41) viewed tabloid television as being both news and entertainment, it is interesting to note that the highest percentage of respondents to statements regarding viewing tabloid television again agreed that they would do so based only on its entertainment value (see Table 4.2).

Of those survey respondents who gave reasons for not watching tabloid television programming, eight (8) respondents stated a general "lack of interest in the genre." Seven (7) respondents stated that tabloid television was "too sensational." Three (3) respondents stated "Watches very little television" two (2) respondents stated that tabloid television was a "distortion of the truth," "unbelievable" and that it had "no appeal to me." In addition, "no time to watch," "insults my intelligence," "content is of no value" and "waste of time" were each stated once as reasons for not watching this genre.

Table 4.1

Reasons For Watching Tabloid Television Programs

Statement (b)	Survey Respondents						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/R	(N=)
"I watch tabloid television because I find it interesting."	14%	38%	16%	17%	10%	5%	(74)
"I watch tabloid television because I find it different from other TV programs."	6%	33%	33%	10%	5%	13%	(74)
"I watch tabloid television because of my curiosity."	5%	44%	23%	9%	3%	16%	(73)
"I watch tabloid television because of its sensationalism."	3%	14%	37%	24%	8%	14%	(75)
"I watch tabloid television to relieve boredom."	6%	33%	29%	8%	7%	17%	(71)
"I watch tabloid television because there's nothing else on TV interesting to watch."	8%	26%	29%	10%	7%	20%	(69)
"I watch tabloid television because of the reality aspect of the genre."	3%	20%	24%	22%	14%	17%	(72)

(b) The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Table 4.2

Reasons For Watching Tabloid Television Programs Again

Statement (c)	Survey Respondents						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/R	(N=)
"If I were to watch tabloid television again, it would be because it's entertaining."	14%	38%	23%	7%	5%	13%	(75)
"If I were to watch tabloid television again, it would be because of the 'gossip' aspects of these shows."	3%	15%	29%	24%	9%	20%	(70)
"I will watch tabloid television again, in order to get a good cry."	5%	8%	20%	21%	29%	17%	(71)
"I will watch tabloid television again because it makes me laugh."	5%	14%	42%	17%	6%	16%	(72)
"I will watch tabloid television again, because I might see a person that I know."	3%	19%	21%	29%	15%	13%	(75)

(c) The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Table 4.3 shows that the largest percentage of respondents to this survey questionnaire were not selective in their exposure to the tabloid television genre. In fact, almost half or 48% (41) of those who responded to statements about missing a tabloid television program strongly agreed that they didn't "get upset if I miss a tabloid television program."

Staying Power as a Genre

FG--When focus group subjects were asked if they would watch tabloid television again, all responded "yes." When asked why they would watch tabloid television again, the primary reason was because "It (tabloid television) is entertaining." Other reasons included because it's "interesting," "to see that one person that I know" and because of "(the) gossip--to get a good cry."

When subjects were asked if they thought that the tabloid television genre was here to stay, all said "yes," even though some said that the genre would "have to change" and that they (the tabloid television programs) were "running out of subject matter." The primary reason focus group participants gave for why they thought that this genre would stay around was because they felt that "it's interesting to people and entertaining." When participants were asked: "If the tabloid television genre doesn't stay around, which elements will last?" participants responded with the "shock" element, "(the) personalized aspect," the "mystery" element and the element which would "keep the audience interacting (in) someway."

S--Of those surveyed, 43% (37) stated that they would watch tabloid television again, 29% (25) stated that they may watch tabloid television again and only 9% or 8 stated that they would never watch the genre again. Nineteen percent (16) chose not to respond to this question.

As seen from Table 4.4, almost half of those surveyed who responded to statements about the staying power of the tabloid television genre (43% or 37) agreed that they felt that the genre was

Table 4.3

Attitudes Toward Missing A Tabloid Television Program

Statement (d)	Survey Respondents						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/R	(N=)
"I don't get upset if I have to miss a tabloid television program."	48%	17%	10%	8%	2%	15%	(74)
"I really get upset If I have to miss a tabloid television show."	0%	7%	13%	28%	38%	14%	(74)

(d) The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Table 4.4

Tabloid Television Staying Power

Statement (e)	Survey Respondents						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/R	(N=)
"I think that the tabloid television genre is here to stay."	3%	43%	30%	8%	3%	13%	(76)
"I think that tabloid television will not be around much longer."	5%	13%	33%	33%	2%	14%	(73)
"I think that certain aspects of the tabloid television genre will hang around."	6%	41%	28%	9%	2%	14%	(74)

(e) The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

here to stay.

Table 4.5 echoes attitudes survey respondents had toward the entertainment value of the tabloid television genre. Of statements regarding reasons for the genre to stay around, 41% (35) agreed that it was "because it's entertaining."

Although an average of 39% of survey respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to statements regarding the element/s of the tabloid television genre which would stay around if the genre didn't last (see Table 4.6), 38% (33) of respondents agreed that the "mystery element/s" of the genre would last.

Tabloid Television Programming Content

Sensationalism

FG--When focus group participants were asked how they felt about the sensational language used on tabloid television programs, only one derogatory or negative response, "I don't think it's necessary," was given. The majority liked the sensational language and felt that "It's necessary (in order to) appeal to (the) audience's senses," and that "It's funny" and that it "makes it (the genre) more entertaining."

When focus groups were asked how they felt when tabloid television programs teased them with the promise of a sensational story then delivered less, the majority of the responses were negative, such as : "let down," "disappointed," "angry," "cheated," "intelligence has been assaulted" and that they "wasted my time." However, other focus group responses included I "don't care," it "doesn't bother me "and I'll just "find out what it was about."

S--It was interesting to find the highest percentage of survey respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to statements which pertained to sensational language on tabloid television programs (Table 4.7). In comparison, the highest percentage of survey respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to statements about being

Table 4.5

Reasons For Tabloid Television Genre To Stay Around

Statement (f)	Survey Respondents						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/R	(N=)
"If the tabloid television genre stays around, it will be because it's entertaining."	7%	41%	24%	9%	3%	16%	(73)
"If the tabloid television genre lasts, it will be because it's interesting."	10%	26%	28%	16%	5%	15%	(73)
"If the tabloid television genre lasts, it will be because of the re-enactments of the murders, rescues, etc."	5%	22%	33%	19%	8%	13%	(74)
"If the tabloid television genre stays around, it will be because of the re-enactments of the murders, rescues, etc."	5%	19%	41%	16%	3%	16%	(72)

(f) The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree.)

Table 4.6

Elements That Will Stay If Genre Doesn't Last

Statement (g)	Survey Respondents						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/R	(N=)
"I feel that the mystery elements of these shows will hang around even if the tabloid television genre doesn't last."	1%	38%	35%	10%	1%	15%	(74)
"If the tabloid television genre doesn't last, I feel that the personal elements of the shows will hang around."	1%	28%	40%	17%	2%	12%	(76)
"If the tabloid television genre doesn't last, I feel that the shock element will hang around."	9%	27%	42%	10%	1%	11%	(77)
"I feel that the interacting (with viewing audience) element will hang around even if the tabloid television genre doesn't last."	7%	29%	36%	9%	0%	19%	(70)

(g) The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Table 4.7

Attitudes Toward Sensational Language Used On Tabloid Television

Statement (h)	Survey Respondents						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/R	(N=)
"Sensational language on tabloid television programs enhance the programs."	5%	17%	36%	21%	8%	13%	(75)
"The sensational language on tabloid television programs is much too graphic."	3%	13%	43%	23%	3%	15%	(74)
"The sensational language on tabloid television programs pique my curiosity."	5%	21%	37%	21%	3%	13%	(75)
"The sensational language on tabloid television programs make them more entertaining."	3%	10%	41%	21%	8%	17%	(75)
"I don't like the sensational language used on tabloid television programs."	9%	21%	48%	6%	0%	16%	(72)

(h) The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

teased with the promise of a sensational story then being given less (see Table 4.8).

Re-enactments

FG--When asked how they felt about the re-enactments on tabloid television programs, the majority of focus group participants felt that it made the shows more "interesting." Other comments were that the re-enactments "allow(s) for more audience involvement," by playing on your emotions "allow(s) you to be sensitive," that the visuals "make(s) (the programs) more interesting," and give you "more of an idea of what's going on." The only negative comment was that sometimes the programs take the re-enactments to the extreme, making them less appealing to the viewer.

S--As the results of this survey show, re-enactments are an important part of the tabloid television genre. Almost equal numbers of respondents agreed to positive statements regarding re-enactments (Table 4.9) and disagreed to the negative statement: "The use of re-enactments on tabloid television programs make them less interesting."

Conflicts/Violence

FG--When focus group participants were asked how they felt about the physical violence on tabloid television programming, the overall opinion was that it was used as a "hook" for ratings purposes or to get more people to watch the programs. However, no focus group participant made to negative statements about the violence. Generally, the attitude towards conflict, as given by focus group participants, was divided between both positive and negative responses. Positive responses included: "adds sensitivity," "interesting (to see) how far they will go" and the "conflicts make the shows." Negative responses, regarding conflicts included: "(The) verbal (conflicts) make(s) me mad," "take away from the

Table 4.8

Attitudes Toward Teases On Tabloid Television Programming

Statement (i)	Survey Respondents						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/R	(N=)
"When tabloid television programs tease me with the promise of a sensational story, then deliver less, I feel disappointed."	7%	27%	31%	10%	7%	18%	(71)
"I feel angry when tabloid television programs tease me with the promise of a sensational story, then deliver less."	2%	22%	38%	16%	5%	17%	(72)
"When tabloid television programs tease me with the promise of a sensational story then deliver less, I really don't care."	10%	26%	33%	14%	2%	15%	(73)
"I feel cheated when tabloid television programs promise a sensational story and deliver less."	2%	19%	40%	19%	3%	17%	(71)
"I like it when tabloid television programs promise a sensational story, then deliver less."	3%	5%	36%	30%	8%	18%	(71)

Table 4.8 (continued)

"I feel that my time was wasted when tabloid television programs promise a sensational story and deliver less."	8%	17%	37%	16%	2%	20%	(70)

(i) The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Table 4.9

Attitudes Toward Re-enactments On Tabloid Television

Statement (j)	Survey Respondents						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/R	(N=)
"The re-enactments on tabloid television programs make them more realistic."	12%	37%	21%	13%	5%	12%	(75)
"I feel that the use of re-enactments allow for audience involvement."	3%	36%	29%	15%	2%	15%	(74)
"The use of re-enactments on tabloid television programs enhance the programs."	14%	33%	24%	9%	6%	14%	(74)
"The use of re-enactments on tabloid television programs make them less interesting."	2%	9%	26%	40%	6%	17%	(71)

(j) The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

show--distracting (makes me) loose focus," and on the subgenre of tabloid television talk shows:" (There is) no reason for it." Other responses included observations such as "Reporters write conflicts(s) for the camera" and "Conflicts don't faze me, (because I) see them so much in television."

S--Although 43% of survey respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to "The conflicts on tabloid television programs make me mad" and 45% neither agreed nor disagreed to "The conflicts on tabloid television take away from the enjoyment of tabloid television programs" (as seen in Table 4.10), an almost equal percentage of respondents (43%) agreed that the conflicts add to the programs.

As seen in Table 4.11, the highest percentage of survey respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with statements which pertained to violence on tabloid television programs.

Hosts

FG--When focus group participants were asked how they felt about tabloid television hosts, the most common response was that they (hosts) "add" to the programs. Some participants even specified the hosts of "America's Most Wanted" and "Unsolved Mysteries" as adding the most to the programs that they host. In addition, focus group participants expressed that some hosts may add to tabloid television programs, while others may not be important to the enjoyment of the show. In fact, it was stated by one focus group participant and agreed upon by others that "Geraldo" takes away from the enjoyment of his program because "he imposes his opinion too much." Also, some focus group participants felt that rather than the appeal of the host dictating whether or not you like the program, perhaps it was the "content of the program (which) dictates whether or not you like the host."

S--According to this survey (see Table 4.12), a high percentage of survey respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to statements

Table 4.10

Attitudes Toward Conflicts On Tabloid Television

Statement (k)	Survey Respondents						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/R	(N=)
"The conflicts on tabloid television programs add to the programs."	7%	43%	24%	7%	6%	13%	(75)
"The conflicts on tabloid television programs make me mad."	5%	15%	43%	24%	1%	12%	(76)
"The conflicts on tabloid television make the programs less interesting."	6%	6%	38%	30%	6%	14%	(74)
"The conflicts on tabloid television take away from the enjoyment of tabloid television programs."	2%	7%	45%	26%	5%	15%	(73)
"The conflicts on tabloid television programs add sensitivity to the program."	6%	24%	28%	14%	12%	16%	(72)

(k) The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Table 4.11

Attitudes Toward Physical Violence On Tabloid Television Programs

Statement (1)	Survey Respondents						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/R	(N=)
"The violence on tabloid television is unnecessary."	7%	19%	44%	26%	0%	4%	(82)
"The violence on tabloid television hooks people into watching it."	7%	26%	27%	23%	3%	14%	(76)
"I feel that there is too much violence on tabloid television."	5%	20%	38%	24%	1%	12%	(76)
"I feel that there is not enough violence on tabloid television."	3%	7%	30%	20%	27%	13%	(75)

(1) The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Table 4.12

Attitudes Toward Hosts Of Tabloid Television Programs

Statement (m)	Survey Respondents						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/R	(N=)
"I feel that the hosts of tabloid television programs add to the programs."	12%	24%	31%	17%	3%	13%	(76)
"The hosts of tabloid television programs impose their opinions too much."	10%	17%	42%	14%	1%	16%	(73)
"The hosts of tabloid television programs bring out important information that may otherwise not be touched upon."	5%	24%	28%	17%	12%	14%	(74)

(m) The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

pertaining to respondents' attitudes toward the hosts of tabloid television programs. Regarding attitudes toward the hosts, the highest percentage neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement "the hosts of tabloid television programs impose their opinions too much" (42% or 36).

Acknowledgement of Tabloid Television Viewing to Others/ Others' Opinion of Tabloid Television Programming

FG--When asked if they (focus group subjects) talked about what they saw on tabloid television programs with their friends, the overall response was "yes" although one interesting response was "(I talk about the) information I got, but I don't tell the title of the show." Another response was "(I) don't make an effort to do it," and another was "no" when asked if they discussed tabloid television with their friends.

When respondents were asked if anyone ever kidded them about watching tabloid television programming, the majority said "yes." And when asked how they responded to being kidded for watching tabloid television, responses were "by laughing it off."

S--Of those who responded to the survey, 49% (42) said that they talk about what they see on tabloid television with their friends, while 31% (27) said that they did not talk about what they see on tabloid television with their friends. Twenty percent (17) chose not to respond to this question.

When asked what their friends thought of tabloid television, responses ranged from "(My) friends think the shows are stupid" to "They either like it or they don't." In addition, "not many of my friends watch it."

When survey respondents were asked "If you watch tabloid television, does anyone ever kid you about watching it?," over half or 62% (53) stated no. Fourteen percent (12) stated yes and 24% or 21 chose not to respond to this question.

Table 4.13 shows no response by respondents towards others who kid him/her about viewing the genre. Survey results show no substantial feedback from the viewer to others who may perhaps make him/her feel "uncomfortable" about the genre.

Although of four statements which addressed "friends' attitudes toward tabloid television," the lowest percentage of respondents (see Table 4.14) stated that their friends liked the Table genre, a higher percentage (36% or 31) of respondents disagreed to the statement. "I don't have any friends who watch tabloid television." A similar percentage, 44% (38) of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement that "My friends think that tabloid television shows are stupid" while 50% (43) also neither agreed nor disagreed that "My friends think that tabloid television shows are great."

Summary

The results of the focus group discussions and follow-up survey show that although the tabloid television genre was hard to define by respondents, they still watch. Whether for reasons of seeing someone that they know, because they find the genre interesting, or to relieve boredom, the majority said that they would watch the genre again--and that it was here to stay--due to the entertainment factor that it offers them. In addition, it appears that if the genre doesn't last, the mystery element would.

Although the results show that important information is learned from the tabloid television genre by the viewer, the viewer has a difficult time in accessing exactly "what" is learned. However, results indicate that the tabloid television viewer still sees his/her source of believable information as network news.

Of the three main components which differentiate the tabloid television genre from other television genres--sensationalism, re-enactments and conflict, the re-enactments were what respondents

4.13

Responses To Being Kidded About Watching Tabloid Television

Statement (n)	Survey Respondents						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/R	(N=)
"If people kid me about watching tabloid television programs, I respond by laughing it off."	1%	17%	57%	9%	1%	15%	(74)
"If people kid me about watching tabloid television programs, I respond by going into more detail about the tabloid television genre."	0%	14%	41%	23%	7%	15%	(73)
"If people kid me about watching tabloid television programs, I usually have no response."	3%	21%	40%	15%	2%	19%	(70)

(n) The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Table 4.14

Respondent's Friends' Attitudes Toward Tabloid Television

Statement (o)	Survey Respondents						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/R	(N=)
"My friends like tabloid television shows."	2%	27%	44%	9%	7%	11%	(77)
"My friends think that tabloid television shows are stupid."	5%	17%	44%	20%	2%	12%	(76)
"My friends think that tabloid television shows are great."	0%	14%	50%	17%	6%	13%	(75)
"I don't have any friends who watch tabloid television."	3%	8%	31%	36%	5%	17%	(72)

(o) The scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

were the most interested in, and most dependent upon to make them feel involved in the tabloid television programs.

It also appears that though the hosts of these programs take a secondary role to the content of the tabloid television programs, they do not define whether tabloid television programs are liked or disliked by the viewers, but are instead used to complement the program content.

The results indicate that although viewers of this genre may have friends who like or dislike the genre, and that viewers may be kidded about watching the genre, they still watch.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

The largest percentage of respondents to the survey showed no opinion on many of the elements that make up the tabloid television genre, elements such as sensational language, conflicts, violence and hosts. The lack of response on these elements may be due to the following reasons.

First, the demographics of this study used college-aged respondents, who tend to have other things on their minds, such as grades, peer pressure, interacting with others, etc. With the exception of the daytime soap opera genre, college students may be too "busy" to actively select programming from this genre. Second, perhaps the participants of this study found it difficult to admit to enjoying watching what is deemed socially unacceptable as derived from focus group participants. And third, people may just be use to the genre, so used to it, in fact, that the elements which make up the genre are no longer given the attention by the viewers that they once had.

Although a large percentage of respondents showed no opinion on many of the elements of the tabloid television genre there is one element associated with the genre which was found to interest them--re-enactments. Re-enactments are found to be the element that these respondents were most interested in and most dependent upon for the enjoyment of the tabloid television programs. This could be due to the gratifications they receive from them, such as the curiosity of wanting to "peep" into the lives of other people. In addition, perhaps the re-enactments gave the participants a sense of security in knowing that it didn't happen to them or that it is all

right to see it happen to someone on television, because they are safe at home.

Although respondents could not pinpoint exactly what they learned from tabloid television, a large percentage felt that they did learn something. Perhaps this suggests subliminal information is obtained from the genre by respondents, or that respondents found it hard to distinguish information from entertainment when viewing this genre.

It was found that tabloid television program hosts are not an important factor in the enjoyment of the genre by many of those surveyed and that it may be the content of the program which dictates whether or not the respondent liked the host.

Perhaps the elements of sensationalism, re-enactments, conflicts/violence that are associated with the tabloid television genre mean that in order to maintain viewer gratification from this genre in the future of tabloid television the intensity of these elements may have to increase. In addition, these elements may have to expand into other sub-genres in order to secure viewer appeal in the future of tabloid television.

The results of this study tell us that the surveyed audience for tabloid television is not selective in their exposure to the genre, and that in order for this genre to appeal to them, they have to feel a certain participation in it: hence, re-enactments. Also, these results tell us that perhaps the surveyed audience for tabloid television doesn't watch the genre in order to focus on important information that they may see on it, but instead for the entertainment the genre provides them with.

It is the opinion of this researcher that in order to keep up with the changing trends in our society, i.e., cable, videocassette recorders, remote controls, etc., that the television medium must also change in form and content. This researcher feels that either the tabloid television genre (in part or in whole) will be a mainstay in the television medium's programming or the tabloid television genre will come and go, as other genre's have done in the past, i.e., musical television series, westerns, etc.

These findings suggest that perhaps both social and communications influences need not be ignored, but instead be used as a basis for better understanding the use of and gratifications received from a specific medium. In addition, these findings suggest that expectations about the gratifications received from the television medium should not be "assumed," but instead be consequent upon viewer reaction of the genres on that medium.

The limitations of this study are: participants who had not seen all of the tabloid television programs discussed in the focus group sessions; the use of small (8 participants total) focus groups for the study of this topic; and the use of college students for the focus group discussions and follow-up survey. The results, therefore may be different for the general population.

Recommendations

It is highly recommended that further research be conducted on the topic of tabloid television programming. This study has attempted to give an overall picture of what the tabloid television viewer likes/dislikes about the genre. However, the researcher feels that this study has merely touched on specific areas of tabloid television programming content and viewers' attitudes towards them.

Due to the limitation of the instrument which used complex questions and simple measurements, some areas (i.e., teases on tabloid television programming and attitudes toward violence on tabloid television) produced unusual results. It is recommended that further research be conducted in these areas. In addition, further research should be conducted in the "gray" areas found in this study, areas such as: What factors contributed to this genre being described, by the majority of participants/respondents, as either a combination of both "news and entertainment" or as strictly "entertainment," and not as only "news?" What specific information is learned from this genre? Why, out of the three elements most

associated with this genre (sensationalism, re-enactments and conflicts/violence) did viewers most respond to and show most interest in re-enactments?

In addition, it would be interesting to further research women's roles in tabloid television programming content (i.e., how stories portray women--as strong, weak, always as victims, etc.). Also, it is recommended that other demographics be used to further research this topic.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

The Appeal of Tabloid Television To Its Viewers:
Focus Group Discussions/Questionnaire Survey

(focus group consent form)

The purpose of this study is to determine what viewers of tabloid television like/dislike about the genre. The focus group discussion will last approximately 1 1/2 hours per day, for three consecutive days. During those periods, you will be shown the openings of three tabloid television programs (day 1: "A Current Affair;" day 2: "Geraldo;" and day 3: "Unsolved Mysteries;") and will be asked to comment on each.

This study will help determine specific reasons why viewers of tabloid television programming watch this genre. Although the study may have no direct benefits to you at this time, the results may well justify what types of television programs you may see in the future. There are no known risks to this procedure.

Your identity will be kept confidential. Only the investigator will have access to the audio tape, which will be stored at her home. As soon as the information has been transcribed, and the results compiled, the audio tape will be destroyed. During the focus group discussions, no last names will be used, to protect your identity.

If you have any questions about the research, either now or later, please contact Phyllis R. Hyman, 7700 Gleason Rd. Apt. 21A, Knoxville, Tennessee 37919, or call wk.- (615) 971-1402 hm.- (615) 691-6316. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate. You may withdraw at any time during the focus group discussions without penalty.

****

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

_____ _____
Name Date

_____
Signature

Appendix B

The Appeal Of Tabloid Television To Its Viewers:
Focus Group Discussions/Questionnaire Survey

(focus group questions)

1. How much television do you watch on an average day? (number of hours)

2. When do you usually watch?

   nights ____
   afternoons ____
   mornings ____

3. What setting? For example: while sewing, while washing dishes, with family members.

4. Do you enjoy watching television (briefly explain)?

5. Why do you watch television? Fox example: for information, for companionship, for entertainment.

6. Do you read newspapers or magazines? Which ones do you read regularly? (If answer is tabloid, "Why do you read _____?").

7. What are your favorite shows?

   --if tabloid (why do you enjoy?)
   --if not tabloid (prompt with names of shows, ask if those are watched regularly)

8. Why do you watch this program? (rely on follow-ups at this point)

   --why is it _____ to you?
   --how is it _____ to you?

9. How would you describe (program)? Is it news or entertainment?

10. How do you feel about the physical violence on these shows?

11. How do you feel about the host of this show?

    --do you feel he knows what he is talking about? How?
    --do you feel he is honest? Why?
    --do you feel he imposes his opinion too much? Why?

Appendix B (continued)

12. How do you feel about the way they tease you with a promise of a sensational story, then deliver less?

13. How do you feel about the sensational language used on this show (either by the host, reporter, victim, or assailant)?

14. How do you feel about the use of re-enactments used on this show?

15. How do you feel about the conflicts on this program (either physical or verbal)?

16. Do you talk about what you see on the programs with your friends? What do they think about the program?

17. Which do you believe more--what you hear on (tabloid) program or network news?

18. Does anyone ever kid you about watching (tabloid program)? What do you respond?

19. How do you feel if you have to miss a show?

20. Do you learn important information on these shows that you don't hear anywhere else?

21. Will you watch tabloid television again? Why?

22. Do you think that this genre is here to stay? Why?

Appendix C

The Appeal Of Tabloid Television To Its Viewers:
Focus Group Discussions/Questionnaire Survey

My name is Phyllis Hyman and I am currently conducting research for my thesis entitled "The Appeal Of Tabloid Television To Its Viewers: Focus Group Discussions/Questionnaire Survey." The purpose of this study is to determine what people like/dislike about the genre. Although the study may have no direct benefits to you at this time, the results may help us to understand the appeal of television programs you may see in the future.

Tabloid television (for the purpose of this study) is defined as the presentation of information in a concise, visual and sensational manner, with the use of re-enactments of crimes, murders, rescues, etc. playing a major part within this genre. Examples include "America's Most Wanted,""Unsolved Mysteries,""A Current Affair,"" Rescue 911," and "Geraldo".

I would appreciate your time in filling out this survey, and would ask you <u>not</u> to write your name on this form. In addition, I would like to assure you that the information gathered from this survey will remain confidential.

If you have any questions about the research, either now or later, please contact me at 7700 Gleason Rd. Apt. 21A, Knoxville, TN 37919 or call (wk.) 971-1402 (hm.) 691-6316.

Thanks again for your time,
Phyllis Hyman

Appendix D

The Appeal Of Tabloid Television To Its Viewers:
Focus Group Discussions/Questionnaire Survey

1. Do you watch tabloid television programming (i.e., Geraldo, Unsolved Mysteries, America's Most Wanted)?

   ___yes
   ___no

2. If the answer is yes, how many total hours of tabloid television programming would you say you watched per week?

   _____number of hours

3. If the answer is no, why don't you watch tabloid television?

   _____

   _____

   _____

Please put a check mark by your response.

4. If you watch tabloid television, does anyone ever kid you about watching it?

   ___yes
   ___no

5. Will you watch tabloid television again?

   ___yes
   ___no
   ___maybe

6. How would you describe tabloid television?

   ___news
   ___entertainment
   ___a little bit of both

7. Do you talk about what you see on tabloid television with your friends?

   ___yes
   ___no

8. What do you believe more, what you hear on tabloid television programs, or what you hear on network news?

   ___network news
   ___tabloid television programs

Please circle the number of the response which best describes how you feel about the following statements.

strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

9.	I watch tabloid television because I find it interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The violence on tabloid television is unnecessary.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	The use of re-enactment on tabloid television programs make them less interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	The conflicts on tabloid television programs add to the programs.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I find that I learn important information on tabloid television programs that I don't hear anywhere else.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	When tabloid television programs tease me with the promise of a sensational story then deliver less, I feel disappointed.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Sensational language on tabloid television programs enhance the programs.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	My friends think that tabloid television shows are stupid.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	If people kid me about watching tabloid television programs, I usually have no response.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I don't get upset if I have to miss a tabloid television program.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	If I were to watch tabloid television again, it would be because it's entertaining.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	I think that the tabloid television genre is here to stay.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	If the tabloid television genre lasts, it will be because it's interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	If the tabloid television genre does'nt last, I feel that the shock element will hang around.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	I watch tabloid television because I find it different from other TV programs.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	The violence on tabloid television hooks people into watching it.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	I feel that the hosts of tabloid television programs add to the programs.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	The re-enactments on tabloid television programs make them more realistic.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	The conflicts on tabloid television programs make me mad.	1	2	3	4	5
28.	I learn nothing from tabloid television programs.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	I feel angry when tabloid television programs tease me with the promise of a sensational story, then deliver less.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D (continued)

30.	The sensational language on tabloid television programs is much too graphic.	1	2	3	4	5
31.	My friends think that tabloid television shows are great.	1	2	3	4	5
32.	If people kid me about watching tabloid television programs, I respond by laughing it off.	1	2	3	4	5
33.	If I have to miss a tabloid television program, I don't get upset.	1	2	3	4	5
34.	I will watch tabloid television again because it makes me laugh.	1	2	3	4	5
35.	I think that tabloid television will not be around much longer.	1	2	3	4	5
36.	If the tabloid television genre stays around, it will be because it's entertaining.	1	2	3	4	5
37.	If the tabloid television genre does'nt last, I feel that the personal element of the shows will hang around.	1	2	3	4	5
38.	I watch tabloid television because of my curiosity.	1	2	3	4	5
39.	I feel that there is too much violence on tabloid television.	1	2	3	4	5
40.	The hosts of tabloid television programs impose their opinions too much.	1	2	3	4	5
41.	I feel that the use of re-enactments on tabloid television programs allow for audience involvement.	1	2	3	4	5
42.	The conflicts on tabloid television make the programs less interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
43.	By watching tabloid television programs, I learn what <u>not</u> to do.	1	2	3	4	5
44.	When tabloid television programs tease me with the promise of a sensational story then deliver less, I really don't care.	1	2	3	4	5
45.	The sensational language on tabloid television programs pique my curiosity.	1	2	3	4	5
46.	My friends like tabloid television shows.	1	2	3	4	5
47.	If people kid me about watching tabloid television programs, I respond by going into more detail about the tabloid television program.	1	2	3	4	5
48.	I really get upset if I have to miss a tabloid television show.	1	2	3	4	5
49.	I will watch tabloid television again, because I might see a person that I know.	1	2	3	4	5
50.	I think that certain aspects of the tabloid television genre will hang around.	1	2	3	4	5
51.	If the tabloid television genre lasts, it will be because of the re-enactments of the murders, rescues, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
52.	I feel that the mystery elements of these shows will hang around even if the tabloid television genre doesn't last.	1	2	3	4	5
53.	I watch tabloid television because of its sensationalism.	1	2	3	4	5
54.	I feel that there is not enough violence on tabloid television.	1	2	3	4	5
55.	The hosts of tabloid television programs bring out important information that may otherwise not be touched upon.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D (continued)

56.	The use of re-enactments on tabloid television programs enhance the programs.	1	2	3	4	5
57.	The conflicts on tabloid television take away from the enjoyment of tabloid television programs.	1	2	3	4	5
58.	Tabloid television programs give me food for thought.	1	2	3	4	5
59.	I feel cheated when tabloid television programs promise a sensational story and deliver less.	1	2	3	4	5
60.	The sensational language on tabloid television programs make them more entertaining.	1	2	3	4	5
61.	I don't have any friends who watch tabloid television.	1	2	3	4	5
62.	If I were to watch tabloid television again, it would be because of the "gossip" aspect of these shows.	1	2	3	4	5
63.	If tabloid television stays around, it will be because of the re-enactments of the murders, rescues, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
64.	I feel that the interacting (with viewing audience) element will hang around even if the tabloid television genre doesn't last.	1	2	3	4	5
65.	I watch tabloid television to relieve boredom.	1	2	3	4	5
66.	The hosts of tabloid television programs bring out important information that may otherwise not be touched upon.	1	2	3	4	5
67.	The conflicts on tabloid television programs add sensitivity to the programs.	1	2	3	4	5
68.	I think tabloid television programs are basically for people who like to gossip.	1	2	3	4	5
69.	I like it when tabloid television programs promise a sensational story, then deliver less.	1	2	3	4	5
70.	I don't like the sensational language used on tabloid television programs.	1	2	3	4	5
71.	I will watch tabloid television again, in order to get a good cry.	1	2	3	4	5
72.	I watch tabloid television because of the reality aspect of the genre.	1	2	3	4	5
73.	I feel that my time was wasted, when tabloid television programs promise a sensational story and deliver less.	1	2	3	4	5
74.	I watch tabloid television because there's nothing else on TV interesting to watch.	1	2	3	4	5

Demographic information:

75. Age:

17-20___
21-24___
25-28___
29-32___
33-36___
37-40___
41-Over___

76. Gender:

Male___
Female___

77. Year in school:

Freshman___
Sophomore___
Junior___
Senior___
Graduate___

78. Major:

VITA

Phyllis Roxel Hyman was born in Knoxville, Tennessee on July 4, 1963. She attended Chilhowee Elementary School and graduated from Holston High School in Knoxville, in June 1981. The following September, she entered Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland and in May, 1986 she received the degree of Bachelor of Science in Telecommunications. She entered the University of Tennessee in 1988 and in August 1991 received a Master of Science degree in Communications.

She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., New Prospect Craft Center's Board of Directors (NPCC) and the Knoxville News-Sentinel's Media Coalition Against Drug and Alcohol Abuse Committee (1990-1991). In addition, she served as Graduate Assistant for the University of Tennessee's (Knoxville) Chapter of the Association of Black Communicators (ABC) (1989-1990), and was on the board of Knoxville's first African-American Appalachian Arts Exposition (AAAAE) (1990).

Her awards include the Larry Dean Communications Scholarship Fund Award for graduate study in Communications (1986), the Morgan State University WEAA-FM Award in recognition of outstanding service to WEAA Radio Station (1986) and the Association of Black Communicators (ABC) Service Award, University of Tennessee Chapter (Knoxville) (1990).

Her professional career, thus far, includes work in radio, television, print journalism and public relations.