



12-2008

Backpack Journalism in Television Newsgathering: Audience Perceptions of Quality

Charles Wesley Gee

University of Tennessee - Knoxville

Recommended Citation

Gee, Charles Wesley, "Backpack Journalism in Television Newsgathering: Audience Perceptions of Quality." PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2008.

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Charles Wesley Gee entitled "Backpack Journalism in Television Newsgathering: Audience Perceptions of Quality." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Communication and Information.

Norman R. Swan, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Catherine Luther, Robert Legg, Edward Counts

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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**Backpack Journalism in Television Newsgathering:
Audience Perceptions of Quality**

A Dissertation Presented for
the Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Charlie Gee
December 2008

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my major professor, Dr. Sam Swan, for his counsel and support during this academic journey. I am greatly indebted to him for his interest and backing of the dissertation, as well as all of my graduate work. Without his perseverance and guidance, I would not have finished the program. I would like to thank the other members of my committee, Dr. Catherine Luther, Dr. Bob Legg, Dr. Ed Counts, and Dr. Barbara Kaye for their feedback, suggestions, and support to this undertaking.

I will also like to thank my parents, grandmother, and siblings for their understanding and support during this academic pursuance. Without their patience and encouragement, this task would not have been completed. They have taught me to finish what was started and I feel that I did not let them down.

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues for their inspirational discussions during this process. When the chips were down, they were there to uplift my spirits.

Thank you.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore preferences by younger news audiences of backpack journalism in local television news. Local television news has to compete with Internet and other media to attract viewers. The theoretical foundation for this study, uses and gratifications, proposes audience members will actively seek news information using television as a primary source.

The focus of the study centered around technology's influence on television newsgathering techniques and if the techniques delineated the quality of journalistic presentation. Four hundred and ninety three college students were surveyed about their media use, news gratification, and preferences of production quality criteria associated with news stories produced by traditional two person crews and backpack journalists. Respondents were shown eight randomly selected videotaped news stories from a television market that employed both traditional two person news crews and backpack journalists. Four stories were chosen by each newsgathering method. Each news story was judged on perceptions of pacing, camera composition, lighting, voice narration, interviews selected, and script production.

Findings suggested that younger audience members indicated a preference toward newsgathering methods by traditional news crews rather than backpack journalists. Anecdotal evidence suggests a shift in the newsgathering paradigm is currently taking place in the local television news. However, the results of this study propose the audience acceptance of this newsgathering technique is slow to be accepted by the younger news audience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Chapter 1	1
Introduction	1
History of Newsgathering	3
Technology	3
News Correspondent	8
Backpack Journalism	11
BPJ Defined	11
Proponents	12
Critics	16
Statement of the Problem	18
Definition of Problem	19
Purpose of Study	20
Significance of the Study	22
Organization of Chapters	25
Chapter 2	26
Introduction	26
Uses and Gratifications	26
Uses and Gratifications with College Students	33
Newsgathering	39
Research on ENG Technology	39
Economics of Newsgathering Technology	50
Measuring Quality	60
Measuring Perception of Quality	60
Research on Audiences	68
Summary of Most Relevant Studies	74
Hypotheses and Research Questions	77
Chapter 3	79
Research Design	79
Population and Sample	81
The Stimuli	83
Questionnaire Construction	85
Procedures	87
Reliability	88
Statistical Analysis	89
Chapter 4	90
Sample Demographics	90
Gratifications from Television News	96
Research Questions	98
Open-Ended Question Data Analysis	104

Respondent Relevancy.....	106
News Judgment.....	107
Story Uniqueness	108
Technical Presentation.....	109
Summary of Key Findings.....	111
Chapter 5.....	118
Summary.....	118
Conclusions.....	122
Limitations	127
Implications.....	129
Implications for TV News Departments.....	130
Implications for Education.....	133
Future Research	135
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	138
APPENDIX.....	155

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 1 News Experience	92
Table 2 Amount of Watching TV News	93
Table 3 Prior Exposure/News Watching.....	94
Table 4 Media Usage	95
Table 5 Reasons to Watch.....	98
Table 6 Quality of Production Values Comparison.....	103
Table 7 News Experience	103
Table 8 Influence of Previous News Experience.....	104
Table 9 Order of Presentation.....	105

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

Television news delivery and acceptance have depended on the use of visuals for many years. Capturing the image is essential to visual storytelling and reporting. Capitalizing on the miniaturization of equipment, television newsrooms have been able to reduce the number of personnel devoted to newsgathering. Without the constraints of bulky equipment, working alone has become a physically practical alternative for newsgathering and presentation.

This phenomenon has promoted the idea of the backpack journalist (BPJ), who can carry all of the needed tools for television newsgathering in a single backpack. This jack-of-all-trades journalist, armed with a laptop, microphone, and a small shoulder mounted camera weighing less than 13 pounds, has everything needed to create a television news report.

Advancements in computer and camera technologies, and editing software have permitted journalists to gather information and transmit it via the Internet, but such advancements have also cut jobs at some stations and may affect news content. For example, positions held by photographers and editors may be eliminated when newsrooms shift to backpack journalists. Traditional news crews at local news stations usually consist of two person teams comprised of a photographer and a reporter. The photographer's job duties include shooting and editing video while the reporter writes

and voices the story. BPJs may be called upon to shoot, report, voice, and edit stories without assistance. The BPJ must be trained not as a media specialist but as a media generalist. This technological movement is causing a gradual paradigm shift in newsgathering and is changing TV news. The miniaturization of equipment gives an ever-smaller number of news gathers greater and greater ability to collect and disseminate information on their own. These shifts in the methods of newsgathering have implications for the profession including profound changes in the character of newsroom economics; the possibility of job elimination and consolidation; the general quality of news broadcasts; and the education (or retraining) of television broadcast journalists.

Some critics contend (Prato, 1999; McLean, 2005) that combining skill sets may jeopardize the quality of journalist presentation. More importantly, they conjecture that audiences who seek television news content may perceive differences in the quality of newsgathering and presentation.

This study explores the question of whether the general audience, especially young adults who are Internet savvy, will be able to tell differences between TV news stories produced by media generalists (BPJ) and those produced by media specialists (reporter/photographer teams).

History of Newsgathering

Technology

The idea of the lone journalist, sometimes called one-man-band (OMB) style of newsgathering, is rooted in the early days of news film. The use of 16-millimeter film in newsgathering was adopted from the motion picture industry (Yoakum & Cremer, 1989). Film techniques that were first adapted for use on the battlefields of World War One (Medoff, Fink, & Tanquary, 2007, p. 4) were still applied to the early newscasts of the 1950's. The television industry worked hard to retrain people with a background in film to use the close-up medium of television visuals. As sales of television sets increased, a greater demand for news information arose. And the newsreel was eventually replaced by newer newsgathering techniques. Broadcasting companies, needing programming for the new medium of television, sought portable equipment. To cover events, large cameras requiring tripods were replaced by smaller, hand-held cameras that recorded sound (e.g. Cinema Products, CP-16). Those new technologies were showcased during coverage of the Kennedy assassination in November 1963. That event promoted newsgathering, and newscasts were expanded from 15 to 30 minutes to meet the demand (Utley, 1998, p. 85).

In 1967, Sony introduced the DV-2400 known as the "Video Rover," the first portable videotape recorder which allowed a single individual to gather both audio/video footage simultaneously (Shapiro, 2002); technology permitted the operator to take ownership of multiple aspects of video production, and lead to the consolidation of formerly clearly defined professional roles. Considered very bulky and heavy, the DV-

2400 allowed one person to carry a videotape record deck on his shoulders or back connected to a camera. Heavy as it was, it required a strong back, but it was portable, and thus helped usher in electronic newsgathering (ENG) technology. With Sony's invention, a path was cleared for today's solo backpack journalist.

In 1971, the invention of Sony's U-matic $\frac{3}{4}$ inch videotape in 1971 (U.S. Patent # 3735939) began to replace film at most television news stations. Additional personnel were needed to carry the new electronic equipment, which included a separate record deck from the camera, which weighed up to 80 pounds (e.g. Ikegami HL-35; Medoff, Fink, & Tanquary, 2007). Two-person teams became common. Open reels gave way to enclosed self-threading videocassette cartridges the size of a thick, medium-sized book.

According to Farhi (2002), ENG made its U.S. debut on May 17th, 1974, when the Los Angeles police got into a shootout with members of the Symbionese Liberation Army. Local television station KNXT-TV was able to broadcast the event live to the Southern California audience as well as to the rest of the country. This event changed the way the audience expected their news coverage to be delivered and altered the presentational style of the news. In 1973, only five stations had ENG capability. By the end of the decade, that number swelled to 550, nearly 86% of the stations in the U.S. During the transition from film to ENG, technological improvements dramatically reduced the number of persons needed to produce a visual story. Film required the efforts of at least a half-dozen people, including film processors and editors, camerapersons, and sound and lighting technicians (Farhi, 2002). ENG required approximately half that number to capture the moment on cheaper, reusable videotape.

This kind of newsgathering also required much less technological expertise and skill, so the demand for experienced craftsmen fell.

In 1975, the introduction of the beta tape format to home recordings in 1975 ushered in the one piece camcorder units that became common in the early 1980's (Ozmun, 1997), replacing the cumbersome ¾ inch U-matic ENG cameras. The beta camcorder weighed only about half as much as its predecessor. The new format cameras used charged coupling device (CCD) chips for improved picture quality, replacing the tubes found in older ENG equipment. The adoption of the camcorder paralleled the growth of sales of VHS camcorders within the consumer markets. Although still in use today in newsgathering, the beta format would eventually be replaced by smaller, lighter digitally-driven camcorders.

As ENG continued to gain in popularity, live reporting from events became a staple of television newscasts. Another technological breakthrough in ENG came in the late 1970's; the use of microwave as a tool to take the viewer live to a scene (Farhi, 2002; Tuggle, 2001). However, microwave technology was limited to line of sight in which the signal could be blocked by terrestrial obstacles such as mountains, building, or trees. Satellite newsgathering (SNG) technology became more prevalent in newsgathering in the mid-1980's, unlike microwave, SNG was not plagued by difficulties of transmitting past terrestrial obstacles or over distance. As satellite transponder space became more readily available and more economical, news stations realized that the long-term benefits of SNG outweighed the costs.

With ENG, news reporters were able to take the audience directly to the scene of events. This sense of immediacy added value to the stations' image and branding, thus

allowing them to turn news into a profitable venture. The benefits of adopting ENG technology were speed, editing flexibility, mobility, and quality (Yoakum & Cremer, 1989, p. 8). Videotape could be cut immediately after being shot. Additional audio and visual effects could be added to provide greater depth and clarity to the story, allowing greater flexibility during the editing process. With the invention of microwave and satellite delivery, video could be sent over greater and greater distances. All these developments added breadth and depth along with mobility to news coverage. Finally, ENG improved the quality of news images. Besides better quality control, videotape offered brighter and crisper pictures, providing a depth and richness that film could not offer. “No technology in the history of television had caught on so suddenly,” wrote Craig Allen (cf Farhi, 2002, p.86).

As Greenfield (1993) points out, “speed is always the essence of news gathering,” (p. 70). “The role of technology in news is to provide the tools needed to (1) collect and gather news, (2) categorize it and (3) make it available as quickly as possible,” commented Barnathan (1993, p. 78). Technology has granted news workers the ability to create more content with faster rates of production at lower costs.

Murrie (1998) says newsgathering technology has changed the way information is presented to the audience. During the days of film, a correspondent had days to ponder and reflect upon an event before presenting to the masses. With the availability of videotape, the time available for reflection became dramatically shorter. Former ABC correspondent Ted Koppel commented on how technology forced the reporters to alter their styles of presentation, “You write differently when you know that your piece won’t

make air for another day or two. These days...the technological tail is wagging the editorial dog,” (Murrie, 1998, p. 98).

Murrie (1998) noted during the first few years of ENG, the quality of news reportage suffered. But with growing acceptance and user proficiency, ENG became the standard of newsgathering technique and offered a higher quality of images than film. ENG video also had an added benefit of eliminating the delay of waiting for film processing by 45 minutes.

Technologies such as ENG allowed news gatherers to be in more places, covering a multitude of events. Tuggle and Huffman (2001) questioned whether the “technology itself, rather than news editorial judgment, is frequently what drives the news gathering process in television,” (p. 335; e.g. Rosenburg, 1993; Tuggle & Huffman, 1999).

By the mid-1980’s, satellite technology would surpass microwave capability in use (Smith, 1984; Davie & Lee, 1993; MacGregor, 1995). With the rise of satellite newsgathering (SNG) and what Murrie (1998) refers to a digital newsgathering (DNG), different skills were required of newsgathers. Correspondents had to learn new writing techniques and add technical skills to their resumes. However, Murrie (1998) suggests because these technologies shifted editorial control from the correspondent to a centralized location, those who gathered new in the field had a diminished role.

Farhi (2002) argues that by making it easier to shoot and edit information, and present the news faster with shorter story lengths, ENG contributed to a lack of “coherence and greater superficiality” (p. 29). Allen (2001) suggests the greater speed may have translated into greater sensationalism with a greater emphasis on crime-related stories, which are less complex and easier for viewers to understand. He notes that

audiences were able to tell a difference between the old and new technologies and forced station managers to adopt them.

News Correspondent

Once television broadcast journalism came into general acceptance in the early 1960's, the rise of the correspondent affected how information was gathered and presented to the television viewing audience. At first, television news adopted the style of radio reporting exemplified by Edward Murrow's reporting of the bombing of London during the Second World War. The correspondent was the eyes, ears and mouthpiece of the event, and relied on words, not images to make the events come alive for audiences. During the 1950's, television news reports primarily consisted of an anchorman reading written dispatches of government news from Washington and a few reports from overseas without the benefit of visuals. Local news presentation patterned itself after the network models. Bulky cameras limited the range of visual newsgathering by correspondents and support crews. The addition of film footage on evening newscasts provided contextual information that gave credence to television news as a preferred source over other mediums. By 1963, the Roper Poll was finding that Americans preferred television news over newspapers as their main source of information (Utley, 1998).

The twenty-year period from 1960 to 1980 was considered the glory days of the network correspondent (Foote, 1998). During this time frame, Foote notes, there was limited competition, and correspondents had greater independence to report content. A news anchor had to patch together a series of dispatches into a coherent newscast. Network management realized that news was a loss leader, but that it helped increase the

exposure of the network to the masses. Large budgets allowed a small army of support staff to accompany the field reporters, including camerapersons, audio technicians, and field producers. The reporters' job was to serve as the "face" of the report and lend credibility to the information.

The correspondent performed three functions as identified by Utley (1998). First, he—most correspondents were men—was the journalist covering the story. He also was the report's producer, responsible for deciding what visuals would accompany the narration. During the half-hour format, reports usually ran from two and a half to nearly five minutes. Later, reports were reduced to around one minutes and a half. As the storyteller, the correspondent's third role was to establish a sense of 'presence.' The correspondent's physical presence at the location of a story gave the report credibility. Reporters became widely known due to their many on-camera appearances, and thus were recognized by the viewing public. Writing during the heyday of network news, Goodkoop (1998) noted,

"The television reporter's primary function is to collect and to frame information into one to two stories or packages per day that will combine compelling visual and aural materials that will inform viewers while keeping them interested," (p.33).

Similarly, Yoakum and Cremer (1989) observed that reporters "work with two channels of information: words and pictures," and are responsible for "how to make words and pictures work together to tell a story," (p.10). Smith (1988) stated that reporters should have production and journalistic responsibilities, and were expected to help supervise shooting and editing of the video footage.

The second part of the traditional two-person newsgathering team was the photographer. Historically, this person was known as a cameraman the one who carries the camera, though Lindekugel (1994, p. 15) argues this term was gender biased. ENG¹ technology gave camerapersons new “journalistic responsibilities” (Yoakum & Cremer, 1989, p. 13). “The difference between a cameraman and a photographer is the difference between a cliché and a well-turned phrase,” commented Atkins and Willette (1965, p.11). Altheide (1976) used “cameraman” as a job title for the critical person who supplies the reporter’s angle through his “skill in filming and editing,” (p. 82). Lindekugel (1994), in his ethnographic study of photographers of a mid-sized television market, noted that the term “photojournalist”² was used by only one of three organizations in his research. The majority of his informants referred to themselves as “photographers,” (p. 10). Yoakum and Cremer (1989) say the photographer is “the key figure in visual news gathering. The visual facts and impressions he or she collects complement the words and information the reporters dig up,” (p.13).

Technologies such as electronic newsgathering and satellite newsgathering helped further diminish the role of the reporter in newsgathering. With the introduction of CNN in 1980 and the emergence of media consultants, newsgathering became a potential profit generator. CNN’s 24-hour news slot demonstrated news could be communicated to the masses on a tight budget and with limited personnel. ENG cameras were the essential tool for CNN’s innovations.

¹ Electronic News Gathering—“identified the equipment or process used ‘to report news events electronically {either live or on videotape} rather than on film’,” Davie & Lee, 1993, p.458, commenting on Rugg; Benjamin, 1993, counters that “*People* gathered the news, not electronics or cameras,” (p.77)

² Also identified by Yoakum & Cremer (1989); “photojournalist” elevates the position into equal footing with reporters/journalists as they believe the term is a “badge with honor,” (Lindekugel, p.13)

Backpack Journalism

BPJ Defined

Today, pagers, cell phones, blackberries and other technological devices that provide instant information are making traditional ways of information gathering via television broadcasting obsolete. With the invention of small digital video cameras and portable laptops with video editing software, there has been a resurgence of “one-man bands” semi-autonomous news workers with a mission to gather information in the form of broadcast news. One-man-bands (OMB) have been a source for news for small market television news departments and cable systems for many years. Those stations rely on OMB to accomplish multi-task journalism at a fraction of the cost of traditional news. Also known as “backpack journalists,” (BPJ) or video journalists (VJ) or solo journalists (sojo) are replacing traditional reporter-photographer news teams, these lone journalists say this method of newsgathering helps produce higher story counts while critics contend that it is a ploy to combine job responsibilities.

Though recent trade articles have touted the BPJ concept as a new idea born out of the advancements in technology, the concept of solo gathering of information and pictures is not new. Atkins and Willette (1965) referred to a combination “reporter-photographer” (p.14) as a person who

“Is the workhorse of most TV news operations. This is a man³ trained in both news and photography. He covers the story, supplying the facts and even writing the copy, as well as shooting the film,” (p.135).

Stone and Hinson (1974) noted the shared responsibilities of typical news stations where, “you may serve as reporter as well as photographer,” (p.16).

Walke (2003), speaking on the behalf of the National Association of Broadcasters, deemed the job requirements of BPJs⁴ as providing for “digital newsgathering ‘one-man-bands’ who today report, photograph, produce, edit, transmit story packages in digital versions to multiple distribution platforms,” (p. 3).

Frutkin (2006) says of the technology has allowed backpack journalists (BPJ) to use portable laptop computers with editing software “to send back their pieces from any Starbucks or Kinko’s equipped with a speedy Internet connection or wireless technology.” The rising availability of “point and shoot” hybrid cameras, known as “prosumer,” (a cross between professional and consumer grade) puts newsgathering technology in many hands. With technology pushing the industry, critics fear that the quality of news products may be cheapened.

Proponents

Griffiths (1998), who was trained as a videojournalist, explained the BPJ style of newsgathering as “a cheap way to make high-quality story-lead television,” (p. xiii). He agrees with Hickey (2002) and Walke’s (2003) explanation of the BPJ/VJ concept is,

³ Atkins and Willette noted that most field camera operators were male, although a few females did fill this position.

⁴ The report referred to BPJ as “VJs”—videojournalists.

“One person becomes a camera operator, sound operator, director, production assistant, scriptwriter, producer, and presenter,” (p.xiii).

Michael Rosenblum (2000), the self-proclaimed father of the VJ concept, claims producing television has been staggeringly expensive in the past. He said the BPJs allow the public and television stations the opportunity to procure broadcast quality video and audio for a fraction of the cost of traditional news. Conservatively, the cost of equipping a two-man crew ranges from approximately \$25,000 to \$40,000. With digital technology, these costs are reduced nearly 50 to 60 percent. Young Broadcasting (2007) estimates the costs of equipping a solo journalist to be approximately \$15,000. And with greater acceptance by society, Rosenblum asks why TV stations should maintain the traditional newsgathering model.

BPJ is being implemented in larger television markets to cope with the problem of shrinking audiences. New York One (NY1), a regional cable news outlet covering news in New York, has been using solo newsgatherers since 1992. The VJ concept is also being used in regional stations within the British Broadcasting Corporation, Belgian broadcasting, and some Dutch television stations (e.g. Meijer, 2003).

BPJs are now being used in both print and broadcast journalism. According to Holly Nielsen, Director of Gannett Video Enterprises, the Gannett Company, which owns 85 daily and 900 non-daily newspapers along with 23 television stations in the United States (Gannett, 2008) as of August 2007, Gannett had 261 cameras on the U.S. streets with 474 journalists trained in the BPJ concept. Gannett estimated that by the end of 2007, more than 800 would be trained, for service in all of their broadcast entities and 70

of their 76 newspapers (Nielsen, 2007). Nielsen further states that the BPJ, “is a news and sales initiative.”

Most news outlets embrace newer technology. However, many professionals in the newsgathering business are resistant to change. News photographers are trained to shoot and edit video, but when asked to take on additional responsibilities, many feel unequipped to write and voice news pieces. Young Broadcasting was the first in the country to convert two of their television newsrooms into video journalist crews, reducing their traditional news crews by half. One station, WKRN-TV in Nashville, which started with 32 BPJs, but through attrition, was left with only 13 BPJs. One news photographer cited burnout as his reason for leaving the station (Schwanbeck, 2006). Multi-tasking on a daily basis appears to take its toll on news personnel. Being solely responsible for the news content, personnel face competition from other stations and time constraints (Donsbach, 2004). Those that leave their jobs and sometimes the industry as well, take with them cultivated contacts with sources and knowledge of the geographic area. It takes time and financial resources to hire replacements and get them trained and up to speed on community issues.

In their Securities and Exchange Commission filing for 2006, Young Broadcasting (2007) suggests the move to BPJs will result in a more efficient use of resources and provide more content. “The cost of equipping a VJ is significantly less than equipping a three-person field crew.” The goal of local news stations is to brand the station’s local news franchise to increase revenue and broadcast cash flow, while strengthening audience loyalty. Their goal to achieve this is “principally through the quality of its local news programming and by targeting specific audience groups with

special programs and marketing events,” (Young, 2007). Under Young’s plan, the quality issue is related to technology and economics. Two of their stations, WKRN-TV in Nashville and KRON-TV in San Francisco, adopted the VJ/BPJ plan for all their newsroom personnel (Broadcast Engineering, 2005). General manager Mark Antonitis of the Young Broadcasting station, KRON-TV in San Francisco, which adopted the VJ concept in 2005 for all newsgathering personnel, insisted that technology is crucial to the quality of solo newsgathering.

“It should not be confused with ‘one-man-band,’ used for years by smaller markets and those stations focused on cutting costs. ‘I told our staff this was not a one-man-band. I used Enya, the recording artists as an example. She does all her own stuff because the technology allows her to do it,” (cf Warley, 2005).

It is worth noting, however, that their wholesale shift to BPJs has not improved their ratings (Smith, 2007).

Jane Stevens (2002), a freelance multimedia journalist, describes the VJ or BPJ as a jack-of-all-trades, master of none. She describes herself as, “becoming a master of multimedia, which is a new medium requiring new approaches and methods of storytelling.” Stevens notes that the traditional method of television newsgathering is a linear, one-way form of communication (e.g. Pavlik, 2000) that allows little feedback from the viewer. BPJ, with its ability to deliver information in a multi-platform setting, presents information in “a nonlinear format in which all of the information in the elements are non-redundant—a very different form of storytelling,” (Stevens, 2002). This establishes a two-way form of communication, whereby viewers can add photos, audio

clips, or commentary. The interactive capability may allow audience members to become more active in the news selection process.

“The technology has made journalism much more immediate and instantaneous,” said John Schidlovsky, director of the Pew Fellowship in International Journalism (cf Konrad, 2003). “These are the journalists of the future.” Armed with a small prosumer camera and laptop that is half the weight and 1/10 the cost of equipment of a normal network crew, Preston Mendenhall of MSNBC.com uses special satellite phones to transmit his streaming video, texts, and still pictures from Iraq (Konrad, 2003). Technology has allowed him greater mobility and flexibility than normal camera crew to report from the most remote places on earth.

Critics

Some detractors challenge the notion that new technologies are helping to improve the gathering and dissemination of TV news. They argue that though it has become easier to collect content, journalistic values may be compromised. To illustrate this problem, Benjamin (1993) points to the coverage of a Delta Airlines jet crash in Dallas in which events covered nearly simultaneously but information was disseminated without proper fact checking. “That the fact that there were pictures flying through the air from a multitude of sources did not guarantee good journalism,” (p.76). “Good pictures are good pictures...and good journalism is still good journalism,” observes Powell (1993, p.81). Although television is a visual medium, Benjamin (1993) asserts that the basics of writing should not be ignored. “I don’t care if they’re transmitting the stories by magic lap computers. If they can’t write, they can’t write—by satellite or by quill pen,” (p. 77).

The argument can be made that technology may be replacing the need for quality of written reports, since it offers instantaneous direct access to news content. However, technology can facilitate a rush to news judgment. Although the BPJ concept is designed to be character-centered storytelling, Schroeder (2001) sees it as more appropriate for human interest reporting than for issue stories. It may short-change audiences by offering “new heights of mediocrity,” (Potter, 2006).

Scholar and news critic Ben Bagdikian has chastised news organizations for stepping too far over the fine line between their mission as businesses and as public service providers. He called for an examination of news quality and its relationship to profitability in newsgathering. Bagdikian sees a need for a systematic study of whether, “high-quality news is more profitable than low-quality or mediocre performance,” (Bagdikian, 1974, p. 574).

Former Poynter Institute Ethics Fellow, Martha Stone (2002) applies similiar economic thinking to backpack journalism, suggesting that the BPJ is a “Jack of all trades, and master of none,” and a deliverer of mediocre journalism. She says, “In time, the message that quality comes from those journalists who practice a defined job, be it writer, videographer, photographer or editor, will be clear.”

Potter (2001) fears that as the BPJ concept creeps into medium and larger television markets, and even the network level, it is endangering two-person reporter photographer teams. “This is not about improving the visual quality or the journalism quality of the newscast,” said Hub Brown, communications department head at Syracuse University (cf French, 2006). “When you throw a camera in everyone’s hands in the shop, you devalue both videography and reporting.” Some television news directors say

the reporter/photographer teams contribute to richer stories with fewer mistakes. From this perspective, when news staff members go solo, the benefits of teamwork and collaboration are lost.

Konrad notes that some media organizations have shied away from the backpack journalism technology out of a concern for image quality. Other counters that even though the imagery provided by BPJs may not be what some critics call broadcast quality, it is better to have some images of an important event than no images at all. This may suggest that the public will accept lower than expected quality of images, as long as a certain other criteria are met.

Statement of the Problem

The implementation of the BPJ has raised concerns in the television newsgathering community. Some proponents have suggested this technique breathes new life into television storytelling. Critics have suggested the BPJ phenomenon has a hidden agenda as a cost saving measure. What may be fueling the controversy is the combining of skill sets, which may result in the presentation of an inferior quality of journalism. If audiences questioned the quality of the news, they are also likely to question the journalistic process and seek alternate channels of information.

It is unknown if the BPJ is a major contributor to the newsgathering process as a whole. Little research has been conducted on the phenomenon. Some research studies have suggested the technological innovations associated with BPJ have enhanced newsgathering, while others see technological innovations as problematic, facilitating a

newsgathering process that generates less substance and more analysis. Quality has been examined in academic literature, but from the perspective of the content producer. Little research exists that examines the audience's perceptions of quality.

Definition of Problem

It is the intent of this research study to explore the newsgathering techniques used by both BPJs and traditional two-person news crews. Previous literature has touched upon quality in news, however it may have failed to realize the importance of the technical elements found in the news package and their effect upon the audience. This study explores the technical criteria used in producing news packages and measure audiences' perceptions of quality. To achieve this, a survey of college age students were asked about their perceptions related to the quality of news.

College students were chosen as the demographic for this study because of their attachment to the virtual world and their relatively weaker dependence upon traditional media than other viewers have. Their opinions may influence future research and presentational styles of newsgathering. Studies in the past have suggested audiences are active seekers of information. A young demographic group such as students may seek gratification from information. Television news competes with the Internet in informational delivery. This presents a problem for television news programmers. With the proliferation of the Internet, are students still active television news consumers and why do reasons they watch news? Moreover, will this audience be able to specify their preferences regarding certain styles of newsgathering?

Purpose of Study

This study attempts to address three major concerns. First, there is a lack of research examining the quality of TV news packages as perceived by audience members. Few researchers have attempted to quantify (McQuail, et.al., 1972) perceptions of quality. Second, technology is affecting newsgathering and allowing the BPJ phenomenon to flourish. Third, with the influx of Internet technology, younger news consumers may be abandoning traditional informational means of television news and becoming passive news viewers. A secondary goal of this study is to address individuals' reactions to this change.

There is a dearth of academic research concerning video/backpack journalism. Most literature either cheerleading is housed within trade publications that promotes BPJ (e.g., French 2006; Rosenblum, 2000), or dismissively critical based on assumptions about the BPJ's poor quality and the economic motivations of news industry power blocs. Perceptions of poor quality are a by-product of the conversion from newsgathering specialists to newsgathering generalist.

There is much disagreement about what "quality" means in television news. Quality may be defined generally as the "degree to which the characteristics of an entity satisfy highly regarded normative standards," (Shamir, 2007, p. 322). When placed within the realm of local television news, Roberts and Dickson say it is, "synonymous with the station with the highest rating," (1984, p. 392). However, Wulfemeyer (1982) condemns ratings as "more of popularity contest...than a real measure of quality," (p.79) and see quality as more to do with the "format" of the newscast (Wulfemeyer, 1983,

p.325). Ishikawa (1996) expands upon Wulfemeyer by adding, “what is needed today is the organization of professional staff and critics in the fields of production and arrangement of programmes (sic) to let them make quality assessment regularly based on established format,” (p.96). Some studies have sought to identify quality, but from a perspective of the content producer (Wulfemeyer, 1982).

Following Hackett’s (1984) and Berelson’s (1952) lead, this study measures technical variables in the presentation of news content by backpack journalists. The focus on technical quality (Lin, 1992) is useful, because to it provides a “journalistic ‘core’ of the item which could be assessed by criteria,” (Johnsen, 2004, p. 250). These criteria focus on technical television production values such as editing and shooting video.

Kerr (1990) refers to production values as, “often used in attributions of quality- which refers to the quantity of money spent on a programme (sic),” (p.47). Ishikawa (1996) stresses the importance of measuring of production techniques “to ask the target audience to assess the composing factors of each programme (sic),” (p. 92). Roberts and Dickson (1984) expanding upon Wulfemeyer’s (1982) concept of newscast content quality, added technical elements such as “videotapes, slides, and electronic graphics” (p. 395) to their quality assessment criteria. In a study of audience’s reasons for choosing news programs, Lin (1992) found that “reporting scope” (p. 378) was the most commonly cited reason, “reporting quality” and “habit” were second (12.8% each), “technical quality” was third (10.7%). Lin’s findings provide evidence that the audience takes technical merit into consideration in choosing news content.

College students are very media savvy, especially when it comes to new media. The Internet generation appears to be drifting away from traditional media (Kaye & Johnson, 2003). It seems that television is being replaced by the likes of video sharing websites such as Youtube. However, Pew research (Pew, 2007) indicates that 18-29 year olds still use traditional broadcast as a desired news source. CNN believes digital technology will be the “undoing of television news as we know it,” (cf Prato, 1994) as audience members can choose what and when they want to watch using interactive video. According to the Pew Research Center (2006) CNN is the third most used Internet news source, drawing 23% of all online news seekers. Thirty-seven percent of all video watched by adult Internet users is news-related (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2007). Nearly 65,000 videos a day (Gill, et.al. 2007) are posted each day to interactive website such as Youtube. According to Nielsen/Net Ratings, YouTube claims nearly 20 million unique users accounting for 60% of all online videos watched, (USAToday, 2006). Technological innovations have changed the way imagery can be produced, accessed and delivered to the masses. If television news is to survive the virtual revolution, it is essential to understand the younger demographics preferences and perceptions of quality of visual presentation.

Significance of the Study

The available research in this field has been limited. The size of the audience as measured by ratings has always been considered a benchmark for assessing quality in television news. Using the ratings points, members of television news management and

consultants determine the type of news programming their audience desires. Economic constraints and technological innovations are driving those who gather the news to abandon the model of the broadcast journalist spending who perfects certain skill sets and to adopt the model of the media generalist.

This study has significant implications to television industry officials, academics and news consumers who may be affected by the shift in newsgathering. Industry professionals have access to proprietary information that academics do not, which this study is designed to fill in those gaps. News directors, general managers, and news workers should consider academic studies besides research provided by news consultants as they decide how to deal with these shifts in their industry. This study seeks to examine an area that may have been overlooked by the industry. While the industry can use focus groups to help establish patterns of news consumer behavior to guide short term strategic planning, this study may offer a glimpse into influences that affect long term planning. Results from this research may provide information to help cultivate young news consumers' viewing habits and slow their attrition from traditional delivery methods. Also, news workers who are not privy to all the proprietary information may find the results of this study useful in their efforts to strengthen weaknesses and work toward a better news product.

Academics who are interested in the future of newsgathering may use this study as a context for their own research. The study may also help journalism instructors to retool their thinking and teaching methods in response to the shift in the newsgathering paradigm. For nearly 40 years, academics have trained students to a proven method to use the two person newsgathering crew consisting of a photojournalist and reporter. To

help students succeed in the era of the BPJ, academics may have to learn new software to help with the instructional process. New technology requires supporting software and hardware, which requires additional training for both academics and students. It is costly to purchase hardware and software. This study may help academic departments decide how best to develop the resources needed to prepare new journalists for the newsgathering shift.

Finally, students may be impacted by this study. If the findings prove substantial, then a trickle down influence will change how they are taught, the types of equipment they need to be able to use and types of job skills they must have. There may be a period of adjustment while academic departments, instructors and students become familiar with new hardware and software. The steep learning curve for new technology may lead to frustration with the process and the instruction. In addition, students may need to purchase new equipment. Some universities are requiring specific laptop configurations with software, an additional cost to undergraduates. Additional costs may include fees to support computer lab upgrades, cameras, and other support equipment. With the possibility of additional skills set needed, students may face taking additional coursework to prepare them for the job market. This study can guide students through the transition period.

As stated above, if the implementation of the BPJ as the preferred method of newsgathering presentation is accepted by younger demographics, several facets of society may be impacted. The news production industry, academia and students may be dependent upon one another to achieve success. Academia may need guidance from the industry to effectively instruct students about the future of newsgathering. The industry

may depend upon research and instruction by academics to help select qualified job applicants. These efforts by academia may, in turn, influence other students to become heavier television news consumers.

Organization of Chapters

Chapter one of this dissertation has provided a context for the research problem, a statement of the problem, a purpose, and a proposed research questions. Chapter two presents literature related to television news consumption, the theory of uses and gratifications theoretical perspective, audience perceptions, and the ways those concepts are used to measure the quality of television production. Chapter three outlines the quantitative methodology for the study, a survey of a convenience sample of college students. Chapter four discusses these results and findings from the survey. Chapter five presents a discussion of these results and findings and offers suggestions for future research. Relevant appendices follow chapter five.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

This chapter examines five areas of communication research related to the phenomenon of backpack journalism. The theoretical framework of uses and gratifications will be studied within the context of information seeking associated with television news. An historical overview of the evolution of newsgathering and the role of technology in that evolution will be discussed next. The third part investigates the rise of television production and the importance of video. This is followed by a discussion of the definition for the concept of quality and its inclusion in television presentation. Finally, relevant literature on audience research in television news is examined.

Uses and Gratifications

Numerous studies employ the theory of uses and gratifications (e.g. Katz, et.al, 1974; Blumler, 1979; Levy and Windahl, 1984) in order to explain how audiences interpret the visual messages associated with television news. Addressing the link between a person's background and social circumstances, McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1972, p. 155) categorized four types of gratifications people sought while viewing television content. These were *diversion* (seeking emotional release or escapism), *surveillance* (acquiring news and information), *personal identity* (value reinforcement,

personal reference, or reality exploration), and *personal relationships* (social utility and companionship). A series of tape-recorded interviews with 73 residents were followed by a 42 item statement about quiz programs. Correlations of the items yielded four clusters out of ten producing reliability scales from .68 to .78. Cluster emerged as self-rating appeal, basis for social interaction, excitement appeal, and educational appeal (p. 148). McQuail, Blumer, and Brown used their findings to develop a typology on audience gratifications.

Levy's early research (1978) investigated the concept of "active" audiences and what they expect to gain from watching television news. He conducted his study in Albany County, New York to represent an "average" demographic. Semi-structured focus group interviews were used to help build a 40-item questionnaire, which included 25 statements about uses and gratifications that had been previously tested in Great Britain as well as 15 new items. Over two months, Levy conducted personal interviews using a quota sample of 240 adults chosen from 40 randomly selected housing clusters. Respondents were asked to specify their preferences on the 40 items using a Likert-type five point scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." An attempt was made to see if viewers' exposure to the news was planned or accidental. Results showed 53.2% said they were not actively deciding to watch the news. Of those making plans to watch at designated times, men were more likely to be considered "appointment" news viewers. A majority of respondents (53.1%) who had at least some college education were active news seekers. This may suggest that people with higher education levels and informational needs are more likely to actively seek exposure. When asked about their reasons for watching, out of the barely half (51.4%) who were active watchers, 21.3%

indicated that the newscasters were the driving force, 18.1% program format, and 12% news quality.

Gantz (1978) posited that uses and gratifications theory can be used to categorize viewers into four types of motivations, based on: (1) primarily recreation-diversions, (2) information-acquisition, (3) a mix of both sets of motivations, or (4) those not strongly motivated by either set (p. 665). Gantz predicts that the first two types should recall more about the news broadcast than those watching television for strictly recreation or viewing for no particular information gain. Gantz conducted a total of 293 interviews to measure motivations for watching CBS national newscasts and measured nine variables such as frequency and exposure, perceived knowledge gained, and recall combined with a 10 questions to assess viewers' recall of particular evening newscasts. Results showed information-acquisition was significantly related to news recall and information-acquisition and recreation-diversions were significantly related. The study suggests viewers who are motivated to learn will seek news to help with their learning process.

Surveillance is a key concept for this study especially within the context of viewing TV news reports. According to Blumler (1979), surveillance is a cognitive orientation, "whereby the audience member looks primarily for information about some feature of society and the wider world around him," (p. 17). However, television news reports from the perspective of substance and presentation "are not necessarily designed to reward only cognitive drives," (p. 18). He refers to other sources that may provide media needs such as banter between news personalities or the personality displayed by the news readers.

Blumler (1979) expanded upon his earlier collaboration with McQuail and Brown (McQuail, et.al., 1972), replacing *personal relationships* with *curiosity* (related to higher education, experience with travel abroad, organizational affiliations) as one of four types of gratifications. Blumler also sought to resolve a number of earlier theoretical problems associated with gratifications research. He employed secondary data analysis to review 32 gratifications statements made by 1,000 British adults, and compared the roles of television and newspapers in relation to the four gratifications and their fit within the gratification categories of social norms, facilitators and compensators. In the category of social norms, the audience he studied favored papers as the source of news three of the four types but heavily favored television for personal identity gratification. Audiences also favored newspapers in the role of facilitator three of the four gratifications, but favored television to gratify curiosity. In roles involving compensation, television was favored as the provider of two of the four types of gratification, with a tie by percentage of personal identity, and a slight preference for newspapers for curiosity. Blumler states, “The underlying uses and gratifications logic is inadequate for study of popular culture,” (p. 31). His statement suggests that further research should examine television programming such as television news, which provides a better fit than newspapers for the uses and gratifications approach.

Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn (1980) explored gratifications from a different perspective. They noted two types of gratifications, those sought and those obtained. Building on Blumler’s (1979) study, they found that TV news viewers may develop a sense of bonding with those in front of the camera. Previous research (Levy, 1978) had suggested that parasocial interaction existed but had not tested the phenomenon.

Telephone interviews were obtained through systematic random sampling from the telephone directory. To qualify, all respondents ($N = 327$) had to watch at least one network newscast a week. The questionnaire consisted of 15 gratifications-sought (GS) statements followed by another 15 items, slightly reworded that measure gratifications-obtained (GO). The correlation of means (GS & GO) was found to be significant between those who watched only one broadcast (52%) and those who were able to differentiate between most and least watched programs. The GS verses GO correlation for most watched program was found to be strongly significant, indicating gratifications seeking behavior. An association of GO and GS for most watched programs compared to GO and GS for least watched programs showed that differences between each category was found to be strongly significant. The results suggest a moderate to strong relation between GO and GS. Viewers of a single news program seem to have their gratification shaped strongly by that program, while viewers watching more than one obtain gratifications from elsewhere and most likely are not adequately satisfied by gratifications from one program.

Bantz (1982) would later redefine McQuail (1972) and his colleagues' four factors as *surveillance*, *companionship*, *entertainment*, and *voyeurism* when studying college students' decision-making process about TV viewership. He developed a 37-item questionnaire after reviewing student essays about why they watched television. Two types of surveys were conducted, one focused on respondents' attention to a favorite type of program and the other on the television medium in general. A total of 270 surveys were administered with 142 responding to the medium version and 128 responding to the program-type version. A factorial design comparing the items to the type of

gratifications by medium or program type produced no statistical significance. The test was repeated six months later, with the order of presentation controlled through randomization. The sample size of 446 was broken into 227 responding to medium and 219 to program type. In the program type, survey and companionship was found to be significant to surveillance. A comparison of the findings between the two studies showed that surveillance was significant to voyeurism. Overall, the study suggested no sharp differences in reported uses of favorite programs compared to uses of the television medium in general.

Viewing patterns develop out of certain gratification seeking motivations. Rubin (1983) posited that there are two types of television viewing users, each with different sets of television viewing motivations. One type use the medium for entertainment and time consumption and second, the other for nonescapist, information seeking. Rubin conducted a secondary data analysis of 626 respondents ages four to 89 years, and later downsized this to 464 adults to eliminate children under 18 for a better representative subsample. The genders were evenly divided. The survey instrument consisted of questions on television viewing motivations and viewing patterns. Original respondents indicated their levels of agreement on a scale from “exactly” to “not at all” with the 30 statements. Two conical root statistical tests suggested that information seeking individuals view shows such as talk shows, news, and game shows, but not for escapism purposes. When viewing motivations are used as predictors of viewing patterns, information, entertainment, and companionship, levels of viewership increased and decreased depending on the level of escape motivation. Rubin (1983) suggested that some viewers use television content for entertainment to pass the time or relieve

boredom. Those viewers seeking information had overall higher viewing levels, especially watched talk and game shows and news programming. If no particular program was sought, television was relegated to satisfying entertainment, habitual, and time consumption needs.

Levy and Windahl (1984) found a strong correlation between increased intention and planning to watch television and surveillance use. They inferred that heavy television news consumers are usually seeking companionship or information. Their two-tiered study consisted of data collected from 390 Swedish adults mostly women. The first part of the study inquired about preactivity. Respondents were asked three questions to probe whether they intentionally entered the communication setting, measuring whether they put aside other activities with the intention of watching the news. Later studies suggest other activity such as multi-tasking takes place during television viewing (e.g. Bucy, 2003). Levy and Windahl posit that television viewing may be the sole activity during news. The second part of the study consisted of 15 gratifications statements (Palmgreen, et.al. 1980) designed to measure why respondents watched the news. Responses to the three preactivity questions showed that 61% of respondents agreed with the importance of seeing a newscast from beginning to end; 45% reported planning their evenings around the newscast; and 53% watched the clock so as not to miss the news time. These findings suggest that the audience Levy and Windahl studied were moderately active news consumers. Findings from the second part of the study suggest that entertainment value may be the most important factor in news consumption. Ratings were lower for motivations related to information seeking, such as advanced notice was rated seventh, obtaining trustworthy information (rated tenth), and to be

informed (rated thirteenth). Overall, some motivations, which many consider important for news viewers, did not materialize in the Levy and Windahl study.

Blumler (1979) suggests that para-social relationship bonds formed with the news personalities may “cater powerfully to other than cognitive impulses,” (p. 18). These content characteristics such as para-social relationships within the context of gratification studies of news consumption are similar to findings by Blumler, Brown, and McQuail (1970, cf Blumler & Levy, 1977).

Although parasocial relationships may influence audiences’ perceptions of quality in television newsgathering, it is not considered the main focus of BPJ research. One may make the assumption that the aesthetic value of an on-camera talent may sway viewers’ decisions about watching a newscast. After all, personal appearance is a significant component associated with star quality. In this BPJ study, aesthetics are applied to video and qualities associated with it.

The issue of television quality has been for the most part emerged from European critical/cultural traditions. Many studies have drawn on uses-and-gratification theory to explain why viewers watch television and to define the quality of programming. If a television program does not meet their quality expectations, then they viewers may seek alternate sources of information.

Uses and Gratifications with College Students

The Internet can deliver information to the masses on demand. Many young people don’t have to wait for a television news broadcast or watch a cable news channel until it repeats a story of interest. They are inundated with choices for their information

seeking (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Kaye & Johnson, 2003; Bates, Harmon, Wells, & Gee, 2006). Diddi and LaRose (2006), drawing from the previous research of Henke (1985), O'Keefe and Spetnagel (1973) and Vincent and Basil (1997), suggest that all forms of news media are selected by those with surveillance needs who are seeking local news and in-depth information. They continue, however, "the gratification of surveillance needs has been closely associated with the print media, and television is preferred by those with entertainment and escapism needs," (p. 194). This reinforces previous studies that members of the younger demographic have a tendency to gravitate to television programs that meet entertainment needs (Blumler, 1979; McQuail et.al. 1972; Lometti, et.al. 1977; Rubin, 1985; Bantz, 1982).

Rayburn and Palmgreen (1984) suggested that uses and gratifications theory is tied to expectancy value theory. Their hypothesis was that gratifications sought would correlate with respondent's most recently watched news program. They administered questionnaires to 178 students who watched at least one network and one local television newscast per week, implementing Palmgreen, et.al.'s (1980) scale. Their investigation failed to determine whether separate gratifications-sought were correlated with gratifications-obtained, but their hypothesis concerning expectancy-value mode was supported. They concluded that if television news viewers perceive the news to be filled with excitement, the audience would obtain excitement from their preferred newscasts. Rayburn and Palmgreen also proposed future research with college students, arguing that students do not differ significantly that much from the general population.

Students' perceptions and uses of news media sources was the focus of Henke's (1985) study. At the time of Henke's study, many communities being wired for cable

allowing television viewers more choices for information. Henke's rationale explained that using college students were an appropriate target of her study because they are at a life cycle stage of socialization and graduation. She hypothesized that as students become older, their media consumption increases, especially with cable news. Henke's questionnaire was distributed to 630 students at a university where a local cable franchise had recently been established. Statistical significance was found in use of traditional network media and student classification. Significance was also found in media consumption of cable news corresponding with student classification. Henke's findings suggested that cable news provided supplemental national and international news. As students age and become more aware of the world, media consumption increases influencing their knowledge, activity and political awareness.

Uses and gratifications assume theory assumes audiences will become more active and goal oriented (Katz, et.al. 1974) in their selection of media. Blumler (1979) suggested that television viewers are active at different times and along several dimensions. Rubin and Perse (1987) focussed on three types of audience activity related to news viewing: *intentionally* (planned news viewing), *selectivity* (nonrandom viewing of alternatives in news content, Levy & Windahl, 1985), and *involvement* (audience being tuned in and reflecting on the content). Students ($n = 390$) enrolled in evening classes of a large Midwestern university were asked about their news attitudes based on a 10-item affinity and realism scale. They were also asked about their news consumption habits with regard to three types of activity listed above. These investigations suggested that not all audience members are equally active, but there is a pattern of activity. No statistical significance was found between news selectivity and intentionally, distractions

and involvement compared to selectivity, and distractions and involvement. Rubin and Perse (1987), following Levy and Windahl's (1984), concluded that lower levels of activity may satisfy the gratifications sought for some television news viewers. In media uses and effects, audience activity is an important factor (Rubin and Perse, 1987).

Media use increases with age, especially among college students (O'Keefe & Spetnagel, 1973; Henke, 1985). Whether motivated by of course demands or surveillance uses, as students' progress in their studies, media consumption is increased. Vincent and Basil (1997) hypothesized that student's gratifications sought would drive their media use. Data was gathered at large western, Midwestern, and eastern universities ($N = 1209$) during and after the military operations of "Desert Shield" and "Desert Storm" during the first Persian Gulf conflict. The questionnaire consisted of 68-items, 22 of which were adapted from earlier gratification seeking research, while 17 questions measured media use. The rest were related to demographics and culture. In terms of media use, students watched an average of 7.4 television news programs, or 3.7 hours of broadcast news, each week. Network news viewing was nearly consistent with O'Keefe and Spetnagel's findings of 1.9 times per week as was local news (1.8 times/week—1987, 1.9 time/week—1973). Vincent and Basil's hypothesis that use of news would increase with years in college was supported. Their second hypothesis that demographic differences would affect gratifications sought especially in older students, men, upperclassmen, and those with higher grade point averages (GPA) was tested using regression analysis. The study found the respondent's gender, age, year in school and GPA were predictors of entertainment, surveillance, boredom and escape needs. Gender was a predictor of entertainment and escape needs, while age was found to have a

negative relationship with boredom, escape, and surveillance. Males had higher levels of entertainment and escapism needs than females. GPA correlated weakly with entertainment, boredom and escape. Regarding surveillance needs, GPA, age, and gender had no relationship to surveillance, while year in school showed a positive relationship. Demographics were also compared to different media to test gratification seeking. Significance was found with news use, including television news, newspapers, and the MacNeil/Lehrer Report, but no significance was found with CNN. GPA was found to be significantly related only to newspapers. Year in school showed a positive relationship to viewing CNN and reading newspapers. Overall, surveillance was a significant predictor of news media use. Vincent and Basil (1997) suggest that students with “higher surveillance needs tend to use higher levels of news media” (p. 388). Since entertainment seems to be a more prevalent motivation for college students, students with higher entertainment needs are more likely to choose television over print for their primary news source.

According to Nielsen Media Research, the average home gets 104 channels but the average viewer regularly watches only about sixteen (Lieberman, 2007). LaRose and Eastin (2004) refer to this as the theory of media attendance. When a consumer is confronted by a “myriad of media choices the consumer lapses into habitual patterns of media consumption in order to conserve mental resources, rather than repeatedly engaging in active selection” (Diddi & LaRose, 2006, p. 194). Audience members such as college students develop habits aided by classical conditioning that change when an alteration in the routines interrupts their daily patterns. These alterations may include changes in one’s need for or interest in information, for example in times of war or the

kind of cultural changes that occur as students mature during their years at college (Vincent & Basil, 1997). Diddi and LaRose (2006) suggest such habitual media consumption behavior is different than the ritualistic gratification proposed by Rubin (1984); both still assume active information processing.

The formation of news habits by college students within the uses and gratifications paradigm was the focus of Diddi and LaRose's (2006) research. Habitual media consumption is not necessarily related to excessive amounts of consumption and may cover a wide range of overall levels of media usage. For example one who turns on CNN at night and watches for 10 minutes may be influenced by habit as much as the person who tunes in to the morning news program for an hour. Both are engaged in habitual usage behaviors patterns. Media consumption is considered to be good for the individuals' lives and contributes to the functioning of society. But, over usage can contribute to mood swings depending on the nature of the coverage (Mundorf, Drew, Zillman, & Weaver, 1990) or may be linked to unfortunate personal consequences, disrupting school, work activities, or personal relationships. Diddi and LaRose examined the news consumption patterns of college students. Their sample of 303 was comprised predominately of males (68%), who were questioned about their media usage replicating earlier news media research (Vincent & Basil, 1997). Students tended to gravitate to campus newspaper as their primary source of media consumption and relied to a lesser degree on Internet portal sites, and late night comedies. Sources providing in-depth coverage of national and international events were consulted less than one day per week. These findings included a negative statistical relationship between new electronic media (Internet and cable) and escapism, surveillance, entertainment, and habit. They shed new

light on the relationship between new and traditional media consumption. College students rely heavily on the Internet, yet Diddi and LaRose's findings suggest that students have not abandoned traditional media for new media forms. Both forms tend to complement each other.

Past research has proposed that audience members actively seek information as defined in uses and gratifications theory. Gratifications obtained from media include *surveillance*, *companionship*, *entertainment*, and *voyeurism* (Bantz, 1982). It is the intention of this study to examine two of the uses and gratification factors—*surveillance* and *entertainment*. Levy and Windahl (1984), Rayburn and Palmgreen (1984), Rubin and Perse (1987), and Vincent and Basil (1997) examined how college students obtain gratifications from media usage. This study proposes that if students do not like the quality of the visual newsgathering techniques of a BPJ, they may actively seek visual information from television channels that offer gratifications to satisfy their needs. With greater access to new media such as the Internet and a multitude of digital cable channels, the main question is how are today's students obtaining gratification when seeking information from sources such as the local television news?

Newsgathering

Research on ENG Technology

As television stations adopted electronic newsgathering technology, academia began to notice how the new technology was potentially influencing the broadcast news industry affecting the viewing public. Most studies focused on the influence of the

content upon satisfying audience needs rather than the technical presentation of the news stories.

Tuchman (1973) noted that technology altered the nature of news departments. Her participant observation research followed film cameramen as they gathered news and selected their shots. She observed a relationship between camera techniques and their cultural implications for viewer perception. Tuchman argued that a disconnect exists between how a person with a film background frames and composes a shot and the news value of objectivity. Cameramen with backgrounds in film composition did not provide the visual substance that television news needed. Tuchman argued that television film editors had a better grasp of the process required for objective visual presentation process rather than some cameramen. The framing of objects by film composition graduates raised a credibility issue, because it challenged the assumption that seeing is believing.

Bantz, McCorkle, and Baade's (1980) observations of a western metropolis television newsroom suggested "technological developments" (p. 46) were one of five factors contributing to news work routinization. The other four included the nature of news staffs, the impact of news consultants, constraints on the organization's product, and profit considerations (p. 46). They cited the introduction of microwave relays and portable video equipment as adding speed to the newsgathering process. "In television news, the most important recent technological developments are portable video equipment," (p. 47). Technology contributed to coordination in a newsroom along with the need for role specialists. They observed that news production seems to be similar to an assembly line situation: the process of putting together a newscast involves several different steps, with skilled workers at each stage contributing different chunks. They

identified a series of five steps: (1) story creation—workers assess the incoming information and determine the order of its importance; (2) task assignment—a decision assignment editors reach about what stories to pursue in consultation with producers, assigning certain workers with knowledge of the event; (3) material gathering and structuring—the crux of newsgathering where photographers and reporters retrieve the news story; (4) material assembly—a two-fold process in which editors construct and assemble individual stories, and then assemble these stories into a newscast, and (5) newscast presentation (p. 53). For successful newsgathering, Bantz, et.al. observed that a team mentality was essential. Neither the reporter nor the photographer could claim sole responsibility for the story and, both were needed to operate the new bulky technology such as ENG U-matic format. However, Bantz et.al. suggest that the assembly line metaphor falls short of describing the news production process. News production is based on routine organization that is designed to use nearly identical photographers and reporters to produce a uniform product. Although technology is just one factor, it may have the greatest impact upon the news work itself. The researchers found that notions of productivity associated with the idea of an assembly line mentality, imposed constraints and stifled creativity.

Smith (1984) also suggested that technology influences newsgathering. The technology Smith was concerned with included news bureaus with live capability, helicopters, and satellite downlink and uplinks. He surveyed 90 network affiliate news directors in the 30 largest ($n = 46$) markets and a random sample of 100 in the smaller television markets ($n = 66$) for their opinions concerning the use of technology and its influence on news content. The mailed questionnaire garnered a response rate of 92% (N

= 174). Coders used a Likert type five-point scale classifying each comment from “positive” to “negative.” When asked if technology influenced the content of local news, 86% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed. A majority of smaller market news directors were more likely to say that technology had a negative effect on content. Smith explained that this finding might be attributable to lack of access to the newest technology to keep a competitive edge. Technology may help news stations gather news but Smith found news directors indicating some displeasure with the influence of technology on news content.

Lacy, et.al. (1988) discovered evidence of a relationship between competition and the purchase of satellite newsgathering equipment. The introduction of new technology to any industry is met with two concerns: cutting costs and the effects upon demand. Satellite newsgathering (SNG) was no different. Researchers of this study noted, “news stories take on a different dimension when supported by pictures acquired by satellite,” (p. 50). They noted that the world’s reaction to the gravity of the Chernobyl nuclear accident was influenced by the Soviet decision to black out satellite pictures. Mail surveys were sent to news directors of 730 commercial stations. A total of 322 completed questionnaires were returned with a response rate of 47%. They identified six factors influencing the adaptation of SNG including (1) prohibitive costs, (2) use of another affiliates station’s equipment, (3) the use of microwave equipment instead of SNG, (4) limited practical use, (5) lack of interest in the service, and (6) other (p. 53). The dominant response from news directors (78.9%) indicated that prohibitive costs were the main concern. In markets where other stations had SNG capability, 65% of news directors cited competition as the main concern. Overall the study concluded that though

it may be cost prohibitive, the geographical area of news coverage and competition were the factors driving in which stations to adopt SNG. Competition with other stations was the main reason news stations purchased SNG.

As ENG became mainstream in newsgathering process, the emergence of satellite newsgathering (SNG) became the new technological tool for news presentation. SNG was found to require more work from reporters/photographers and may have resulted in less local news. Cleland and Ostroff's (1988) studied the formation of the Florida News Network from the perspective a Jacksonville station, which was a consortium of Florida TV stations providing statewide news content via satellite. During their participant observations, Cleland and Ostroff that found news management expressed concern that the availability of the technology would supplant the importance of the story. "If the use of the news gathering technology becomes the news or affects the order of news programs, the news director has a problem," (p. 948). SNG contributed to increased workloads for news workers with additional live shots for other member stations and lack of acceptance of their journalistic standards by those in the other markets. "We wouldn't hire some of those people for our station, and some of those people for our stations wouldn't hire our people," (p. 948). Cleland and Ostroff suggested that SNG changed the skill sets required for news workers, and required that they develop new skills ever more quickly. News makers were concerned that the extra pressure would force a reduction of story elements and could suggest a decrease in journalistic presentational quality. They found that SNG increased workloads for reporters and photographers.

Berkowitz (1991) posits four factors influencing news selection: *news judgment*—assessment of an item's interest or importance, *electronic technology*—an

item's visual potential and accessibility via microwave or satellite equipment, *information subsidy*—the influence of information provided by sources, and *resource constraints*—the availability of time, staff, travel, funding, and equipment (p. 246). Berkowitz collected data over a four-weeks by observing a large Midwest television newsroom and quantifying and assessing 391 news items. News items were coded at the end of each day to see if they aired or not, and producer's initial newscast lineups were compared with final lineups. Some items were dropped from the initial lineups due to logistical problems or replaced by breaking news stories. Berkowitz found some statistical significance in means between the four factors listed above and aired and unaired stories. The association of electronic technology was moderately correlated with resource constraints ($r = .19, p < .01$) and news judgment ($r = .16, p < .01$). The study concluded that news workers believed that the news stories were picked up or dropped more often because of the ability to cover a story live than because of other factors, and that this practical consideration overshadowed news judgment. However, news management argued that news technology was used to showcase the sophistication of the station's newsgathering capability. They found some stations overused technology to the point that it interfered with the newsgathering process.

The compromising of quality and diversity was the focus of Davie and Lee's (1993) research on television news technology in a multi-channel environment. They posited that SNG allowed greater diversity in news programming. Diversity was defined as the percentage of unique stories broadcast by individual stations in each sample market. Station market size and location may limit the amount of unique stories compared to consonant stories. Newscasts from the Dallas, San Antonio and Austin

television stations were videotaped, yielding 1,335 stories from nine stations. Stories were coded for system source defined in terms of one of four technical categories that specified distribution and video origination. The four system-source categories included studio, station SNG, station ENG and network SNG. The largest market of Dallas provided the greatest number and percentage of unique stories. National and world consonant stories were found to be similar by network and TV news services in all markets. ENG stories were found to be eight percent higher in the consonant category than the 54% of diverse stories. Station SNG was 14% higher in diverse stories (57%) and network SNG consonant stories were preferred 2 to 1 (67%) by the individual station managers. Although technology in newsgathering should allow more diversity, this study's findings of reliance on content produced outside of the viewing area indicated that technology was used as a crutch to help fill news holes in local programming. ENG or SNG were used to supplement news content from other markets in the state, reducing the diversity of stories covered in a given television market.

Research studies have explored the rationale for using technology to enhance live reporting (Tuggle & Huffman, 1999). Tuggle and Huffman postulated that news operations allow technology to drive journalism and news management and argued that overuse of ENG for live presentation reduces news validity. Tuggle and Huffman proposed a series of research questions addressed the differences in opinions between news personnel (reporters) and news management (news directors) concerning the use of live technology and whether technological considerations may supercede concerns about credibility, editorial and journalistic concerns. Surveys were sent to news directors and senior reporters at randomly chosen stations in 211 media markets. A total of 220

questionnaires were returned for an overall return rate of 53.1%. Fewer than 40% of news directors reported going live for the sake of going live while nearly 60% of reporters believed this occurred. Open-ended questions from reporters suggested that viewers have become desensitized to live reporting and live shots were mundane due to the overuse of the technology. Differences were found to be statistically significant between news directors' and reporters' degree of concern that the overuse of technology was jeopardizing story credibility. One news director noted that technology could create artificial pressure to put reports on the air, before the video could be evaluated and checked for ethical problems. Key findings suggested that reporters believed the decision to going live was often influenced by news directors or by news consultants who believed a story warranted the live coverage.

Tuggle and Huffman (2001) decided to explore live reporting and technology by studying whether if live field reporting detracted from efforts to gather information. Live stand-ups for introducing taped news packages were compared to traditional taped packages based on information. Content analysis of newscasts from two large markets, three medium size and three small market television stations were examined for live and taped news packages. A total of 24 stations and 120 news programs were studied. Five-sample newscasts from different days were coded for network affiliation, story length, subject matter and whether a live element originated in the city of license or elsewhere. The 24 stations in the sample aired more stories with live elements than taped reporter packages. A reporter on the scene using no supporting visuals accounted for 60 different occasions with the average length of report lasting 76 seconds. Over half the time (53.3%), no apparent journalist justification was needed for going live. Feature news

(entertainment) was the most frequent topic of the live reports. Tuggle and Huffman argued that news managers needed to examine the news value of stories being covered live and captured that the misuse of live technology might contribute to the loss of news audiences.

In their study examining the conversion of film to digital still photography, Fahmy and Smith (2003) suggested that digital imaging helped make it easier and cheaper to producing images easier and cheaper. Their notion of a “new digital paradigm,” (p. 93) paralleled what BPJ may be facing. For example, laptops, editing software, and wireless connections technology are allowing BPJs to work in the field with more autonomy and no need to return to the television station to file a report. However, Fahmy and Smith’s study suggested that technology might actually hinder and decrease quality in journalistic coverage. Their purpose was to explore the impact of new digital imaging technology in news environments. They conducted semi-structured interviews with seven still photographers selected from a list of participants associated with the 2001 Picture of the Year International contest. One participant noted that the adoption of digital imaging technology did not hinder workflow. Another suggested the technology hindered the tactile procedure of handling photographs and that re-training was needed to alter perceptions of job duties. The participants also reported that the technology created problems during the archiving process because the digital servers have limited amount of storage space. This also leads to a redefinition of job duties. Having limited disk space in digital cameras, photographers became photo editors in the field, choosing the images to keep and deleting the others. The adoption of technology at newspapers is similar to those in television newsgathering. Technology may allow more

autonomy, but a shift in job duties is a possibility, along with potential of unforeseen economic costs such as digital archiving.

Johnsen (2004) proposed that digital technologies may alter news producing organizations. His research involved a qualitative study in a Belgian regional media group and investigated how technological change such as the Internet and videojournalism have changed the newsgathering process. A total of 15 managerial and technical staff, chief editors and journalists were interviewed. From the videojournalism perspective, Johnsen examined the factors of *motivation, resistance, strategies to overcome resistance* and *stabilization*. Motivation was defined as to be the organization's reason for cutting costs in the production of television news. By streamlining the news process, one executive mentioned, "If you have 10-15 people who can do everything—that's fantastic!" (p. 245). Flexibility and efficiency along with standardization of the workflow are potential benefits of technological improvements.

With regard to resistance, social and technological problems had to be overcome before the VJ concept could be implemented. Johnsen found common grounds for resistance, including skills, jobs, perception of quality, content management and tensions among the staff. Resistance by the staff seemed to be the main concern especially in redefining jobs. Their main fear was the loss of quality when jobs were combined. One new editor pointed out. "If I watch the news and compare the Video Journalist [items] to the regular ones I do think that the regular ones have better quality: better camera, better lighting, this sort of thing," (p. 246). An editor-in-chief questioned, "Will people be able to film, edit, and make text and do that in a good way?" (p. 246). With the growing conflict concerning change, management defined five strategies to overcome resistance:

providing clear leadership, defining jobs and skills, empowering journalists, presenting a new understanding of quality, and managing content. Leaders in the news organization made it clear to staff that they needed adapt or be fired. Young journalists who did not have experience under the old system where jobs and skills were clearly separated replaced those who could not change. “We made the choice not to look for people who knew the old way of working,”(p. 249) explained an editor-in-chief.

Managers were quick to point out that the VJ concept was embraced because it makes journalists less dependent upon others, giving them more time to focus on the journalistic content. The concept of quality can be interpreted as quality of footage or skills of the technician. “It was emphasized that the quality of the new equipment is so good that it is virtually impossible to tell the difference in picture quality in a video journalist item from the quality of a full-crew traditional item,” (p. 250). Johnsen claims that news quality is only dependent on the news content and not the video or editing process. Although the VJ project was deemed a success, the organization suffered major disruptions, and the shift in the newsgathering process helped changed perceptions of quality in newsgathering.

Lastly, stabilization within the organization was important for the successful implementation of the technology. Johnsen’s data suggested a strong coherence on some points and disagreement on others concerning videojournalism between the groups he interviewed. They all seem to agree with the needs related to cost cutting, skills, increased reach, and flexibility. But many expressed concern about the quality of the end product.

Economics of Newsgathering Technology

Some literature suggests economics and quality go hand and hand (McManus, 1990; Meijer, 2003). McLean (2005) refers to the idea of a “profit-to-jobs paradigm,” (p. 335) to explain when economics and journalistic integrity intertwine.

McManus (1990) tested an economic model against the journalistic model during the first stage of news production in a local television market. He postulated that the economic model that treats newsgathering as an inexpensive, passive discovery process, is generally supported over the journalistic model, which involves active surveillance. The notion of exchange is common to both models. For example, news consumers exchange attention for information provided by news providers. Newspaper and cable subscribers exchange money (e.g. subscription fees) for information dissemination. “Consumer attention is then sold to advertisers for a negotiated price, usually proportionate to the number and type of consumers. Whatever the quality of their journalism products, commercial news organizations must turn a profit to stay in business,” (McManus, 1990, p. 673). He defines the active discovery process as time spent outside of the newsroom searching for enterprising stories, walking city hall, or contacting sources. The passive discovery process entails checking press releases, scouring the newspapers, or listening to police radios for any activity. The economic costs of the passive discovery process are much lower in terms of staff time than the cost of actively sending out news crews to beat the bushes for stories.

The study was conducted at three western network affiliates over three different months. Each station was located in a large, medium and small television market. Participant observation was employed three days a week for a month to observe

newsgathering and news decisions. A follow up questionnaire ($N = 239$) was distributed to employees with a return rate of 87%. The mid-sized market station staff described its newsgathering process as reading and clipping from the local newspaper. Some story ideas also came from police scanner traffic. A statistical significance was discovered between high, medium and low effort of newsgathering in percentage of stories ($p < .001$) and percentage of airtime ($p < .001$). Low discovery activity dominated both categories (stories—78.5%, air time—73.8%). The small market station's reporters complained about missing routine beat calls. One mentioned that it was easier to call the public relations officer to ask about any controversy rather than comb through many editions of the newspapers. In regard to percentage of airtime (low—59.2%) and stories (low—80.3%), significance was found as well. Results for the large market station suggests more of a low to moderate effort during the news discovery process. Again, statistical significance was found in both categories. However, a larger percentage of medium activity was found in stories (low 51.1%, medium 35.6%) and airtime (low 31.4%, medium 51.4%). McManus suggests station staff size makes a difference in the discovery effort. The more resources allocated to newsgathering, the more active the discovery process.

McLean (2005) found that each video-journalist “took on the responsibility for three different workers,” (p. 335, e.g. Young Broadcasting, 2007) suggesting a “profit-to-jobs paradigm,” (p. 335). Using a participant-observation method, he studied the newsroom dynamics in Canadian television markets facing downsizing and combining of job responsibilities. The study found VJ/BPJs must devise their own skill sets and must become more efficient to meet their daily obligations. Seeking the path of least

resistance due in part to constant deadlines, the individual news workers do not explore further options in the newsgathering process, which may imply a loss of quality in BPJ stories.

McLean's (2005) research found that corporate downsizing, combined with technology, forced television markets in Canada to adopt the BPJ model. Frank Flegel, a former news director, criticized the BPJ model, arguing that by offering only one person's point of view, rather than several, it reduces editorial checks and balances in the journalism process.

“A reporter should be thinking about the story...how to interpret and give meaning to the story. You can't do that when you're also thinking about the camera...Photographers are journalists, but they are specialists who look at the best way to shoot a story, to add understanding to the story. A reporter in my opinion cannot properly do both. The result is a drop in the quality of production and a drop in the quality of reporting,” says Flegel (p. 339).

A growing concern about the BPJ concept is that journalists will work around one or two sound bites/quotes and then find relevant information from other sources to fill in the gaps. Many BPJs said they would work with the new technology and sacrifice journalism quality in order to remain employed. McLean suggests that this is a short-term fix placating management's wishes. However, by taking shortcuts and working quickly to meet deadlines, the BPJ may endanger news quality, creating products of be greater superficiality that manipulates the viewing audience.

Importance of Video

Past research has suggested that some types of video production aid in television news recall. Television news is comprised of audio and video cues that may enhance or detract from the information presented.

Visuals may play a role in viewers' ability to recall information presented in a news program. Edwardson, Grooms, and Pringle (1976) examined whether viewers were better able to recall information when it was presented with visuals than when it was provided via framed shots of a news anchor reading textual information. They were interested in investigating whether visuals that do not support the textual information presented with them might impede the comprehension of news stories. As a pretest, students were asked to watch eight different news stories, approximately 75 seconds in length each. The news stories contained manipulated names and facts to counteract the effects of previous exposure and were presented in two versions, one with silent motion picture film, and the other without film. In both versions, a local male anchor read the rewritten scripts. In the first, the anchor introduced the segment before the film was shown, and in the second, the anchor was shown in a framed shot reading the story. Broadcasting students were asked to recall the facts of the story without visuals. They could not. However, in a follow-up study using a random sample of residents of the area surrounding the location, the researchers' hypothesis was not supported. The eight altered news stories were shown in the homes of the participants. In 545 cases, the subjects were able to recall the news stories correctly with the aid of news film and 537 were able to do the same after only seeing the news anchor. This study's findings suggest

that the use of film to enhance the news presentation does not aid in the recall of news information.

Gunter (1980) provided additional insight into the issue of whether visual backgrounds enhance or inhibit the learning of information provided aurally. Thirty undergraduate students volunteered to view 15 short, videotaped news reports from the BBC and ITN. The reports were presented both with audio/visual information and with audio track only. Two thirds of the subjects were randomly assigned the video portion and ten the audio-only presentation. The reports ranged in length from four to six seconds and between 15 and 20 word each and were taken from actual news bulletins produced three months earlier. The videos were classified into three categories: film clips, still inserts (known today as over-the-shoulder graphics) and clips without visual inserts (no-insert items). The videos were edited into five blocks of three items each. Subjects were asked to recall information after viewing the videos. This experiment yielded a high statistical significance ($p < .001$) for the picture-content effect on learning. Recall scores for film clip items and no-insert items ($p < .01$) and for still/no still inserts ($p < .05$) were significant. When recall scores for film clips with visuals were compared to those for audio-only clips, strong significance was found ($p < .005$). Gunter's experimental findings suggest that visuals can significantly increase news recall. In this study, the probability that information would be learned and remembered increased in the context of high imagery.

Research also supports the notion that subtle visual cues integrated into the imagery of a story during the news production process can reflect meaning. Television news photographers and editors follow a series of conventions while assembling stories.

Every time a camera stops and starts, it creates a “cut.” During the news-assembly process, cuts are spliced together on videotape to create continuity, the flow of a visual story. When this continuity is disrupted by means of what is called a “jumpcut,” the resulting discontinuity affects the narrative flow, and thus subtly influences the message conveyed. Drew and Cadwell (1985) tested the idea that the use of subtle production values may affect the way the audience perceives a message. An experimental design was created using 97 undergraduate students enrolled in beginning reporting classes. The students were selected based on their communication interests, but were not advanced enough in their studies to have taken film or broadcasting classes.

The video manipulation consisted of four different versions of a 70-second news story about the university’s art program, specifically its ceramics program. The video in each condition was edited every ten seconds for a total of seven shots each showing a slightly different step in the process of making a pot on a potter’s wheel. One video was produced with a high jumpcut condition, a series of seven medium scenes shot from the same camera position. The second video started at the same point but moved in for close-ups with every alternating shot. A third video started at the same position as the others but changed the angle 90° to the left. The last video changed distance and angle for every alternating shot, and each shot was cut every 10 seconds regardless of the position of the potter’s hands.

Respondents were asked to complete twenty items using five-point bipolar adjective scales along with seven multiple choice questions designed to measure recall. Results indicated that the video that used shifts in camera angle to mask discontinuities received higher evaluations compared to the videos with high jumpcut conditions on

scales of reliability, realism, clarity, and ease. The video that used shifts in distance received even higher evaluations on 13 of the bipolar adjective scales. The use of close-ups garnered high ratings for credibility. In comparison to the jumpcut video, it was rated informative, likeable, more relaxing, important, and informative. The respondents were able to recall a majority of the information presented aurally. Drew and Cadwell's study implies that information recall improves when audio accompanies video, even when discontinuity is present and thus that students pay closer attention to video only when the audio is absent.

A similar study examined verbal encoding without regard to the effects of picture changes. Davies, Berry, and Clifford (1985) postulated that children, like adults, recall information better through verbal channels than through visual channels. They used an experimental method to test recall from news items concerning the opening of Parliament. The researchers manipulated videotaped news items from an ITN broadcast, editing together four pairs of sentences. The news items were selected based on the frequency with which they covered cuts in the news items by using cutaway shots with little relevance to the accompanying texts. The experimental design allowed the researchers to compare between videos with the cuts in the middle and those without.

Subjects ($N = 205$) included both undergraduate adults ($n = 85$) and children ($n = 120$) from a comprehensive school age range 11-12 and 14-15 years old. Statistically significant differences were found ($p < .01$) between age and five different video conditions. However, each individual group compared to each condition yielded no statistical significance. Davies et.al. concluded that production techniques such as shot changes affected each group's recall of the verbal texts.

When television news is presented via two tracks of information, audio and visual, the possibility of redundancy arises—with both channels providing the same information simultaneously. Drew and Grimes, expanding upon Gunter's (1980) earlier findings about correlations between audio and visual recall of news items, investigated whether the technique of audio-video redundancy might aid in television news recall (Drew & Grimes, 1987).

A series of 15-second voice-over stories were recorded from national newscasts. Scripts were written in a broadcast style and video was edited to the audio track to produce a strong match between the two channels of information. Story materials were chosen that reflected minor national publicity but offered good opportunities for visual communication. For example, one story reported on a Pentagon announcement of increased crew sized on nuclear submarines. Five short newscasts containing 14 randomly placed stories were created, each with three versions, characterized by high, middle, and low redundancy. A control version used video/audio that did not match. Data were collected in three different ways: by freeze-framing the tape and asking subject to identify pictures, by freeze-framing the tape and giving subjects 26 slug line describing audio content, and by asking subjects to answer multiple-choice questions about central points of the stories.

Eighty-two undergraduate journalism majors participated in the study, separated into groups ranging from 13 to 18 students per condition. Results indicated redundancy conditions with video only ($p < .03$) high and medium redundancy ($p < .05$) but no differences with low redundancy. Audio recall compared to the conditions was strongly significant ($p < .0004$) with significant differences between the individual redundancies.

Story understanding also found significance ($p < .005$) and mean differences between high and low redundancy ($p < .05$). Drew and Grime's study suggests that viewers are more attentive to information from audio than from video when the information provided is redundant, but when audio and video contradict each other, viewers are more attentive to video at the expense of audio.

Fast-paced editing may also affect viewers' arousal and memory. Lang et.al. (2000) suggested that the faster the pacing of a film, the higher the audience's level of arousal and the greater their recall of the content. They tested subjects' responses to twenty one-minute messages from various television programs, movies and advertisements which they categorized according to the number of edits per minute: 0 to 7 edit for "slow", 8 to 15 edits for "medium", 16 to 23 for "fast" and more than 24 for "very fast." Subjects' visual recognition, skin conductance, and heart rate were measured as they viewed the videos. Subjects viewed television messages or read headlines on a computer screen. They then listened to a six-minute radio message and finally performed the task they had not completed in the first part. Subjects completed recall after the three stimuli. As the number of edits increased, the heart rate decreased. Subjects' attention increased in the second half of the message, especially with fast and very fast paced messages. Tests for increased memory compared to frequency of edits showed significance of main effects of editing ($p < .000$) and show type ($p < .000$). Subjects tended to guess for information during fast and very fast paced message. As the pace of the edits increased, so too did the viewer's arousal, as measured by heart rate. Recall was also greater for very fast-paced and for fast-paced messages than for medium-paced and

slow-paced messages. Lang et.al.'s findings suggest that increasing the number of edits per television story elicits higher arousal and recall of information.

Grabe et.al. (2000) proposed that the physiological arousal caused by tabloid-style news stories would increase audiences' attention to content. In this study, eight stories were manipulated by production techniques such as music, sound effects, slow motion, the use of flash frames as transitions between shots, and obtrusiveness of reporter voice tone to make them more or less sensational, in a tabloid style. These stories were then presented to participants whose levels of arousal were monitored by heart rate and skin conductance (measuring perspiration). The sensationalized news reports were found to stimulate attention and arousal, but viewers' recall of facts did not differ by condition. The respondents were able to differentiate between the tabloid style and the standard type of journalistic presentation, and deemed the production values used in tabloid style as less newsworthy. Grabe et al.'s findings suggest that viewers can recognize and are likely to distrust tabloid style journalism.

Lang, Potter and Grabe (2003) demonstrated that writing helps make news memorable. They hypothesized that the use of simple, concrete wording along with a strong chronological narrative can aid recall by reducing the cognitive processing required for information processing and providing cues that help with story retention. To test their hypothesis, they collected four news stories from different markets. They then created an alternative version of each story according to seven rules: (1) Let emotions talk, (2) Slow it down, (3) Dare to be quiet, (4) Match audio and video, (5) Know how to deal with negative images, (6) Take a literal approach, and (7) Use strong chronological narratives, (p. 115). The stories were transcribed and re-voiced with reproduced reporter

standups. Station logos were removed and the same reporter appeared in both versions. Respondents ($N = 45$) between the ages of 25 and 65 were randomly assigned to watch two original and two altered versions. Although the results indicated no differences in levels of attention or arousal between the original and altered stories, the stories that were revised according to the seven rules were judged by respondents to be significantly more enjoyable, believable, engaging, interesting, comprehensive, and informative, though not to be more important. Differences in levels of attention or arousal, measured by heart rate, were also found not to be. In addition, respondents' ability to recall information was significantly better for the revised stories than for the original stories. Lang et.al. (2003)'s study suggests that viewers may be able to process television news messages more easily, with better recall and comprehension, when news makers keep things simple.

Measuring Quality

Measuring Perception of Quality

Measuring intangibles such as quality has proven to be a daunting task for researchers. The quality production of content in the case of local television news has mostly been examined from the perspective of news consultants and news workers themselves by means of professional standards.

News consultants monitor quality in order to improve ratings and thus raise advertising rates, but academics are usually not privy to proprietary information collected by news consultants regarding audiences' perceptions of and preferences for

programming, so researchers must rely on trade magazines and audience interviews to piece together what audience members are thinking.

In an early academic study of news quality, Wulfemeyer (1982) stressed that quality should be based solely on the content of the newscast. Wulfemeyer used seven classifications of content: commercials, issues, entertainment, banter, weather, unexpected events and sports, to measure the quality of newscasts by three San Diego network television affiliates. He called his classifications by its anagram, CIEBWUS, also known as CIEBWUS Index Rating or CIR). Two newscasts from each station were randomly selected. Thirty hours of videotape were analyzed by a three-person panel. Each story length was recorded in seconds and placed into one of the seven categories. An audience survey of 250 respondents were selected by random digital dialing and asked to rank order the CIEBWUS categories by interests. The greatest amount of time on all three stations was devoted to news in the issues category. Unexpected events were ranked second in two of the three stations, while entertainment was second in the third station. Wulfemeyer found that the station that received the highest ratings in the San Diego market emphasized issue stories, offered a moderate dose of entertainment and a heavy dose of on-air banter among the news presenters. The other two stations emphasized unexpected events (i.e. crime related events), covered fewer issue stories and had less banter. Wulfemeyer concluded that the CIR was based on the audience's preferences for what they "want to know" as opposed to what they "ought to know," (p. 82). The recent shift from issues-oriented news to infotainment seems to validate Wulfemeyer's conclusions.

Roberts and Dickson (1984), commenting on Wulfemeyer (1982) said, “The number one station, or best station, or ‘quality’ news station is thus synonymous with the station with the highest rating,” (p. 392). Surveying prior research, they identified four factors that might be used to define “quality”: (1) the kinds of stories in news programs, (2) the appeal or credibility of newscasters and newscasts, (3) the accuracy of news reporting, (4) the degree to which a station’s selection of stories corresponds with audience’s preferences to news (p. 392). They conducted a three-part study including a content analysis of local television news, an analysis of audiences’ rankings of factors determining quality and a study of viewers’ perceptions of news anchors. The audience analysis and news anchor perception items were intended to provide insight into how audiences assess quality. Roberts and Dickson followed Wulfemeyer (1982) in examining hard news (government, crime, fires/accidents, education), banter, and commercials. No significant difference in time devoted to each criterion was discovered among the three network affiliates. The exception was that the ratings leader devoted more time to commercials. Another set of tests was performed to compare the technical quality of the newscasts. The technical merits were assessed by measuring the complexity of the videotapes, slides and electronic graphics incorporated into the newscasts and the skill with which they were handled. Out of nine measures, eight were found statistically significant.

The next part of their study explored whether any correlation existed between the audience’s preference for news stories and the amount of time stations devoted to the same issues. Roberts and Dickson found no significant correlations between the type of stories covered and audiences’ preferences. Ironically, respondents rated sports as the

least preferred programming but the stations devoted the most amount of time to sports. The final set of analysis compared the weather, news and sports anchors preferences by the audience. Out of the three stations, some significance was found, especially with the sports anchors. Roberts and Dickson concluded that audience generated data should not be used in “formulating a definition of quality since in essence it is nothing more than a measurement of popularity,” (p. 398). They argued, instead, that refinements should be made to existing criteria for assessing technical quality and the substance of news.

Hofstetter and Dozier (1986) criticized local TV news for failing to provide the public with adequate information about current events and denounce the prevalence of news consultants who “doctor” newscasts to attract audiences. In their study, they investigated how the quality of local TV news was being influenced by sensationalized stories. Early and late evening newscasts from the three network affiliates located in Houston television market were videotaped over a 33-day period. A total of 924 news stories requiring 739 minutes devoted to broadcasting time were coded. Stories that were found to have elements of sensational or human-interest—those emphasizing fires, disasters, accidents, crime/violence, or groups not linked to political concerns—were deemed sensational. During their survey period, the NBC affiliate devoted over half their time (52%) to sensational coverage, followed by CBS (43%) and ABC (42%). The results indicated that a large portion of Houston’s television news was devoted to some type of sensationalism.

The second part of Hofstetter and Dozier’s study examined the quality of news stories. They identified eight elements of quality (p. 817) which they used to assess the news stories: instruction (e.g. performing a social/political activity such as reporting an

accident), process (descriptions of political/social processes), background (development of issues in broader terms), consequence (fallout from events or issues), pros and cons (more than one point of view), political process (the political process or actor attached to it), attribution (explicitly given credit to a source), and use of multiple sources (attributed to more than one source), based on Graber's (1976) concept of useful information. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the newscast were devoted to background and consequence. Less than 10% of story time was devoted to pros and cons, attribution, or multiple sourcing. Hofstetter and Dozier suggest local news emphasized some aspects toward opinion resources, which leaned toward speculation than factual. News stories that might be considered "objective"—giving both sides of the story or giving credit to sources appeared with less frequency. When these measures of quality were applied to sensational and non-sensational stories, statistically significant differences were found in measures of multiple attribution, process, consequences, pros and cons, and political process. This study indicated that some degree of sensationalism existed in the Houston newscast during the survey period. Though some elements of quality were found in sensational news, the stories provided very little information. The researchers found it disconcerting that the traditional elements of objective journalism were ignored by the news producers.

Most news can be categorized as either sophisticated and serious or light and popular. Meijer (2003) has proposed a third dimension—public quality. Meijer cites news critics who say that news popularization has corroded news content, rendered it more difficult for citizens to act within their responsibilities. Her definition of "news quality" is based on the perception of distinctions between popular journalism and quality journalism (p. 15). Using the qualitative methodology of content analysis, Meijer

examined newscasts from NOS News, a Dutch television station. She found that editors could only separate news into “real” and “popular” but could not identify more than two audience types—mass and elite. Real news was defined as hard news, but with an agenda. This type is selected based on politicians, also known as actors, the impact of events in terms of national interest including disasters or taxpayers. Popular news was defined as interesting news (interesting in the view of editors) and included stories of human interest, heroes, or ordinary people in uncommon situations.

NOS News applies three approaches quality in its newsgathering: a conventional approach (gathering “full” information), a popular approach (conveying information simply making it accessible and easy to digest) and a public approach (conveying information clearly, with good analysis) (p. 23). Professional discourse within the NOS organization has two different guidelines. Those involved with the children’s show believe that quality news “requires close interaction and collaboration on how a specific issue is framed,” (p. 25). The angle of the news item is decided before the reporters go on assignment. The normal routine by the news department is to go on assignment with a sheet of basic info. Deliberation is kept to a minimum. Applying the conventional approach to the importance of visuals, a foreign news coordinator stated, “TV consists of imagery and text. It is the imagery that adds a sense of depth to an item. It is perfectly acceptable to broadcast images merely because of their aesthetic value,” (p. 25). Interpretation of images accounts for 85% of professional framing; unsurprisingly, only a small proportion of images can be interpreted as “unframed” images. As Meijer explains, the framing of images for interpretation marks the shift from conventional to popular news. All three approaches to quality were evident in news gatherers’ comments about

war-reporting. NOS News has a tendency to avoid graphic images due to the belief that too many negative images may dull viewers' responses to the news. This notion contradicts the public approach to quality. Meijer interviewed one war correspondent who recalled being censored by news headquarters for showing too many close-ups of bodies. Meijer argued that such imagery promotes the public approach to quality news, because it generates discussion in the public sphere and thus promotes the kinds of debates essential to the democratic process.

Many professionals regard production value as a crucial factor for determining program quality. In the past, viewers have been perceived as having insufficient interest and knowledge to cast judgment on production values of television programs.

Professional content makers were presumed to be able to employ a wide range of evaluative criteria, not accessible to viewers. Referred to as production value standards, these criteria include such elements as "scripting, editing, quality of lighting, number of cameras," (Shamir, 2007, p. 326). However, Shamir (2007) claims that lay viewers are able to pass educated judgments concerning how production values reinforce their appreciation and enjoyment of news programs. In his study, Shamir proposed two research questions. First, are the production values perceived by viewers related to gratifications they received from watching programs? Second, how well can viewers discern differences in production values?

Four surveys were carried out with television viewers in Israel. A computer-assisted telephone interviewing system was used to extract four representative samples of the Jewish population. Each survey focused on five TV programs known to each respondent, totaling 20 different programs. Five programs were chosen to represent

different genres of television: narrative (dramas), entertainment/talk shows, news/current affairs, culture/lifestyle shows, and soaps. A six point Likert-type scale measured respondents' ratings of standard interests/enjoyment for each program and a similar scale measured their assessments of various quality aspects, with choices from extremely high to very low quality. Finally, respondents were asked about program characteristics and the gratifications they sought/received from watching the programs. Using a 5-point Likert scale, six items referred to evaluative dimensions such as education, social interaction, or cultural enrichment. Two other survey items inquired about production values such as the technical means/photography on the set and time and money invested in writing the script.

The results of Shamir's study indicated that production value and involvement with a program were significant to viewers' interest/enjoyment of most programs. The data indicated that involvement with the program was a more important influence than the production values on viewers' interest/enjoyment. Quality assessment of production value was evenly split on the interest/enjoyment scale with the viewers' assessment. Shamir suggests that viewers are not very aware of production values used on television programming. Television programs and genres vary considerably in terms of the amount of time and money invested in them. Respondents were not able to tell differences in production values in American shows such as *ER* or *Sex in the City* compared to "conveyer-belt-produced Israeli soaps and South American telenovelas," (p. 332). The findings of this study suggest that further research is needed in order to obtain more detailed evaluations of production value evaluations, with comparisons between viewer evaluations and expert evaluations.

Research on Audiences

In the past, most research on quality has examined quality through the eyes of the professionals. Gans (1979) found that journalists had little knowledge about their audiences' perceptions of programming. He found they wrote and shot film for themselves and their superiors, simply assuming their own interests and preferences would reflect their audiences'. His two-part study examined television news networks and news magazine's perceptions of topics they believed should become salient in the viewers' and readers' minds. Gans' eight-year longitudinal content analysis study of television versus newsmagazines (1979) explored how journalists determined what constitutes news. CBS and NBC network news were compared to *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines. Stories were classified both by the actors and by the activities, that dominated the screen time or space given. Categories of "known"—persons recognizable by journalists and audience members either by name or by title—and "unknown"—low level officials and news participants such victims, voters, protesters and policemen—were analyzed in 1290 stories from the year 1967. The "knowns" occupied 918 stories compared to "unknowns" in 266 stories on television. Newsmagazine coverage of "knowns" increased from 490 in 1967 ($N = 645$) to 674 eight years later ($N = 795$), corresponding with a decrease in the coverage of "unknowns" from 118 to 80. Activities in the television news world were dominated by crimes/scandals/investigation category, with 28 percent of stories devoted to such topics in 1967. News magazines led with government personnel changes with 22 percent of coverage in 1967, and again in 1975. The top category in news magazines, as in television news, was the category of

crimes/scandals/investigation with 34 percent of news coverage. Gans' results might be skewed because of the Watergate and CIA scandals that were prominent in the mid-1970s. Stories about the Vietnam conflict or policies toward the conflict were not considered in Gans' analysis. Results suggest that attributing lesser-known sources is more time consuming than citing higher placed widely known officials.

The second part of Gans' study included qualitative analysis using interviews to explore what journalists determine were important news stories. The journalists used friends, family, or people they met at parties as known audience members. One magazine editor explained, "I basically edit for my wife. She's not political, but if a story interests her, it'll interest others," (p. 238). A television producer stated, "I go after reactions from my neighbors, from my sister in the Midwest, and from my brothers out west," (p. 236). Magazine journalists primarily imagined their readers as affluent and college-educated, while television journalists saw their audience as well educated and middle class. Professionals may have a tendency to overestimate the socioeconomic status of their clientele, possibly to enhance their own status. Journalists may also exclude less-prestigious viewers from their audience-image in order to justify their ability to relate to their audience. Gans posits that this perception may explain why journalists are reluctant to use academics as experts. Journalists may be reluctant to draw attention to the academics' "informational superiority," (p. 239). Gans observed that journalists' tendency to use well-known officials as sources rather than common people such as policemen, firemen, and lower unknown officials may be one reason that they have a reputation as elitists.

Past literature has established a disconnect between program makers' and audience members' quality preferences. Wulfemeyer (1983) investigated audience preferences for certain types of criteria when seeking television news information. He cites news consultants' beliefs that audience members prefer young, attractive newscasters and fast-paced, exciting visual stories, with a touch of humor (p. 323). His major research question involved what type of newscast stories the audience actually find most interesting. Minor questions inquired about anchor banter, commentaries and preferences about the gender of news anchors.

Two newscasts were randomly chosen and videotaped from each of the network affiliates in San Diego. Each newscast was content analyzed by two panels of three persons each. Six categories of news were developed: (1) *Issues* (news aimed at improving viewers' daily lives, for example, stories about city council decisions, consumer-information or education) (2) *Unexpected Events* (news of spontaneous events such as crime or property damage) (3) *Entertainment* (often referred to as "soft news") (4) *Banter* (unscripted discussions between anchors) (5) *Sports* (coverage of high school, college, or professional athletic competitions) and (6) *Weather* (updates, forecasts, and weather-related news segments) (p. 324). Wulfemeyer would later refer to these categories as the CIEBWUS Index Rating. He argued the CIEBWUS "was based on the audience desire and news value judgments on craving what it wants to know than what it "ought to know," (p. 82).

This early idea of audience desire can be argued today in the increasing number of infotainment type or soft news stories airing on local and national newscasts (e.g. Baum, 2003). Wulfemeyer's (1983) categories were tested using random digit dialing phone

surveys with a sample size of 250. Almost 30% of the respondents indicated they watched one television station over another based on the “quality” or “format” of the newscast, (p. 325).

The study yielded revealed a couple of statistically significant results. Both men and women ranked the categories essentially in the same order ($p < .001$). The only significant gender difference was that within the category of “issues,” men ranked economy higher than women ($p < .05$). Gender differences in rankings for *Unexpected Events*, *Entertainment*, and *Weather* when compared to one another were found to be statistically insignificant. Significant differences were found between those with some college and those who had less than a college education in their rankings of participation sports (e.g. bowling, fishing). $p < .04$) Responding to questions regarding commentaries, 55% reported that they liked the news commentaries while only 46% liked the sports commentaries, but men preferred both than women. Nearly three quarters of respondents said they had no gender preference for news anchors, but among those who did, 68% preferred a male anchor. They preferred gender of weathercasters and sportscasters was tested, with 68% and 51% claiming no preference respectively. However, among those who had a preference, males were overwhelmingly chosen with 84% for weather and 90% for sports. Wulfemeyer’s findings found entertainment related stories ranked about as high as unexpected events, suggesting the public wants to keep up with events but likes the lighter side of the news.

Local television journalists, along with consultants (e.g. Bantz, et.al. 1980), have attempted to predict viewer interests, yet Wulfemeyer (1984) found that past research (Gans, 1979) only revealed how little journalists really know about audience behavior.

Applying his CIEBWUS Index Rating, Wulfemeyer had respondents ($N = 250$) rank order their degrees of interest by category and subcategory. He then surveyed journalists ($N = 20$) at television newsrooms in the San Diego market and compared their predictions with the actual results. Out of the six categories, the journalists were able to correctly predict four of the major newscast content category preferences ($p < .05$). The journalists predicted that audiences would be most interested in unexpected events, but, in fact, viewers ranked issues as their first choice. The journalists correctly identified the subcategories pertaining to entertainment ($p < .01$) and sports ($p < .01$). Wulfemeyer's findings tend to support previous research, which has demonstrated that journalists may not understand their audiences' needs and preferences. His study also indicates that audiences' preferences may or may not hinge on how the newscasters present the news or what kind of parasocial relationships they establish on air or what type of content the newscasts air. His findings suggest that journalists are unable to predict what kinds of stories viewers prefer.

Audiences' preferences for certain kinds of news stories were also explored in Behnke and Miller's (1992) study. These researchers sought to determine whether the chronological placement of stories within a news program affects the audience's level of arousal or their relative levels of interest in the news segments. A diverse group of undergraduate students ($N = 60$) from a prominent southwestern university participated in the study. The students used an audience analyzer keyboard with 5 keys attached to a computer to record their levels of interest in the content found in a 30-minute newscast. No statistically significant relationship was found between the students' level of interest and the order of the stories presented in the news program. Regarding question two, four

newscast segments, which included (1) news stories, (2) sports, (3) commercials, and (4) weather, were compared to one another. Significance was found between 1 and 3 ($p = .05$), 1 and 4 ($p = .05$), and 2 and 3 ($p = .05$). Findings from the study suggest that in determining levels of audience response, segment content is more important than segment placement.

Lin (1992) noted “little research has systematically examined the quality of news content,” (p. 375). She speculated that viewers may find it difficult to recognize differences in quality among different local channels since most stations have comparable quality. Citing Wulfemeyer’s (1983, 1984) research, she suggested that strict quantitative methods might be helpful to gain additional insight into the quality of newscast content. To establish a strict qualitative evaluative criterion, she tested audience selectivity and exposure patterns in a Midwest television market serving three different states. A telephone survey was conducted and data were collected from residents of the centrally located county in the television market. The survey yielded 259 responses from 54.4% males and 45.6% females with a cable penetration of 45% of households. Lin tested for six selectivity and exposure factors: *Newscaster* (the importance of newscaster for channel preferences) *Content* (respondents’ perceptions of reporting quality for news categories) *Local News Exposure* (total number of times respondents watched the channel); *Media-Use* (correlations with local news, measuring the total amount of time network newscasts were viewed); *Carry-Over* (whether network newscasts were the lead in for local newscasts); and *Demographic*. A series of open-ended questions were asked to establish the grounds for audiences’ preferences of one channel over another. Using a 4-point scale of “Very Important” to “Not Important”, Lin’s found that weather persons’

personalities were perceived as a very important selectivity factor (38.4%) followed by news anchors' personalities (32.9%), reporters' personalities (23.2%) and sports anchors' personalities (13.3%). The top four content categories rated by the audience as very important were national news (52%), world news (47.1%), weather reports (45.7%), and local news (43.8%). The reasons or news program selection given in response to the open ended questions were grouped into 12 categories with the top five being reporting scope (33.3%), reporting quality (12.8%), habit (12.8%), technical quality (10.7%) and personalities (6.6%). Lin's research suggests that news audience members expect to receive quality reports regardless of the station or network.

Lin's finding that quality is an important reason for news viewing decisions supports the hypothesis that quality does matter to the viewing audience. Examining quality-related characteristics of content and comparing these characteristics to audiences' program choices is within the realm of this research study.

Summary of Most Relevant Studies

Different facets of television news have been studied for almost 40 years. The following studies are most relevant to the study of backpack journalism and its relation to quality newsgathering. One of the earliest studies of television news production suggested that camera composition is an effective way to achieve increasing credibility. Tuchman's (1973) analysis implied that when Americans are faced with conflicting media reports of the same event, television visuals are considered more believable print

media. Edwardson, et.al. (1976) suggested that visuals reinforce news recall better than a news anchor providing oral information. Gunter (1980) found that image content had a profound effect on the learning process of news items, although Drew and Cadwell's (1985) found students pay closer attention to audio when presented with redundant visual and aural information in TV news. Drew and Grimes (1987) concluded that audio was the primary channel of information for news recall if the audio and video information matched. Production techniques such as pacing or sound effects associated in a tabloid style news presentation are not deemed newsworthy by audiences compared to standard presentational styles (Grabe et.al, 2000). Lang et.al., (2003) found that certain production techniques used in writing and editing were likely to enhance the enjoyability, informativeness, and believability of news stories.

Research on technology in newsgathering provides a basis for this study of backpack journalism. Some research indicates that technology helps with newsgathering while others claim technology jeopardizes quality. Smith's (1984) research suggested that 86% of news directors believe technology influences news content. Lacy, et.al. (1988) found a "Keeping up with the Joneses" mentality when television stations invested in satellite newsgathering (SNG): if the one competitor in a market adopted SNG capability, then all the stations in that market were likely to do the same. However, Cleland and Ostroff (1988) observed that stations with SNG capability created more work for newsgathering personnel. News workers complained that technology was being used as a gimmick, at times overriding news judgments (Berkowitz, 1991). Critics regarded SNG as a tool for filling news holes and complained that it diminished the diversity of types of stories presented to the viewers in three different Texas television markets (Davie & Lee,

1993). On the other hand, Johnsen (2004) deemed the technology as a success. Fahmy and Smith (2005) found that digital imaging technology of digital images transformed the dynamics of newsrooms, allowed newsmakers greater flexibility, and enhanced and increased information sharing, although it created information storage problems (Fahmy & Smith, 2005).

Several researchers have examined the concept of quality in television news. Wulfemeyer (1982) developed a scale of news content to assess quality in local TV. He found that the CIR scales closely mirrored successful news stations' content. Roberts and Dickson (1984) suggested that audiences determine measures of quality and that stations' ratings are linked to popularity. Their findings may or may not be linked to news content or technical quality. Meijer (2003) suggested that news has been categorized too narrowly as either serious and sophisticated or light and popular. She suggested that the public quality of news should be examined. Shamir (2007) noted that most research into quality was from the perspective of the content producer. He found that the audiences were able to recognize differences in television production values, and that these production values influenced their interest and enjoyment of programs.

Notwithstanding journalists' abilities to cover news events, previous studies have suggested they may be out of touch with their audience. Gans (1979) discovered that journalists' decisions about what news to cover and how reflects their perceptions of audiences' preferences. However, their perceptions were found often to be inaccurate. Journalists' attributions tended to come from their knowledge of highly placed known public officials rather than from common people. Wulfemeyer's (1984) likewise found that journalists were unable to predict what stories the audience preferred. Lin (1992)

found the viewers were preferred that important events of local or national importance be covered well regardless of the news category.

Past research has established that technology has played a key role in television newsgathering. Station management desires technology in order to showcase their newsgathering capabilities. News workers are somewhat fearful that technological shifts have affected quality and may lead to job loss. Some audience research has found the use of video may not be as important as audio in television news recall. Moreover, audiences also have a basic understanding of television production techniques.

What is unknown is the role of quality in news presentation. Professionals have mostly defined quality but not the viewing audience. Measurements of quality of technical criteria have yet to be explored. Another unknown is the effect of the Internet on gratifications obtained from television news among young viewers.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study is to explore whether technical attributes/measures impact news consumers' perceptions of differences in quality between traditional broadcast newsgathering methods and backpack journalism. The following are the proposed hypotheses and research questions:

- H1: The audience will prefer news stories produced by BPJ than those produced by a traditional newsgathering crew in terms of production quality.
- H2: The audience members with experience in media courses or news production will prefer news stories produced by BPJ than those produced by a traditional newsgathering crew in terms of production quality.

- RQ1: Will the audience prefer the pacing of traditional newsgathering stories as opposed to BPJ stories?
- RQ2: Will the audience prefer the camera shots of traditional newsgathering stories as opposed to BPJ stories?
- RQ3: Will the audience prefer the lighting in the video segments of traditional newsgathering stories as opposed to BPJ stories?
- RQ4: Will the audience prefer the voice narration of traditional newsgathering stories as opposed to BPJ stories?
- RQ5: Will the audience prefer the interview-presentation style of traditional newsgathering stories as opposed to BPJ stories?
- RQ6: Will the audience prefer the balance in the writing of traditional newsgathering stories as opposed to BPJ stories?

Chapter 3 Methodology

Research Design

The primary purpose of this study was to explore whether technical attributes/measures impact news consumers' perceptions of quality between traditional broadcast newsgathering methods and backpack journalists. The target demographic for this research was younger news consumers, because this group is most likely to shape how news information may be delivered in the near future. The news consumers selected for this study were college students.

A total of eight news stories, four produced by BPJs and four by two-person news crews were randomly selected from one week of videotaped newscasts from the Nashville, Tennessee television market. The stories were shown to students to elicit their opinions concerning the quality of the news stories produced by BPJs and traditional newsgathering crews. Respondents evaluated the news stories' quality across six aspects: pacing, lighting, narration, writing, shot selection, and interviews.

Survey research was employed to measure the respondents' beliefs and opinions concerning television news (Berger, 1998; Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 1990; Creswell, 2003). Creswell (2003) suggests using a survey method to capture a moment in time concerning attitudes and opinions about a topic. Shoemaker and McCombs (2003) reinforce Creswell's suggestion by proposing a cross-sectional survey, in which "the respondents are interviewed only once, and the data collected provide a snapshot of the population at

the time of the field work (the interviewing) is done” (p. 233). The cross sectional survey for this study was designed to capture attitudes of a large number of people in a short amount of time (Shoemaker & McCombs, 2003).

Data collection was implemented after receiving permission from the instructors of record to conduct research in their classrooms. For data collection outside of scheduled class hours, an alternative classroom was made available for respondents who voluntarily chose to participate. These students were enrolled in introductory speech communication courses.

A single researcher collected the data over a three weeks, using a face-to-face paper-based survey, which was designed to measure the respondents’ opinions while viewing television news vignettes (e.g. Drew & Grimes, 1987; Tiggemann & Slater, 2004; Gunter, 1980; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar, 2000; Lang, Potter, & Grabe, 2003).

Respondents were given a set of verbal instructions, which reinforced written instructions on the survey instrument. They were instructed to stop after completing the section of questions concerning media consumption habits. They were then instructed to watch each individual news story and rank their opinions. Respondents recorded their answers on an optical scannable (Optical Mark Read-OMR) NCS Pearson answer sheet, commonly known as a scantron-form.

Several measures were implemented in the design of the survey instrument. The survey included original material and items used by others in order to address the hypothesis and research questions. The section on media usage, intended to give an indication of the respondents’ preferred media seeking habits, was adopted from a Bates, et.al. (2006) study involving student information seeking during natural disasters. Of the

original eight media choices, “Other Internet Sites” was combined with “Internet News Sites.” “Email” and “Student Newspaper” were added to the survey. A second set of eight questions explored the theoretical perspective of uses and gratification to determine if audience members were active in seeking or gaining certain gratifications from television news (Levy & Windahl, 1984). The first five questions of the section were drawn from Levy and Windahl’s gratifications statements (p. 75) to help give an indication of why viewers watched television news. The last three questions were designed to see if respondents made plans to watch news. These questions employed Levy and Windahl’s notion of audience pre-activity, the issue of whether viewers interrupt their schedules to catch newscasts. Questions in quality were duplicated for each of the eight news stories for the survey. Eight questions asked about how interesting and useful the respondents found the information in the news stories. Three questions required respondents to choose variables along a bipolar adjective scale as in Obermiller’s Affective Response scale (p. 21, 1985). This scale was used to provide a high reliability during testing. The other five questions were adopted from Bates et.al.’s (2006) scale, although two were used in Drew and Cadwell’s (1985) study.

Population and Sample

This study surveyed students in large introductory classes at a large southeastern United States university. A convenience sample was used to collect data with a target of 400 respondents. Actual sample size exceeded the target yielding 493 ($N = 493$) respondents. Although a convenience sample is deemed weak in term of external validity

and considered biased (Trochim, 2001), all the respondents belonged to the target demographic of the study, college students as news consumers.

As members of the Internet generation, college students are a prime population to examine in order to capture trends in consumer habits. Shuptrine (1975) stated, "Because of time, distance, and money considerations, students are often used as quick and convenient sources of information," (p. 383). Much evidence suggests that this population is seeking information elsewhere other than traditional mediums of television news. News programmers need to explore why this demographic is seeking other sources of information, instead of the local TV news and make adjustments based on this research.

Younger demographics such as college students are an important section of the general population to study television news usage habits. The Pew Research Center (2007, p.8) has found that audience members 18-29 years of age say that they prefer local news (76%) compared to network (74%) or cable (73%) as a primary news source. Though the new media seem to be the first choice for information gathering (Kaye & Johnson, 2003), the Internet news audience found local TV news the most favorable (78%), tied with newspapers as a traditional form of media preference (Pew, 2007, p.1). When asked about where they went to seek news on the previous day 18-29 year olds (Pew, 2006) said they got their news from TV (49%) as opposed to the Internet (24%). These numbers reinforce to the idea that 18-29 demographics will be a coveted demographic for news consumers.

The Stimuli

The 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. newscasts of the ABC, NBC, and CBS network affiliates in Nashville, Tennessee were videotaped during the week of March 17th-21st, 2008. Nashville was chosen both because of its convenience as well as the researcher's familiarity with that television market. The ABC affiliate used both the BPJ model and traditional two-person crew for newsgathering, while the NBC and CBS affiliates employed traditional two-person newsgathering teams (a photographer and a reporter). All stories were coded to determine if they fit the criteria of a news package (Diefenbach, 2008), which are defined as, "news stories that are shot in the field and edited together," (p. 230). News packages include interview segments and usually reporter narration and require more production attention by newsroom personnel than any other story type.

Once news packages were identified as being potentially produced by a BPJ (ABC affiliate), e-mails were sent to the creators of the news content identified by name on screen or verbally, asking if they had any help during the production of the news stories. Twelve stories were confirmed via email to be created by a BPJ. The other two network affiliates yielded a combined 23 stories for the week. Stories were assigned by channel designation and order of appearance during the week. For example, the CBS affiliate was given the number 5 for their channel recognition and the first story to meet the package criteria was allocated the letter "a." All stories for that particular channel were given subsequent alphabetical letters along with a brief tag line to describe the event (e.g. 4F—Park shooting). All BPJ stories ($n = 12$) were placed into statistical analysis software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences—SPSS 16) to produce a random sample

of four. The other affiliate stories ($n = 23$) were randomized by SPSS 16 to yield four as well. The eight stories were then randomized using a random number generator (<http://www.pangloss.com/seidel/rnumber.cgi>) to determine order of presentation.

Respondents were shown eight-videotaped news stories produced in this local mid-sized news market. Past research studies have used eight stories for presentation (Edwardson, et.al., 1976; Grabe, et.al., 2000). For this particular research, any number under eight would not generate an acceptable dichotomy between the two styles of newsgathering. Any number over eight could have led to respondent fatigue. The stories were presented to the respondents in this order:

1. Ag Day on Capital Hill
2. Pastor Killed by Goat
3. Marshall Co. Rabies
4. Soldier Getting Storm Help
5. Mayors for Meals on Wheels
6. School Director Saved by AED
7. Sumner Co. School Calendar
8. Montgomery Co. Attorney Arrest

Stories produced by BPJs fell in the number one, five, six, and seven positions while news packages by traditional crews occupied positions two, three, four, and eight. The stories fit into various genres, including issues, entertainment, and unexpected events (e.g. Wulfemeyer, 1982). Once the stories were chosen, they were imported to Final Cut Pro to create a digital file on DVD to eliminate any loss of audio or video quality.

The length of each of the segments ranged from one minute to a maximum of two minutes and two seconds, averaging one minute and thirty-four seconds. The average lengths of stories produced by the BPJ were one minute and twenty-six seconds compared to a one minute and forty-three second average for the stories by the traditional

crews. All stories were shown with added graphics used to indicate the location of the story, the names of the interviewees, and/or the names of narrators.

Questionnaire Construction

The 131 question survey consisted of questions designed to determine (1) frequency of television news viewing, (2) choice of media in news seeking, (3) evaluations of the production values applied to the video samples, (4) demographic information, (5) preferences for types of news reports, (6) gratification statements, and (7) perceptions of quality.

Questions one through nine asked where the respondents seek their information-seeking habits using a Likert-type 5-point scale. The tenth question was designed to establish whether the respondents were light, moderate or heavy news consumers. The next question concerning where the respondent attended high school/home schooled was intended to filter any bias that might exist, especially when the visual stimuli were being provided by the Middle Tennessee television market. Questions twelve through sixteen were based on Levy and Windahl's (1984) research on gratifications sought by television consumers. A series of three questions were asked concerning opinions on whether the stories were interesting, unpleasant, and good based on Obermiller's (1985) Affective Response Scale, which established dependent variables in the instrument. The other five opinion questions focused on the degree to which the respondents found the stories enjoyable (Shamir, 2007), informative, useful, relatable, and relevant. These adjectives

probed the respondents' use of television as entertainment. These eight questions were repeated for all eight news stories.

Each video example was assigned six criteria measuring technical aspects (e.g. Babrow, 1987) of the stimuli, specifically pacing (e.g. Levy, 1978), visual presentation (e.g. camera shots), lighting, voice narration, context of interviews, and writing. Respondents evaluated these aspects using a scale similar to Shamir's (2007): extremely high quality; high quality; fair quality; so, so, more or less in the middle; low quality; and very low quality.

One open-ended question was asked to determine whether respondents were able to recall specifics about the stories (Drew & Cadwell, 1985). They were instructed to provide information on which story they remembered best. This was to measure if the students could recall a specific piece of information or video. The question would give an indication of whether video was important to the salience of the news stories.

The last part of the questionnaire collected basic demographic information: age, ethnicity, gender and educational level. The final question inquired about the level of the student's news experience. The news experience would indicate prior exposure to the news profession either through educational courses or work as a content producer. These prior exposures might affect how much news the respondents consumed or how they assessed the quality for each video story.

Procedures

Potential respondents were chosen through contact with professors and instructors who taught classes in the areas of desired student demographics. Basic communication, journalism and general speech courses were surveyed. These were selected to reflect a variety of student interests. It was assumed that communication and journalism students would offer different opinions concerning quality than would students in general speech courses, which are taken by students from many fields of study as part of the university's mandatory general education program.

Instructors' permission was sought to conduct a research survey during their designated class times. Permission for access to speech courses was solicited through the program coordinator. Speech class instructors gave the students times to participate in the survey process. Students enrolled in the speech courses were required to participate as part of their course grade.

A total of twenty-three classes were asked to participate in the survey. Two of the introduction to communication class instructors declined to take part in the research process. An introduction to news writing class provided the most class participation, with ten sections participating followed by eight of the general speech communication classes, two introduction to communication classes and one introduction to electronic media class.

The presentation of the stories took place in a three different venues. One venue was a large auditorium seating up to 250 respondents. Pencils and optical scan sheets were distributed. Respondents were asked not to filling in identifying information on the

sheets or on the printed surveys. The printed surveys (see Appendix One) were then distributed and the researcher asked the respondents to answer questions one through nineteen. The questionnaire took approximately 35 minutes to administer.

In the large auditorium locations, lights were dimmed at the front of the room, where the images were projected onto a screen size of approximately 12 X 16 feet. The video was presented via an Apple laptop computer hooked up to a Smart Board podium and projected onto the screen. The audio portion of the presentation was heard through large speakers. A smaller auditorium designed to seat approximately 100 used the same audio/visual format. Two types of classroom settings were used to administer the survey instrument. The large classroom could seat approximately 130, while the smaller classroom held approximately 35 respondents. Both classroom settings used a SmartBoard type setup for audio/visual with a projection screen size of approximately 6 X 8 feet. The larger classroom used an overhead speaker system to distribute the audio. For all respondents in the smaller classroom locations, external speakers were added to enhance the audio in order to replicate the auditorium conditions.

Reliability

A consultation with colleagues and advisors helped with instrument design. Following pre-test the survey instrument was administered to respondents. A reliability scale measuring *interesting*, *unpleasant*, *informative*, *useful*, *enjoyable*, *relate* (relating to story), *good*, and *relevant* yielded a Cronbach's Alpha range of .81 to .88. The criteria for *unpleasant* was reverse coded. For measuring quality including the criteria of *pacing*,

camera shots, lighting, narration, interviews, and writing, the Cronbach's Alpha (α) ranged from .78 to .88. Both sets of questions were considered reliable.

Statistical Analysis

A database was developed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS 16.0). All optical scanned surveys were combined into a Microsoft Excel file before being imported into the SPSS file. Information supplied by respondents was coded and analyzed for ordinal and nominal data. A series of *t-tests* was implemented to compare mean differences between the eight stories and the six criteria. Repeated measure ANOVAs were used to measure any differences between prior news experience and the six criteria. A series of cross tabulations was used to determine whether prior exposure to media related classes would have any effect on amount of time devoted to watching television news. Chi-squares were used to see if any statistical significance was present for the prior exposure test.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter presents the results of the survey instrument. The findings are presented in four parts. Part one describes the demographic makeup of the respondents. The amount of media usage by respondent is provided in part two. Part three is reports responses to the questions concerning opinions about the eight stories in terms of interest, relevancy, and information based. In the fourth part, responses to the questions of measures of quality are examined.

Sample Demographics

A convenience sample of 493 students ($N = 493$) was surveyed at a large southeastern university. The sample size included college-aged students in selected general education speech courses required for all majors. Instructors were contacted to gain permission to conduct research in their courses. Respondents were chosen from introductory communication, introductory to news writing, and introductory electronic media courses. This design made it possible to survey respondents with a range of levels with media exposures and to test if prior exposure to media or communication related courses had any effects on respondents' evaluations of the quality of news presentation. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the demographic data.

Of the 493 respondents, 56.8% were female and 38.3% were male ($n = 469$, 23 with missing or incorrect data). The respondents self-identified racially as Caucasian

(81.7%), Black (7.9%), Hispanic (2.2%), Asian (4.7%), and (2%) Other. In the age category, 40.6% of respondents identified their age group as 18-19 years of age. Two hundred and four of respondents indicated they were 20-21 years of age (41.4%), followed by 22-23 years of age (12.8%), 24-25 years of age (1.2%), and 26 or older (1.6%). Eight-two percent (82%) of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 21.

When asked to indicate their education level, 32% indicated they were “Freshmen”, 32.9% “Sophomore”, 20.3% “Junior”, and 10.8% with “Senior” standing. Respondents having a graduate school education comprised less than one percent of the group.

To test Hypothesis Two on whether prior news experience may affect perceptions of quality (see Table 1), respondents were asked, “Do you have any background in news? Please fill in all that apply.” Results indicated 110 (22.3%) respondents did not have any prior news experience. When asked if they had “*Taken courses related to media and/or mass communication,*” 138 (27.9%) responded affirmatively; 112 (22.7%) said they had “*Taken courses in journalism*”; 83 (16.8%) of respondents said they had “*Written or produced stories for school paper or other news program*”; and 50 (10.1%) indicated they “*Have experience as working journalist or producer.*” Variables were coded accordingly: zero (0) was assigned when question was left blank; one (1) was assigned to the answer “taken courses in media”; two (2) was assigned to answer taken courses in journalism”; three (3) was assigned to “written or produced stories for school related activities”; and four (4) was assigned to those who indicated having previous experience as a working journalist. If multiple answers were marked, the highest number was chosen to show a greater amount of knowledge and exposure to the media. In the case of

prior experience vs. no experience, variables were coded to reflect a one (1) if the answer was left blank or a two (2) if any variables were marked on the optical scan sheet.

Since the news stories were from the Middle Tennessee media market, the question, “Which of the following best describes where you attended high school (or were home schooled)?” was asked to determine if any bias in quality-evaluations might arise from regional connections. Respondents were given the choices of “West Tennessee,” “Middle Tennessee,” “East Tennessee,” or “Out of state.” Twenty-six point nine percent (26.9%, $n = 132$) of those indicated Middle Tennessee while 73% ($n = 358$) said otherwise.

Out of those not from Middle Tennessee, fourteen percent (14%) said they attended high school or were home schooled in the West Tennessee region. Those from East Tennessee garnered the highest representation (39.8%) and students from out of state comprised nearly twenty percent (18.9%) of sample population. The total sample size for this question was 490 ($N = 490$) with 3 missing.

Table 1 News Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Experience	110	22.3	22.3	22.3
	Courses Media/MC	138	28.0	28.0	50.3
	Courses Journalism	112	22.7	22.7	73.0
	Written/Produced Stories	83	16.8	16.8	89.9
	Exp. Working Journalist/Prod	50	10.1	10.1	100.0
	Total	493	100.0	100.0	

One question addressed the amount of hours respondents (devoted a week to watching television news (see Table 2). The question, “*Please indicate how much average time in a week do you watch TV news? (Round up to nearest hour.)*” was posed to determine if students did watch a considerable amount of television news. They were given choices in two hour increments: *0-2 hours, 3-5 hours, 6-8 hours, 9-11 hours, or more than 12 hours*. Almost half ($n = 235, 47.7\%$) of the respondents answered that they averaged less than *two hours* of television news a week. Those who chose *3-5 hours* (31.4%) were followed by *6-8 hours* (13.8%), *9-11 hours* (3.4%), and less than three percent indicated *more than 12 hours* (2.8%) of watching television news.

Table 2 Amount of Watching TV News

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-2 hrs.	235	47.7	48.1	48.1
	3-5 hrs.	155	31.4	31.7	79.8
	6-8 hrs.	68	13.8	13.9	93.7
	9-11 hrs.	17	3.4	3.5	97.1
	more than 12 hrs.	14	2.8	2.9	100.0
	Total	489	99.2	100.0	
Missing	*	4	.8		
	Total	4	.8		
Total		493	100.0		

Table 3 Prior Exposure/News Watching

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.546 (a)	16	.706
Likelihood Ratio	12.497	16	.709
N of Valid Cases	489		

A cross tabulation was conducted to discover whether those respondents who had prior exposure were associated with the likelihood to increasing news watching activity. A Person Chi-Square test (see Table 3) determined that no statistical significance ($p > .05$) existed ($N = 493$, value = 12.546, $df = 16$, $p = .706$).

Media Usage

Descriptive statistics were used to determine preferred choices of information sources. Respondents were asked the following question: “For the following set of questions, please indicate how much you would normally use these media for gathering news and information on current events. Use a scale where 1 means that *you never use it*, and 5 indicates that you would *use it very often*.”

A five point Likert-type scale was used to measure media use where one (1) represented “*Never*” and five (5) signified using the medium “*Very often*.” Nine forms

of media were represented: Local Newspaper, Local Television, Radio, Network TV, Cable News, Internet News Sites, Email, News magazines, and Student Newspaper.

Not surprisingly, *Internet News* (see Table 4) was the most preferred mode of information gathering ($n = 492$, $M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.159$). *Network TV* was second ($n = 492$, $M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.110$) followed by *Student Paper* ($n = 491$, $M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.207$), *Cable News* ($n = 491$, $M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.152$), *Local TV* ($n = 490$, $M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.173$), *Email* ($n = 492$, $M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.448$), *Radio* ($n = 489$, $M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.211$), *Local Paper* ($n = 493$, $M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.040$), and *News Magazines* ($n = 490$, $M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.038$).

Table 4 Media Usage

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internet News	492	3.89	1.159
Network TV	492	3.52	1.110
Student Paper	491	3.46	1.207
Cable News	491	3.37	1.152
Local TV	490	3.31	1.173
Email	492	3.18	1.448
Radio	489	2.77	1.211
Local Paper	493	2.71	1.040
News Magazines	490	2.21	1.038
Valid N (listwise)	485		

Gratifications from Television News

Questions 17-19 addressed the theory of uses and gratifications to see if college aged students were “active” media seekers, especially in terms of television news. These questions were designed to see if college students planned activities around designated broadcast news times. Respondents noted their level of agreement with these statements:

It is important to see the news from beginning to end
I usually plan my evenings so I do not miss the news on TV
I usually check the time so that I do not miss the news on TV

A five-point Likert type scale was used to measure exposure seeking. The number one (1) was to mean “*Strongly Disagree*” and five (5) meant “*Strongly Agree*.” Respondents indicated that the notion of pre-activity did not interfere with their choice to watch television news. When asked about watching television news from beginning to end, they tended to disagree ($n = 491, M = 2.41, SD = 1.117$). When asked about altering their evening plans so not to miss news on television, a trend of strong disagreement was evident ($M = 1.51, SD = .877$). The final item probed whether the students checked or even knew times for evening newscast. There was strong disagreement with this statement. ($M = 1.46, SD = .798$).

This survey implemented several questions to determine if college aged students are considered “active” participants in news information seeking. To determine the role of gratifications-sought (following on Levy and Windahl’s study) a series of five questions were posed to probe the gratifications that the respondents sought from

television news media. Levy and Windahl found that gratifications-sought aligned closely with gratifications obtained.

Past research has shown that respondents were given the statement on how much they would normally use television for gathering of news and information. They were given a five point Likert type scale where one (1) represented “*Strongly Disagree*” and five (5) meant “*Strongly Agree.*” The students were asked to finish the statement, “*I watch news on TV because...*” The questions were as follows:

I want to be informed about important events.

I want to get some entertainment.

I want information I can trust.

I want to know about things I can tell other people.

I want to know in advance about things like higher prices.

Descriptive statistics were run to see in what order college students preferred the gratifications statements (see Table 5). Entertainment is the preferred choice in television gratification (Lichtenstein & Rosenfeld, 1983). However, this sample ($N = 491$) indicated they agreed that being informed about important events was the highest priority ($M = 4.02$, $SD = .987$). Trustworthiness of information was second ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.211$) followed by entertainment ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.208$), being knowledgeable to chitchat among others ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.108$) and information about prices was last ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.193$).

Although Lichtenstein and Rosenfeld (1983) suggest entertainment as the primary gratification received from television, they found that information about daily life was second. This study found important events were preferred and trustworthy information second. This juxtaposition of entertainment may suggest that an important

Table 5 Reasons to Watch

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Informed Events	491	4.02	.987
Info Trust	491	3.67	1.211
Entertainment	491	3.55	1.208
Tell Things	491	3.32	1.108
Price Info	491	3.16	1.193
Valid N (listwise)	491		

event such as the Iraq War is more important to college students at this time than information concerning the latest Hollywood scandal.

Research Questions

Statistical measures of analysis of variance and paired sample *t-tests* were used to test hypotheses one and two. Paired *t-tests* were implemented to compare differences in perceptions of quality among the eight different news stories. Half of the stories were produced by BPJs and the other half produced by two or more news personnel (traditional photographer/reporter teams). Stories produced by the BPJs were coded as “general,” (for “media generalist” while the others were coded as “specialist” to indicate news personnel with narrowly defined job duties.

Duplicate questions concerning the six criteria associated with production values were posed about each of the 8 news stories. The following questions were asked:

I found the pacing of the story to be:

I found the camera shots to be:

I found the lighting in the story to be:

I found the voice narration to be:
I found the interviews to be:
I found writing (script) of the story to be:

Respondents were given a 5-point Likert type scale to measure quality. One (1) suggests the stories were of “*Very low quality*,” two (2) represented the value of “*Low quality*,” three (3) indicated “*So, so, more or less in the middle*,” four (4) indicated “*High quality*,” while five (5) represented “*Very high quality*.” This was an adaptation of Shamir’s (2007) six-point quality scale.

RQ1: Will the audience prefer pacing of traditional newsgathering stories as opposed to BPJ stories?

Respondents’ assessments of the quality of pacing in the four stories produced by a media generalist (BPJ) yielded an average mean of 3.33 ($N = 493$, $SD = .692$). For the stories produced by the media specialist (traditional crews), the assessment of pacing-quality had an average mean of 3.42 ($SD = .664$). Comparing the between generalist and specialist with a paired sample *t-test*, respondents were able to differentiate between the two sources ($t = -2.925$, $df = 492$, $p = .004$), giving the specialist stories a higher average rating than the generalist stories. (See Table 6).

RQ2: Will the audience prefer camera shots of traditional newsgathering stories as opposed to BPJ stories?

When asked about their perceptions of quality in the different camera shots, the stories produced by a generalist received an average mean rating of 3.15 ($SD = .701$), compared to the average mean of 3.20 ($SD = .672$) for those produced by the specialists. However, no statistical significance was found. A paired sample *t-test* was used when respondents were not able to differentiate between the stories ($t = -1.633$). This shows

the respondents had no preference for camera angles or the visual framing of the individual scenes (see Table 6).

RQ3: Will the audience prefer lighting in the video segments of traditional newsgathering stories as opposed to BPJ stories?

Respondents were asked to judge the quality of the eight stories based on lighting of the scenes or shots. Using a paired sample *t-test* to examine stories produced by a generalist, the average mean of 3.20 ($SD = .694$) was lower than the average mean of a 3.25 ($SD = .656$) for the stories produced by the specialists. The results of the tests a ($t = -2.103, df = 492, p = .036$) indicated that students were able to tell a difference in the quality of lighting between the stories produced by media specialists and generalists (see Table 6).

RQ4: Will the audience prefer voice narration of traditional newsgathering stories as opposed to BPJ stories?

The production criterion of narration was also addressed in the survey. Narration encompasses such effects as tonal quality, audio-delivery and voice inflection. The listener may find certain vocal styles to be soothing, informative, or even annoying. The presentational style of the generalist on average was rated at a mean of 3.46 ($SD = .707$). However, narration provided produced by the specialist garnered higher ratings ($M = 3.56, SD = .668$). A strong statistical significance was found for this variable using a paired sample *t-test* ($t = -3.770, df = 492, p < .001$), thus suggesting a preference for media specialists in the narration quality criterion (see Table 6).

RQ5: Will the audience prefer how the interviews are presented of traditional newsgathering stories as opposed to BPJ stories?

Interview segments are key to reinforcing information presented in a television news story. Those segments produced by generalists ($M = 3.32$, $SD = .751$) received a lower average mean ratings than segments produced by media specialists ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .685$). A paired sample *t-test* indicated a strong statistical significance for this finding ($t = -3.381$, $df = 492$, $p = .001$). This suggests that the respondents preferred the quality of interviews provided by specialists over those provided by generalists (see Table 6).

RQ6: Will the audience prefer the balance in the writing of traditional newsgathering stories as opposed to BPJ stories?

The presentation of the written word may have just as great an impact as narration in the communication of ideas. This question explored if respondents may be able to perceive a difference between the writing produced by media generalists and media specialists. Respondents did not have access to scripts and relied upon hearing the information. The ratings for the quality of writing were higher for stories by generalists ($M = 3.33$, $SD = .717$) than for those by specialists ($M = 3.30$, $SD = .716$) as indicated by the average mean. However, the respondents were not able to differentiate writing between the content producers, according to paired sample *t-test* ($t = 1.257$). No significant difference was found (see Table 6).

H1: The audience will prefer news stories produced by BPJ than those produced by a traditional newsgathering crew in terms of production quality.

H2: The audience members with experience in media courses or news production will prefer news stories produced by BPJ than those produced by a traditional newsgathering crew in terms of production quality.

Hypothesis One sought to explore audience preferences of production quality of news stories produced by traditional newsgathering techniques and BPJ techniques. Overall, the respondents, regardless of their previous exposure to news, found differences in four of the six criteria designed to measure quality. The statistically significant findings on ($p \leq .05$) criteria of story pacing ($p = .004$), lighting ($p = .036$), narration ($p < .001$), and interview choice ($p = .001$) indicate that students were able to establish clear preferences for production values. The technical criteria of writing and camera composition were not found to be statistically significant. Since four of the six criteria were statistically significant, it is possible to conclude that respondents do prefer stories produced by traditional newsgathering teams as opposed to BPJs. Thus, hypothesis one is confirmed.

To test hypothesis two concerning the influence of prior media exposure on students' preferences, a series of repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were implemented. These tests determined whether the relationship between respondents' levels of prior news experience (see Table 7) and their ability to differentiate between the six quality criteria. Ironically, all criteria tested against Hypothesis two using repeated measure ANOVAs did not yield any statistical significance. Hypothesis two is rejected. Results are in table eight.

Table 6 Quality of Production Values Comparison

		Avg. Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pacing	General	3.33	.692	-2.925	492	.004
	Specific	3.42	.664			
Shots	General	3.15	.701	-1.633	492	.103
	Specific	3.20	.672			
Lighting	General	3.20	.694	-2.103	492	.036
	Specific	3.25	.656			
Narration	General	3.46	.707	-3.770	492	.000
	Specific	3.56	.668			
Interviews	General	3.32	.751	-3.381	492	.001
	Specific	3.43	.685			
Writing	General	3.33	.717	1.257	492	.209
	Specific	3.30	.716			

Table 7 News Experience

		Value Label	N
News Experience	0	No Experience	110
	1	Courses Media/MC	138
	2	Courses Journalism	112
	3	Written/Produced Stories	83
	4	Exp. Working Journalist/Producer	50

Table 8 Influence of Previous News Experience

	Mean		F	Hypothesis df	Error df	<i>p</i>
	General	Specific				
Pacing	3.33	3.42	2.244	4	488	.063
Shots	3.15	3.20	1.255	4	488	.287
Lighting	3.20	3.25	1.010	4	488	.402
Narration	3.46	3.56	1.428	4	488	.224
Interviews	3.32	3.43	1.735	4	488	.141
Writing	3.33	3.30	.377	4	488	.825

Open-Ended Question Data Analysis

One question in the survey instrument was designed to explore story recall. A total of 356 (72.2%) of the 493 total respondents provided responses to question 132 that indicated their recall of details from the simulated newscast. Females provided more of these responses (61.5%) than males (38.4%). The question asked, “*Out of all the stories, which one do you remember the best? Why?*”

Some respondents provided information but did not provide a gender, while others indicated the story number without providing any details associated with that story. Those were not included in the data examination.

Respondents provided more comments on the soldier story than any other. Table 9 shows a listing of all the stories by the percentages of comments the received in response to the open-ended question, along with their order of presentation.

All handwritten responses were recorded on separate pieces of paper. The optical scan sheets were also checked for responses. If they met the data examination criteria, each response was recorded with scan sheet number, gender and comment. Analysis of the open-ended comments yielded nine themes that made stories memorable for respondents: the war effort/troop supporters, proximity to the story location (i.e. stories about the respondents' own county/city), pet lovers/owners, unusual news stories, emotional news stories, technical prowess, human interest, news judgment, and participation in society. Once the themes emerged, they were collapsed into four categories. These categories were relevancy to respondent, news judgment, technical aspects of presentation, and uniqueness of the news story.

Table 9 Order of Presentation

Order	Story	% of Responses
4	Soldier	24.7
3	Rabies	21.3
7	Schools	18.8
1	Cows	10.6
2	Pastor	8
8	Attorney	6
5	Meals on Wheels	5
6	AED	4

Respondent Relevancy

One common theme emerged from the respondents' comments was a tendency to recall the informational content of particular stories. Nearly all the comments were dealt with the content of the stories rather than their production values. For example, respondent 127 (male) recalled the school year story because, "It interested me, seemed like a good idea." Respondents noted the relevancy of stories to their own lives. Themes in this category were story proximity, family and friends in the military, pet owners, participation in charitable work, family in secondary education, and the school calendar.

A large number of comments mentioned the school calendar story as relevant to them. Several respondents mentioned they lived in the county where the story was reported, while others remarked that they found the story interesting because they had been in high school within the past couple of years. Respondent 148, a male, wrote that the modified calendar would mess up his summer camp work plans. Female respondent (202) said, "I plan on becoming a teacher and this new school schedule can effect (sic) me in the future." Another female (219) expressed concern that the new schedule will affect her and her child. Respondents 52 and 240, both female, noted the implications of this story for their younger siblings.

The story involving an injured soldier coping with the damage to this roof in foul weather garnered a lot of attention. Many respondents knew of friends and family in the military and expressed appreciation that the community helped out. They also found it inspiring and uplifting that the media was covering the topic. Others recalled the story,

but provided little detail. However, one female (233) said the story especially hit home. “I remembered the story about the US soldier. My father was killed in the recent war.”

Another story that received many comments concerned rabies in Marshall County, Tennessee. Most of the students who commented on this indicated that they were pet owners. Some said they related to it because they had had to put down a pet. Respondent number 69, a female, related to the story by indicating, “I had a dog who got the disease.”

Participation in charitable acts was mostly associated with the meals on wheels story. Respondents 81, a female, and 264, a male, mentioned they had participated in the program. “I serve at a soup kitchen,” said number 175 (male) about his relation to the story. Another male (345) was glad to see the message being spread to help get aid to the program.

News Judgment

Some of the respondents voiced displeasure with the content of the news. They called into question whether some of the stories were actually newsworthy. The bulk of the criticism came as the expense of the cow-milking story. Respondent 259 (male) said, “Contest between officials milking a cow...was so outrageous that this is a news story.” “It defined bad news,” said a male (22). Another male (178) voiced displeasure by saying, “I remember this story because it was horrible. I’ve never seen such a bad story.” Not all the critics were males. Two females (362 and 211) pointed out the lack of relevance and stupidity of the story. “Ridiculous and not news,” summed up the attitude

of female respondent 327. Female respondent 197 remembered the story as “completely pointless and a waste of television time.”

Other stories also were the target of comments about news judgment. A female respondent (257) indicated her story “Because it involved crime, which is one of the categories Americans thrive for on television.” Female 333 offered criticism of the story involving the pastor being accidentally killed by a family goat. “I mean seriously, is this the only kind of stinkin’ (sic) news they have to offer? ‘Cuz (sic) people die everyday.”

Story Uniqueness

A large number of respondents commented stories because of their emotional appeal, peculiarity or uniqueness. Many comments from the respondents reported on their emotional responses to the stories. Words such as “touching,” “heart-felt,” “sad,” “sympathy/empathy” and “emotional” were associated with the stories about rabies, the death of the pastor, the injured soldier and meals on wheels. Apparently, respondents these stories made a lasting impression on the respondents because they felt emotionally connected to the information. The rabies story evoked memories of the movie “Old Yeller” in a couple of respondents (208—female and 376—male). In a similar vein, several respondents offered positive comments about the stories involving meals on wheels and injured soldier. Words of encouragement such as “heart-warming,” “uplifting,” were associated with both of those stories. The comments reflected positive outcomes for the receipts of aid in the story lines.

The stories on cow-milking and the death of the pastor garnered a lot of comments on their uniqueness. A few described the stories as “bizarre,” “weird” or

“peculiar.” One respondent (222—male) commented on “the killer goat rampage. It was sad but so absurd it was almost funny.” Another male (36) said about the pastor story, “It was bizarre and touching.” While a few respondents noted that the cow-milking story was “weird” and “bizarre,” most respondents viewed it as a light-hearted story. “It was interesting and entertaining,” said respondent number three, a female. Respondent number 367 (female) enjoyed it by stating, “It was neat to watch public officials engage in a fun different type of competition that brought them back to their childhood and was all in good fun.”

Technical Presentation

Respondents indicated that they noticed certain production techniques in the stories. A couple of females (142 & 14) took note of the reporter’s voice in the animal stories. Number 142 enjoyed the male reporter’s narration of the rabies story, while number 14 did not like the vocal presentation of the cow-milking story because “reporter was so country-sounding that I was distracted.” However, respondent 33 (female) suggested that the cow story had better voice narration and camera shots than the other stories. Narration was a concern of female respondent number 10, who suggested that the reporter of the school story rushed his speech, “but the story was well written.” This comment integrated observations about both writing and oral presentation. Two females correctly identified analogies used by the reporter in the soldier’s story: “Don’t sweat the small stuff,” and “small things” were identified in the storyline by 117 and 210 respectively. A male (198) commented on the “good play on words” in the cow-milking story.

A few respondents observed video aspect of the stories. Respondent 51, a male, said the soldier story had “good camera shots” with “little lighting problems.” Male, number 25, noted the well roundedness of content and production of the soldier story. A female (11) liked the video shots of the soldier’s baby even though she felt bad for his situation. The pastor story had “memorable shots” according to male 156, though he did not indicate what was memorable about them. One respondent (18, female) recalled the school story because of the camera shots, but noted that the “scrolling phrases were annoying.” One male (402) was able to relate to the school calendar story because “They interviewed a good looking elementary school teacher.” The respondents’ reactions to news video production techniques suggest that some viewers are aware of some elements some video presentation. However, the lack of numerous comments on this aspect of the newscast may suggest that video may not matter to this audience.

The open-ended question provided some insight to what might be the underlying factor in story recall. Respondents commented over and over on one salient image: of a soldier who was missing a leg. The power of this image might be attributable to the camera angle of the video shot, the respondents’ emotional attachment to his situation or their concern about the current state of national affairs. No clear theme emerged in the comments to indicate why this particular scene was recalled by so many students.

Past research studies have suggested recall is a key factor in news consumption. The open-ended question was implemented to see if video was an influence on recall. Other studies have suggested audio is more important than video in news recall. Since camera composition was found not to be statistically significant in this study, these findings also suggest that audio may be more important than video. It appears that

technical aspects of the video-production, such as shot composition were less salient than aural information for the respondents in this study, whether the stories were produced by a traditional news crew or a BPJ.

Summary of Key Findings

The study revealed that college students were able to differentiate video news production values between stories produced by a backpack journalist and a news crew consisting of two or more specialists. Respondents were able to distinguish differences in quality for four of six criteria for evaluating news presentation. Statistically significant differences in quality assessment were found ($p \leq .05$) for the criteria of pacing, lighting, narration, and selection of interviews. For the criteria of shot selection and writing, respondents were not able to make a distinction in the quality of news depending on how it was produced.

It was hypothesized that prior exposure to academic courses may affect news consumption behaviors and may influence the ability to differentiate content produced by a media generalist and media specialists. This hypothesis did not receive any statistically significant support for any news production criteria.

The findings also suggest that students' have not abandoned television news just yet, which supports previous research about students' information-seeking behaviors. Although it appears that the Internet is making substantial gains in this demographic, news programmers should find it encouraging that television news is still being consumed at least three hours a week by nearly over 40% of the sample. However, they

may be somewhat discouraged to learn that almost half watch less than two hours a week of news programming. For those who are still consuming television news the main motivation is not entertainment, but the desire to be informed about important events.

The open-ended question provided some insight into whether video is an important measure of news consumption. Respondents were able to make some emotional connections to some of the stories upon recall of the newscast. However, many were not able to recall detailed information. Several respondents were able to comment on the appearance of one subject in one story. Respondent observations may have greater implications than it seems to at first glance, implications that will be further discussed in chapter five.

The hypothesis that the audience should be able to state preferences for stories produced by a BPJ or a traditional news crew based on technical quality is somewhat supported by the results. For 4 out of 6 criteria, respondents recognized better quality in the news products created by journalistic specialists. Those four criteria were pacing, lighting, narration, and choice of interviewees. In terms of pacing, there was a noticeable difference in the two styles of newsgathering production methods. This criterion supports Levy's (1978) findings that "respondents reacting favorably to program 'pacing'," (p. 7). Not one of the stories presented was the kind of fast-paced, MTV style with which many college aged students are familiar. An MTV style of fast-paced story presentation would not have been appropriate for the report on the pastor being killed by a goat. Pacing has to be accepted by the audience as appropriate for the particular story. It can be suggested that those media specialists whose job responsibilities including videotaping and editing stories, are better able to produce fast-paced tightly edited stories

than are media generalists. For stories on complex issues, pacing may have a decisive influence on story recall (Lang, Potter & Grabe, 2003).

The students did not use shot selection as a criterion for distinguishing quality. If media generalists are solely responsible for all aspects of their stories, it seems plausible to think that shot choice would be regarded as a distinguishing criterion, especially for a demographic steeped in video. However, the lack of significance for this criterion might be attributable to the fact that the stories randomly selected for this study did not include any visually creative, artistic shots that might have captured the respondents' attention. News stories that use artistically video-centered presentation styles often deal with light, human interest features rather than complex information heavy stories such as crime or economics. Respondents were presented with two human-interest type stories: AG Day on Capital Hill and Mayor for Meals on Wheels. Both stories were produced by BPJs and respondents may have indicated that by noting no statistical difference in shot selection by media generalists or specialists.

The third criterion examined was lighting. Speculation that media generalists might not be able to match the quality of lighting techniques produced by media specialists were born out by this. The respondents did notice a difference between the production approaches. Lighting is more time consuming than the other technical aspects of video production. When working alone, media generalists may need to take short cuts when lighting their stories. The stories in this study did not include any examples of complex lighting—for example, using multiple lights to illuminate an interview subject. Lighting helps provide subtle cues about texture and depth (Jackman, 2004). It also provides a third dimension to television, creating a greater sense of reality. Lighting is a

key element to visual perception (Zettl, 2008) and can alter emotion. In this study a majority of the stories used natural lighting such as daylight, but a few did use supplemental light. For instance, the rabies story that occurred in Marshall County appeared to use artificial light to enhance the interviewee's face. Whether because of the lighting or the emotional connection to the idea of losing an animal, respondents did recall this particular story. However, they did not comment specifically on technical aspects of the story. Narration is the vocal delivery of news information. Without good articulation (Hyde, 2004), the audience may misinterpret the information presented. Even dialect can be distracting. One female respondent mentioned that the narration of the AG Day story was "country-sounding" and distracting. Dialectic sound is very important to the narrative aspect of storytelling (Zettl, 2008). A majority of media specialists whose job roles include working as television news anchors or reporters have been instructed in vocal delivery of the news. It can be posited that they have better control of voice inflection and tonal quality than media generalists. The respondents strongly agreed that they preferred specialists to generalists in the narration category. For example, in the story about the injured soldier who lost a leg in combat, and also suffered damage to his roof during an early spring storm, the female reporter offered reassurance to the audience about "not sweating the small stuff," about the roof, but concentrating on his relationship with his infant son. Was it the voice inflection or wording of the narration that provided comfort and a positive conclusion to this dilemma? The open-ended responses suggest that a few respondents did key in on that particular phrase in this story produced by specialists.

Selecting good interview segments is as important if not more than narration. Interviews give a greater sense of credibility to a news story. If they do not complement the narration, audience members may become confused. In this study, the respondents strongly preferred interview segments chosen by media specialists rather than generalists. This may suggest that working solo reduces the ability to narrowly focus on few criteria. In the context of the video examples, it was unknown whether the BPs were under tighter time constraints than their counterparts.

The final quality criterion examined in this study was writing. Because the respondents were not provided the news scripts, writing may have been the toughest criterion for them to judge. Some respondents may also have been confused about the line between writing and narration. Writing was found to be statistically insignificant as a quality-criterion: the respondents did not indicate a preference for either generalists or specialists.

The data collected by the open-ended question revealed some interesting information. Most responses did not provide much insight into the recall of story specifics. Some responses did indicate some attention to technical production criteria. Respondent number 369, a female, said she recalled the school calendar because “there were a variety of camera shots that kept my attention.” It is unclear whether her attention to this technical detail was an independent phenomenon, or whether she was prompted to notice it because of the section of the survey that specifically mentioned camera shots. Several respondents did repeat or used specific language from the survey, which may suggest a regurgitation of the quality questions. Overall, however, the open-ended question did suggest that students were more concerned about story content than

production technique. Emotional connections to particular stories appeared to strongly influence respondents' recall and preferences. Such preferences may arise from personal emotional attachments to the events being reported on and thus may confirm media consultant Pat Maday's comment that viewers care about content, not quality (Frutkin, 2006).

Other findings were not as surprising. Several questions sought to determine media usage by students. Internet news sources topped the list of preferred information seeking sources. Network TV was second, followed by the campus newspaper, cable news and local TV, fifth. Email, radio, local paper, and news magazines round out the rest of the media choices. Although the Internet was the first choice, it was surprising that local TV was further down the list. According to the Pew Research Center (2006) the Internet News media was overwhelmingly chosen as the preferred medium based on features such as convenience. However, the online news consumption online among 18-24 year olds has risen only one percent, to 30% in 2006. Pew (2007) found that 76% of young adults 18-29 favored local news slightly over network news (74%) and cable news (73%). With this in mind, local television news outlets may have a tough time retaining audiences, especially those with expectation of quality journalistic values.

Peripheral questions inquired about "activeness" of student's media seeking behaviors. The central premise of uses and gratifications theory is that audiences will seek information to gratify their needs. Levy and Windahl (1984) sought to test uses and gratifications theory by the pre-activity and selectivity of persons seeking to enter communication settings. Levy and Windahl's sample of 390 adults in a small Swedish town is far different from today's youth with access to 24 hour information via the

internet and multiple cable channels. The responses to the three pre-activity questions in this study indicate the ability of college students to choose the time of viewing of a news program through the use of time shifting equipment. Overall, students moderately disagreed with having to make time to watch the news. The ability to record on a VCR or digital video recorder (DVR) such as Tivo has allowed audiences to watch programming at times of their choosing and not be constrained by pre-determined programming times.

In response to questions probing whether they were active in their media seeking behavior, students moderately agreed that they sought information in order to be “informed about events” and leaned toward agreement with the statement on “entertainment.” Though students did not strongly agree, it may be refreshing for news directors to see that the young Internet generation still wants to be informed by television news as opposed to being purely entertained by it.

Chapter 5 Discussion

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the backpack journalism (BPJ) phenomenon and whether or not members of the audience prefer stories produced by traditional news team or a BPJ. It was designed to probe college age students' perceptions about TV news stories. Besides perceptions, the study inquired about current media usage habits of younger audiences and whether traditional ways of news presentation are still a viable option in the future.

What is driving the BPJ concept is attributable to the evolution of technology and presents a major shift in the newsgathering paradigm. Critics point to the broadcast station's willingness to retain a certain profit level as the main driving force. It has been suggested that technology is also shaping news content. BPJ has emerged from the one-man-band idea where working solo may delineate certain job skills, which may lead to presenting an inferior news product.

This study also tackled the problem of attempting to define a quality news report. Most of the past research has examined the concept through the eyes of the professional presenter and ignored the receiver. But when the audience is studied, news is not the focus. Television programming in general has been the focus.

The theoretical framework for this study, uses and gratifications, was built on the premise that television viewers actively seek different facets of entertainment,

surveillance, companionship, and voyeurism to obtain cognitive satisfaction from the material. This particular study focused on the entertainment and surveillance portion of the theory. It is the researcher's belief that students are more apt to use television news for either factor, if they view the news at all. With the World Wide Web being a major part of socialization and information seeking, the television industry is competing with the virtual world for attention.

BPJ is becoming more commonplace in the newsgathering process. The initial question that arose was whether the public is tuning in. This study evolved out of earlier qualitative studies inquiring about what other news workers thought about the newsgathering process. Their responses established the groundwork for this study, whereby the idea shifted to the public's interest or lack thereof in this growing phenomenon. To measure their opinions, some kind of criteria had to be established. Empirically most of the criteria were based on the researcher's previous experience in the industry. Past literature has supported most of the criteria thus giving a solid base of inquiry. Once the base was established, a set of scales needed to be developed. The basis of this study was to establish a pattern for future research with BPJ and quality scales, which the academy has basically neglected.

A total of 137 research questions were posed to college students during April and May 2008 at a large southern university. Data collected ($N = 493$) were comprised of a convenience sample taken from introductory classes in speech, electronic media, communication, and news writing. A series of questions was designed to measure media usage. This would give an indication to the amount of news watched per week. Another set of questions explored the "activeness" of student's television news viewing. These

questions helped provide peripheral information regarding gratifications obtained from news. To test reliability, a series of questions were posed concerning enjoyment and usefulness factors of information. Some of the questions were related to affective response scales from previous studies. Next, the six technical criteria of quality were judged. The reliability and quality scales were repeated for each condition. One open-ended question was designed to determine if video was a factor in news recall. The end of the survey included questions about demographic data and one question about prior media experience. This was used to explore whether educational influence may skew the quality data.

Students were shown a series of news stories to judge the quality criteria. Eight stories were recorded during March 2008 from the ABC, NBC, and CBS network affiliates located in Nashville. One station was primarily using the BPJ concept for newsgathering. The other two stations were using a photojournalist/reporter teams for newsgathering. Once the stories met the criterion of a news package, they were entered and randomly selected using statistical software. Out of the 12 BPJ identified stories and 23 by traditional newsgathering crews, four were chosen by both methods for the study's visual stimuli. A random number generator determined the order of presentation. The order remained the same through the data collection. Respondents indicated their preferences on optical scan sheets, so that to increase reliability of data entry, which reduces the amount of mistakes caused by manual means.

Results from the survey yielded data giving a better insight to college student's media habits and perceptions. In the category of media usage for news/information gathering for current events, Internet News was the top pick. Network TV news was

second. Local TV was fifth. Gratifications obtained from television news suggested that students watch to be informed about important events. This result may reinforce McQuail, Blumler and Brown's (1972) concept of surveillance, which is used for acquiring news and information. Television news is still considered a somewhat credible news source while entertainment was the third preference. Diddi and LaRose (2006) suggested younger demographics use television primarily for entertainment needs. This study did not appear to support that claim. Though not conclusive, it can be assumed that students are still active television news viewers supporting previous research (Rubin & Perse, 1987).

Out of the six technical criteria, four of the six were found statistically significant. Students were able to indicate preferences in the criteria of pacing, lighting, narration, and interviews used by traditional newsgathering techniques and a BPJ. Preferences from the four criteria may suggest that they have not abandoned traditional ways of newsgathering. Even if the BPJ phenomenon continues to grow, younger news consumers may not be as quick to jump on the bandwagon as the industry may think. When prior influences were applied to the criteria, no statistical significance was found. This may be a concern for academics, which teach students in these areas. Since camera composition was found not to be statistically significant with or without prior exposure, open-ended question were designed to see if visuals are important. The open-ended questions yielded little in data about particular visuals in news recall. Nearly 25% of responses mentioned the injured soldier being aided by local businesses story as the most recalled. The open-ended responses may suggest that video may not be as important as

the content of the news stories. This outcome may reinforce the idea in audio-visual redundancy, audio takes precedence over video (Drew & Grimes, 1987).

Conclusions

Students' perceptions of stories produced by backpack journalists were somewhat clarified in this study. They showed preference toward four of the six technical criteria. Of those criteria, the audience indicated higher quality of stories produced by two-person teams rather than by a BPJ. These findings support the main hypothesis of the research study.

Those four production criteria included lighting, narration, interviews and pacing. It can be speculated that these criteria were singled out based on each one connected to skill levels that require some degree of experience and expertise in journalism. If placed within the context of a traditional newsgathering crew consisting of a photojournalist and reporter, the criteria functions are divided into technical/non-technical roles.

For example, lighting can be considered an art as well as a skill. The ability to manipulate light has proved a daunting task for many video journalists. The film industry relies heavily on people who can fulfill the requirements asked by the director. A lighting director is just that, one whose sole purpose to analyze the situation and provide assistance to help establish a mood for the camera. In television newsgathering, the same problem exists. But, today's ENG crews do not have the luxury of having a technician on hand to provide assistance. The photojournalist is responsible for lighting, sound, and

capturing the essence of the story for editing later. They have developed certain rituals and routines to assure quality and efficiency of workflow. A BPJ may not have time to worry about lighting.

This leads to the next point, pacing. The photojournalist can alter the presentational style of the news stories during the editing process. If the content is simplistic such as traffic problems, the photojournalist may choose to use “flashier” edits to speed up the pacing of the story. Students may subconsciously recognize this due to being subjected to fast paced editing techniques in music videos, commercials, or car chases in film. If the content is complex, then slower and less frequency of shot changes may be used to illustrate the story’s message. A photojournalist in a two-person team usually serves as the editor. A BPJ may not have same skill levels.

It is the primary responsibility of the photojournalist to shoot interviews well and with good sound quality. It is up to the reporter to choose what interview segments fit within the story structure. Interview segments or sound bites are used to tell the story or enhance complex information in it. A weak sound bite may not answer the audience’s question about the information and may disrupt the flow of information. Students preferred the segments presented in the stories as chosen by a reporter than those by a BPJ.

The narration of the story is tied to the writing style. However, the respondents in this study separated the two. The ability to present ideas orally is the basic function of the reporter. A simple sentence may be interpreted differently by using voice inflection on certain words. The reporter chooses to enact this upon their discretion as long as it is not perceived to inject bias. In this study, female reporters’ tonal quality may have

persuaded the respondents to notice those stories, as human-interest stories. The injured soldier story had the sympathetic visuals but offered a reassuring female voice track. This may have played on emotion and the students reacted favorably to the story.

Writing and camera shot composition are considered some of the most important parts of newsgathering. Academics have educated students in these two areas, suggesting they are part of the basic foundation in the newsgathering process. Since the audience did not show a particular preference in either criterion, this reinforces the need for academics to keep teaching these core tenets of electronic newsgathering.

This may suggest the audience is not quite ready for BPJ as a whole. Overall, respondents preferred more than half of the study's stories produced by two-person newsgathering crews. They were able to differentiate lighting techniques, but not shot composition. They preferred the narration, which is an extension of the writing, but indicated no preference for either BPJ or traditionalist news team. Students may appear to misunderstand the question "*I found the camera shots to be...*" Lighting techniques are part of what the camera sees. The visuals of editing/pacing are tied to visual composition. The students may have found some camera shots particularly disturbing or even humorous. But the open-ended responses indicated neither. There is no conclusive evidence to indicate why this materialized in the study.

What is known is that the news stories presented in this study produced by traditional photojournalist/reporter crews were preferred by students over those produced by a BPJ as measured in terms of six criteria of quality. What this suggests is that news management may opt for more efficient ways of newsgathering by BPJs, but if future viewers are turned off by the content they see, lower ratings may follow. With lower

ratings, stations' revenues will be lower, which may cause further constraints on information gathering. A downward spiral in revenues is not the direction news management wants to go. Industry reports have hinted that BPJ is a technique designed as a last ditch newsgathering effort to attract audience members. However, it is not the only contributing factor. Solid news judgment is needed whether news is produced by a BPJ or not. It has been suggested that BPJs are best served to cover simple planned events or human interests stories. If complex issues are neglected, regardless of the coverage, credibility becomes an issue.

Results from this study also suggest students are still somewhat active television news viewers, competing in a virtual world of information. Data from the 493 respondents indicate a decline in watching television news. The Internet may have eliminated the need to plan daily activities around news times. Technologies such as DVRs have eliminated where audience members need to be at certain times to receive television news information. However, those who watch news are still conducting active searches for television news content. Apparently, students still obtain gratification from information being presented in television news stories.

Even though the Internet offers convenience and increasing credibility, students appear to have not completely abandoned the traditional news world. This gives some hope to slowing down the migration to younger viewers to a completely virtual newscast. Television stations are offering greater content, at times repurposed for web delivery, on the Internet. Station management has recognized this web migration and suggests directing their audiences to seek more story information on their particular "web channels."

How does this affect backpack journalism? Young viewers of television news mention information from news is more important than the entertainment value. Respondents were able to specify preferences in production values associated with news presentation. In terms of news production values, students preferred stories by traditional newsgathering means as opposed to BPJ produced stories. News management sees BPJ as more of an economic factor. Storytelling and informational delivery may be taking a backseat. This study suggests BPJ newsgathering is not as widely accepted by the younger audience as management may think. The audience may not state a preference toward visual presentation, but they were able to recall certain shots. News management may continue toward the migration toward solo newsgathering, but the younger audience members may be turned off by what they see. In other words, younger viewers may accept change at a much slower pace than news managers expect. This supports the first hypothesis. Younger viewers are not quite ready for news stories produced by a BPJ.

With hypothesis one being supported, hypothesis two was rejected. Prior exposures to the media environment or working in the media do not influence preferences in news stories produced by a BPJ or traditional news crew. The researcher hoped prior exposure may give some credence to the academic process in its influence with students, but the research indicated otherwise. However, a majority of respondents who expressed interest in the media field have not be exposed to upper levels of instruction, which address some of the production criteria.

With regard to the research questions, it is positive to see students prefer stories with a higher standard in terms of technical quality. In today's virtual world of Youtube, the results from the research questions indicate a level of video sophistication thought

lost to the Internet or shows such as *America's Funniest Home Videos*. Apparently most students can tell if something is visually unappealing and thus the results seem to reflect that.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the study's design and implementation. One concern to be addressed is the limited amount of stories to choose as visual stimuli. The five-day period, in which a total of 35 stories fit the criteria to be considered news packages, could have been larger. The Nashville market offers newscasts at 4 p.m. and 10 p.m. The Fox affiliate has a 9 p.m. newscast, which is considered their premiere newscast for the day. However, taping newscasts by network affiliates gives the opportunity to select stories that are going head-to-head with each other seeking greater audience shares. This suggests more resources will be dedicated to the newsgathering process during competitive newscast times. By taping more newscasts and multiple weeks, there will be a greater pool of news stories that have the chance of being selected. However, March is not considered a television sweeps period where resources are allocated to 'special reports' designed to influence particular demographics. The data collection took place during a seemingly 'normal' week of news related events.

Respondents of the survey consisted of college students. Some argue critics against using student sampling (e.g. Courtright, 1996), however Pingree, et.al. (2001) suggests college student samples are appropriate when it is believed the phenomena studied applies to all populations. Pingree, et.al. reinforces Rayburn and Palmgreen's

(1984) research concerning college students and their gratifications obtained from television news. Rayburn and Palmgreen suggest college students do not appreciably differ from the general population (Gordon, Slade, & Schmitt, 1986). For this study, college students are news consumers and a convenience sample was appropriate for this research.

Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar (2000) suggest a limitation of using college students is the potential respondents are a “captive population” (p. 563) and usually involves participation for course credit. Respondents for this study from the introductory speech courses were required to partake in some kind of research study as part of their participation grade. Respondents from the other classes had the option of not participating in the study, which was not a requirement for credit.

For this particular study, it is plausible not to get a perfect overall population sample by using college students. Other survey methods may attract a general population. Mail, Internet, and telephone surveys may be more desirable ways of data collection. Shoemaker and McCombs (2003), however postulate mail surveys are time consuming and expensive, as well as cumbersome to the survey process. As a self-administered survey, mail survey’s major weakness is a lower response rate as opposed to telephone or face-to-face studies, which may increase threats to validity in part to the “lack of representativeness of the sample,” (p. 235). A face-to-face survey requires a higher degree to time involved, especially if administered by a single researcher. To reach an acceptable sample size, many researchers will be needed and require longer length of time. Telephone surveys will be more economical than a mail implementation and face-to-face, however manpower is an issue. To implement this type of opinion

gathering for BPJ perceptions, only Internet or focus groups can offer the desired data results. As stated, face-to-face studies are time consuming and threaten validity.

Survey research is the desired method. Internet implementation offers another method of data collection. Due to a large number of questions (137 items) that were part of this survey, Internet may not be the most appropriate. Plus they have been found to usually have a very low response rate. To counter, incentives have to be offered to get a desired sample size. There are private companies that offer this service, but it is not always considered cost effective.

Lastly, this survey did not include questions concerning credibility of visual stimuli presented to respondents. Television news presentation is viewed as a credible medium for information delivery. If any news medium is perceived to be not credible, then audience members will seek sources that they believe to present the facts and truths. For the purpose of this study, credibility is a peripheral variable but not the part of the focus to determine quality of a news stories based on technical presentation.

Implications

This study was first inspired by anecdotal evidence of the rise of backpack journalism in television newsgathering. BPJ is a technologically advanced version of the one-man-bands that have existed since the days of film in the 1960's. In recent years, innovations in electronics such as miniaturization have allowed backpack journalism to flourish. News managers have recognized the economic benefits of one-man-bands to corporate stockholders. As national news networks close foreign bureaus, downsize

news staffs, and rely upon freelance stringers to provide visual and contextual information, local television stations news departments are following suit. However, there is a danger that this approach to newsgathering may dilute the overall quality of journalistic presentation. This study was designed to explore the possible negative effects of BPJ on the quality of news products.

Implications for TV News Departments

This study demonstrates that newsgathering production values are measurable, but further research is needed to provide insights into how production values may be improved.

BPJ is not a fad. It is an economic fact that news organizations may sacrifice quality to provide images to a public hungry for video. However, if television news is to survive, then cutting staff and forcing them into greater multi-tasking roles may not be the answer. This study has demonstrated that college students today are truly media savvy; they can tell if a news product is of inferior quality. It is no accident that professionally-produced videos on Youtube garner a higher number of web hits than those of inferior production quality. The implication of all this is that news reports, no matter how they are delivered--via broadcast, cable, satellite or internet--will be more effective if they are produced in high quality, including visual quality.

The BPJ approach to newsgathering is designed for those news workers that can handle technological advancements. It can be inferred that when newsrooms abandoned typewriters for computers, there were some who did not feel comfortable with the change. This technological advancement was an improvement just like the switch from

film to ENG. However, BPJ is more than just a technological advancement; it constitutes a paradigm shift in newsgathering and news presentation.

Station management should take notice. It can be assumed that news directors and other managers are targeting men and women ages 25-60 as a key influential demographic since this demographic is a strong economic force in the United States. Those born between 1945 and 1964, the generation known as the “baby boomers,” are accustomed to traditional approaches to news presentation. The shift to BPJ may not sit well with these audience members. They may perceive the BPJ product as inferior and seek other communication channels to satisfy their information needs.

Since more and more stations are considering adopting the BPJ approach, it will be necessary to revise training methods for new journalists and provide retraining for current workers in order to meet professional standards. Young Broadcasting used a two week crash cross-training session to bring WKRN-TV and KRON-TV up to speed on computerized editing, equipment operations, and writing. Traditionally trained reporters had to learn or re-learn how to shoot and edit, while photographers had to learn to write and voice stories. On the job training (OJT) has been the rule for most newsrooms. A new hire, regardless of skill level, usually will either shadow or be given some formalized training before being turned loose on the streets as a news professional. Gannett Corporation has a training and job placement service built into their program: Gannett will train and evaluate a potential hire’s abilities at that person’s expense, and, upon completion of training, may recommend the trainee for a position within the company. Gannett also provides internal training sessions for current employees. The major problem with OJT is that the training takes employees away from their jobs. With

newsrooms operating on a shoestring already, with minimal staff, access to OJT may be limited.

This leads to another problem, hiring. With their training program, Gannett has built a quality control mechanism into their company culture. However, if a station is not part of their chain, then news directors face the daunting task of finding the persons whose skills match their needs. A basic assumption is that most new hires will come from smaller markets and therefore should have a degree of experience. As Johnsen found in his study, managers often seek out journalism students who are video- and Internet savvy and recruit them to be BPJs. The mandate to reduce overall costs may driver managers to take on new hires with insufficient experience of new hires and may jeopardize professional standard of quality.

The morale of the newsroom may also be affected if new hires with less experience and lower pay are working among seasoned professionals. There may be a clash of egos within the organization where older, experienced employees may be reluctant to share information concerning sources or protocols for newsgathering. The words "*This is not a training ground,*" have been muttered throughout organizations by experienced news gathers. The idea of apprenticeships may be a thing of the past. Newsroom conflicts may affect the motivation of BPJs, who may be regarded by some as second-class news workers. If BPJs are given equity with experienced personnel in status and pay, then motivation may not be a problem.

It is possible that television news stations are also having a difficult time with change. Instead of relying upon outdated economic models, they may need to reevaluate and accept change in the form of lower profit margins. Some stations that have wholly

adopted the BPJ concept have yet to reach success with the new approach. Cutting costs, reducing staff and implementing backpack journalist styles do not automatically trigger a turn-around in profits or ratings. This study's results are not intended to condemn the BPJ style of newsgathering. Instead, this research should prompt news managers to examine the long-term effects and implications upon the viewing public of adopting the BPJ approach and should ask themselves whether the short-term economic gains of the approach will jeopardize the long term health of the newsgathering industry.

Implications for Education

As the BPJ phenomenon becomes more widespread, four-year colleges and universities should heed the shifting paradigm of newsgathering. A growing number of academic electronic media or broadcast communication programs use boards of visitors comprised of media professionals to provide advice to students. Whether academics like it or not, they should follow the suggestions often made by such advisory boards and offer course content that will help students be more marketable. However, as they adapt to the new realities, they should not abandon the basic tenets of journalism.

Most academic institutions offer the basic courses in writing, law, video production and increasingly, web-communication. This core curriculum is intended to prepare students for future jobs in the industry. By offering a few more courses such as electronic newsgathering, multi-media newsgathering, and critical storytelling methods, departments will give students a better preparation for the job market. One particular improvement that academia needs to make is to provide more opportunities for students to showcase news content that they have produced on their own. The web has provided

this opportunity to some extent. Students should be proactive and emulate what the industry is using in terms of content delivery systems. That includes traditional ways of cable and partnerships with over-the-air content providers, instead of relying solely on web delivery.

Most academic institutions currently offer programs of study to prepare students for specialized professions. However, to adapt to the new realities, faculty members should help students prepare to work as generalists. For example, if a student wants to be a print photojournalist, her advisor should strongly recommend courses in news writing, video production, legal and web publishing. Courses should be offered to train broadcast journalists in the BPJ concept. Individual courses on shooting, video editing, writing styles, vocal coaching, and newsgathering involving research and covering beats should be part of the standard curriculum for all students. The industry is demanding journalists with multiple skills. If academia can provide multi-training and technological opportunities to their students, both the industry and the students will benefit.

Even as academia retools its training to adapt to the new reality, the industry and academia as well as the students will have to acknowledge that training and learning will need to continue on-the-job training. The industry wants students who can step into professional roles with a minimal amount of training. The longer it takes a new employee to reach an acceptable level of knowledge, the more resources are devoted to training. Academia can rarely produce a student competent enough to jump right into a particular entity's newsgathering process, especially as a BPJ. But with the right combination of course work, student access to technology and outlets to showcase their

talents, combined with internships or part-time job opportunities, students will be able to move into the workplace

Future Research

Television news has been of the target of communication research for nearly 40 years. With concepts like BPJ entering all levels of television journalism, there is a continuing need for attention to this research thread. The effects of this shift in news gathering are more far reaching than many believe. With the expansion of new media information delivery, researchers and industry management alike need to investigate the many potential consequences of this shift.

As backpack journalism becomes more prevalent in television newsgathering, additional research is needed to determine if this model is satisfying the needs of news consumers. The concept of quality, which is associated with something of value, needs to be explored further. It should not simply be assumed that younger audiences have particular preferences or motivations with regard to the news—for example, that they are motivated by a desire for entertainment or prefer light popular news. However, these assumptions should be challenged and systematically investigated. This study attempts to provide groundwork for future research on specific production elements that comprise news presentations. This research study provides a quantitative glimpse into how audiences define technical aspects of quality. It lays the groundwork for the next step of investigating patterns of perceptions. To understand how BPJ is received, longitudinal

studies can provide insight into whether the public will accept this style of newsgathering presentation over the long term, with more exposure to it.

Acceptance by the public is an important factor in television news. This study only explored how technology is being perceived by a demographic that is admittedly technology friendly. One question that should be explored is how the general public perceives BPJ. The largest portion of the television news audiences is comprised of older adults. A study similar to this one can provide insight into whether their informational needs are being met. If they are accepting BPJ stories, then the probability of a station's ratings may rise accordingly.

This study provided respondents a series of random stories by BPJs and traditional media specialists. No two stories were on the same subject matter. In a future study, an experimental design that includes stories on the same subject, each covered by a different approach, may allow more focused investigation of audiences's evaluation of the quality criteria. To acquire a subtler and more contextualized picture of audiences' quality preferences, it might be useful to do future research on this topic with focus groups rather than just a survey. Focus groups can provide greater detailed information about perceptions and provide qualitative insights that numerical measurements do not.

The key issue raised by this study that needs greater exploration is whether the BPJ stories lacked credibility. Is there a correlation between production values and credibility issues? Is the BPJ style of newsgathering considered credible? If credibility is an issue for a news story, then journalistic value will be jeopardized. Credibility is the bedrock of journalism. If it is threatened, so to is the profession.

BPJ may become a more accepted option for newsgathering in the future, and may supplant traditional ways of newsgathering. As older members of news staffs retire, their replacements may be more willing to accept technological changes and implement them. The media generalist will not fully replace newsroom specialists. Young Broadcasting has realized that this simply does not work. Instead, BPJs most likely will be assigned stories that are less issue-oriented and have more human interest than those covered by traditional means. In other words, stories that are complex in nature will need those news workers who can apply specialized skills to present complex stories effectively.

A final suggestion for future research is the need for a systematic ratings analysis of stations that implement the BPJ phenomenon. A longitudinal ratings study will indicate long term trends of acceptance or rejection of the newsgathering technique by audiences and help stations decide how to prepare audiences for the shift in approaches. Some stations have attempted abrupt wholesale changes to their newsrooms with little success. Others have shifted to a hybrid style of newsgathering where an estimated 20 to 40% of information is gathered by BPJ. If the general public's preferences mirrors those of the younger audiences in this study, it may be wise for news organizations to move slowly and cautiously toward the adoption of the BPJ approach to news gathering.

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APPENDIX

As consumers of news and information, you are invited to participate in this study of your perception of quality in television journalism. The following survey will ask you a number of questions about your use of media and news sources. The survey should take about 10-15 minutes to complete, and your responses will remain completely anonymous and confidential. If there are questions on the survey that you do not wish to answer, you can skip them. There are no anticipated risks associated with this study.

If you should have any questions about the survey, or the research project, you can contact the principal researcher, Charlie Gee, at (865) 974-8200, or at cgee@utk.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact [Research Compliance Services](#) at (865) 974-3466.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be destroyed. Completion of the survey (questionnaire) constitutes your consent to participate. You may keep this page for your records.

Do not write your name or any identifying marks on the surveys or scan sheets.

Please turn the next page.

List of Terms

You will be asked to judge a news story based on several criteria. The following terms will explain basic vocabulary used in television news.

Editing—The selection and assembly of shots in a logical sequence.

Interview— a meeting at which information is obtained (as by a reporter, television commentator, or pollster)

Lighting—The manipulation of light and shadows: to provide the camera with adequate illumination for technically acceptable; to tell us what the objects on-screen actually look like; and to establish the general mood of the event.

Pacing—Perceived duration of the show or show segment. Part of subject time.

Shot (Camera)—A piece of video indicating one location; a single sequence of a motion picture or a television program shot by one camera without interruption

Sound bites— a brief recorded statement (as by a public figure) broadcast especially on a television news program

Voice narration—to provide spoken commentary for (as a movie or television show)

Writing (script)—the written text of a stage play, screenplay, or broadcast

Fill in the bubble scan sheet with all your answers.

Please proceed to question one.

Perceptions of Quality in Television News

(Please use the bubble sheet for all answers.)

There are no right or wrong answers, just your opinion.

Media Use:

For the following set of questions, please indicate how much you would normally use these media for gathering news and information on current events. Use a scale where 1 means that *you never use it*, and 5 indicates that you would *use it very often*.

		Never			Very Often	
1.	Local Newspaper	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Local Television	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Radio	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Network TV	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Cable News	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Internet News Sites	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Email	1	2	3	4	5
8.	News magazines	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Student Newspaper	1	2	3	4	5

10. Please indicate how much *average* time in a week do you watch TV news?
(Round up to nearest hour.)

- A. 0-2 hours B. 3-5 hours C. 6-8 hours D. 9-11 hours E. More than
12 hours

11. Which of the following best describes where you attended high school (or were home schooled)?

- A. West Tennessee B. Middle Tennessee C. East Tennessee D. Out of state

For the following set of questions, please indicate how much you would normally use television for gathering news and information. Use a scale where one (1) is *strongly disagree* and five (5) *strongly agree*.

(“I watch news on TV because...”)

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
12.	I want to be informed about important events.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I want to get some entertainment.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I want information I can trust.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I want to know about things I can tell other people.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I want to know in advance about things like higher prices.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	It is important to see the news from beginning to end	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I usually plan my evenings so I do not miss the news on TV	1	2	3	4	5
19.	I usually check the time so that I do not miss the news on TV	1	2	3	4	5

Quality

You will be shown a series of eight television news stories. For the following set of questions, watch each video story and answer the questions that correspond for that particular story.

Story One:

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. One (1) indicates *strongly disagree* and five (5) *strongly agree*.

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
20.	I found the story to be interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	I found the story to be unpleasant.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	I found the story to be informative.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	I found the story to be useful.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	I found the story to be enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	I can relate to this story.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	I found the story to be good.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	I found the story to be relevant.	1	2	3	4	5

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. Use a scale where one (1) is *very low quality* and five (5) is *very high quality*.

- 1—*Very low quality*
- 2—*Low quality*
- 3—*So, so more or less in the middle*
- 4—*High Quality*
- 5—*Very high quality*

		Very Low Quality			Very High Quality	
28.	I found the pacing of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
29.	I found the camera shots to be:	1	2	3	4	5
30.	I found the lighting in the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
31.	I found the voice narration to be:	1	2	3	4	5
32.	I found the interviews to be:	1	2	3	4	5
33.	I found writing (script) of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5

Story Two:

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. One (1) indicates *strongly disagree* and five (5) *strongly agree*.

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
34.	I found the story to be interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
35.	I found the story to be unpleasant.	1	2	3	4	5
36.	I found the story to be informative.	1	2	3	4	5
37.	I found the story to be useful.	1	2	3	4	5
38.	I found the story to be enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5
39.	I can relate to this story.	1	2	3	4	5
40.	I found the story to be good.	1	2	3	4	5
41.	I found the story to be relevant.	1	2	3	4	5

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. Use a scale where one (1) is *very low quality* and five (5) is *very high quality*.

- 1—*Very low quality*
- 2—*Low quality*
- 3—*So, so more or less in the middle*
- 4—*High Quality*
- 5—*Very high quality*

42.	I found the pacing of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
43.	I found the camera shots to be:	1	2	3	4	5
44.	I found the lighting in the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
45.	I found the voice narration to be:	1	2	3	4	5
46.	I found the interviews to be:	1	2	3	4	5
47.	I found writing (script) of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5

Story Three:

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. One (1) indicates *strongly disagree* and five (5) *strongly agree*.

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
48.	I found the story to be interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
49.	I found the story to be unpleasant.	1	2	3	4	5
50.	I found the story to be informative.	1	2	3	4	5
51.	I found the story to be useful.	1	2	3	4	5
52.	I found the story to be enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5
53.	I can relate to this story.	1	2	3	4	5
54.	I found the story to be good.	1	2	3	4	5
55.	I found the story to be relevant.	1	2	3	4	5

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. Use a scale where one (1) is *very low quality* and five (5) is *very high quality*.

- 1—*Very low quality*
- 2—*Low quality*
- 3—*So, so more or less in the middle*
- 4—*High Quality*
- 5—*Very high quality*

56.	I found the pacing of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
57.	I found the camera shots to be:	1	2	3	4	5
58.	I found the lighting in the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
59.	I found the voice narration to be:	1	2	3	4	5
60.	I found the interviews to be:	1	2	3	4	5
61.	I found writing (script) of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5

Story Four:

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. One (1) indicates *strongly disagree* and five (5) *strongly agree*.

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
62.	I found the story to be interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
63.	I found the story to be unpleasant.	1	2	3	4	5
64.	I found the story to be informative.	1	2	3	4	5
65.	I found the story to be useful.	1	2	3	4	5
66.	I found the story to be enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5
67.	I can relate to this story.	1	2	3	4	5
68.	I found the story to be good.	1	2	3	4	5
69.	I found the story to be relevant.	1	2	3	4	5

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. Use a scale where one (1) is *very low quality* and five (5) is *very high quality*.

- 1—*Very low quality*
- 2—*Low quality*
- 3—*So, so more or less in the middle*
- 4—*High Quality*
- 5—*Very high quality*

70.	I found the pacing of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
71.	I found the camera shots to be:	1	2	3	4	5
72.	I found the lighting in the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
73.	I found the voice narration to be:	1	2	3	4	5
74.	I found the interviews to be:	1	2	3	4	5
75.	I found writing (script) of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5

Story Five:

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. One (1) indicates *strongly disagree* and five (5) *strongly agree*.

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
76.	I found the story to be interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
77.	I found the story to be unpleasant.	1	2	3	4	5
78.	I found the story to be informative.	1	2	3	4	5
79.	I found the story to be useful.	1	2	3	4	5
80.	I found the story to be enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5
81.	I can relate to this story.	1	2	3	4	5
82.	I found the story to be good.	1	2	3	4	5
83.	I found the story to be relevant.	1	2	3	4	5

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. Use a scale where one (1) is *very low quality* and five (5) is *very high quality*.

- 1—*Very low quality*
- 2—*Low quality*
- 3—*So, so more or less in the middle*
- 4—*High Quality*
- 5—*Very high quality*

84.	I found the pacing of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
85.	I found the camera shots to be:	1	2	3	4	5
86.	I found the lighting in the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
87.	I found the voice narration to be:	1	2	3	4	5
88.	I found the interviews to be:	1	2	3	4	5
89.	I found writing (script) of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5

Story Six:

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. One (1) indicates *strongly disagree* and five (5) *strongly agree*.

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
90.	I found the story to be interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
91.	I found the story to be unpleasant.	1	2	3	4	5
92.	I found the story to be informative.	1	2	3	4	5
93.	I found the story to be useful.	1	2	3	4	5
94.	I found the story to be enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5
95.	I can relate to this story.	1	2	3	4	5
96.	I found the story to be good.	1	2	3	4	5
97.	I found the story to be relevant.	1	2	3	4	5

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. Use a scale where one (1) is *very low quality* and five (5) is *very high quality*.

- 1—*Very low quality*
- 2—*Low quality*
- 3—*So, so more or less in the middle*
- 4—*High Quality*
- 5—*Very high quality*

98.	I found the pacing of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
99.	I found the camera shots to be:	1	2	3	4	5
100.	I found the lighting in the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
101.	I found the voice narration to be:	1	2	3	4	5
102.	I found the interviews to be:	1	2	3	4	5
103.	I found writing (script) of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5

Story Seven:

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. One (1) indicates *strongly disagree* and five (5) *strongly agree*.

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
104.	I found the story to be interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
105.	I found the story to be unpleasant.	1	2	3	4	5
106.	I found the story to be informative.	1	2	3	4	5
107.	I found the story to be useful.	1	2	3	4	5
108.	I found the story to be enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5
109.	I can relate to this story.	1	2	3	4	5
110.	I found the story to be good.	1	2	3	4	5
111.	I found the story to be relevant.	1	2	3	4	5

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. Use a scale where one (1) is *very low quality* and five (5) is *very high quality*.

- 1—*Very low quality*
- 2—*Low quality*
- 3—*So, so more or less in the middle*
- 4—*High Quality*
- 5—*Very high quality*

112.	I found the pacing of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
113.	I found the camera shots to be:	1	2	3	4	5
114.	I found the lighting in the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
115.	I found the voice narration to be:	1	2	3	4	5
116.	I found the interviews to be:	1	2	3	4	5
117.	I found writing (script) of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5

Story Eight:

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. One (1) indicates *strongly disagree* and five (5) *strongly agree*.

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
118.	I found the story to be interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
119.	I found the story to be unpleasant.	1	2	3	4	5
120.	I found the story to be informative.	1	2	3	4	5
121.	I found the story to be useful.	1	2	3	4	5
122.	I found the story to be enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5
123.	I can relate to this story.	1	2	3	4	5
124.	I found the story to be good.	1	2	3	4	5
125.	I found the story to be relevant.	1	2	3	4	5

For the following set of questions, please select one that best describes your opinion. Use a scale where one (1) is *very low quality* and five (5) is *very high quality*.

- 1—*Very low quality*
- 2—*Low quality*
- 3—*So, so more or less in the middle*
- 4—*High Quality*
- 5—*Very high quality*

126.	I found the pacing of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
127.	I found the camera shots to be:	1	2	3	4	5
128.	I found the lighting in the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5
129.	I found the voice narration to be:	1	2	3	4	5
130.	I found the interviews to be:	1	2	3	4	5
131.	I found writing (script) of the story to be:	1	2	3	4	5

132. Out of all the stories, which one do you remember the best? Why? **(Write your answer on the back of scan sheet in the area that says, “Do not write in this space”.)**

Now, I would like to get some basic demographic information.

133. Gender: (1) Female (2) Male

134. Ethnicity (please indicate which group you most identify with):

(1) Asian (2) Black (3) Caucasian (4) Hispanic (5) Other

135. Age: (1) 18-19 (2) 20-21 (3) 22-23 (4) 24-25 (5) 26 or older

136. Education: (your standing at the beginning of this semester)

(1) Freshman

(4) Senior

(2) Sophomore

(5) Graduate School

(3) Junior

137. News Experience:

Do you have any background in news? Please fill in that all apply.

(1) Taken courses related to media and/or mass communication

(2) Taken courses in journalism

(3) Written or produced stories for school paper or other news program

(4) Have experience as working journalist or producer

Thank you for taking part in this survey.

VITA

Charlie Gee was born in 1965 in Knoxville, Tennessee. He attended high school in Hendersonville, Tennessee and graduated in 1983. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Mass Communications from Middle Tennessee State University in May 1993.

Upon graduation, he continued to work in radio for WGFX-FM in Nashville until 1995. While at WGFX-FM, he was a promotions assistant, music director, and on-air talent. In spring of 1993, he started working part time at WKRN-TV as a video-tape editor. He would later become a full time photojournalist, while working weekends in radio. In late 1995, he joined the staff of WBIR-TV in Knoxville. He would leave a year later to go to WLKY-TV in Louisville, Kentucky. Nearly three years later, he returned to Knoxville to the CBS affiliate, WVLT-TV. There he started taking graduate classes in electronic media at the University of Tennessee.

His tenure would be short lived and returned to Nashville to join previous WKRN co-workers at the FOX affiliate news startup at WZTV-TV. He would leave the news industry in March 2002 to concentrate on graduate studies. He started his Masters of Communication at the University of Tennessee that summer and graduated in spring 2004. During that time, he freelanced for national news and cable networks. In fall of 2004, he entered the doctoral program at the University of Tennessee graduating in August 2008.