TELEVISION NETWORK NEWS

Issues in Content Research

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Foreword

Erik Barnouw

TEN YEARS FROM NOW a scholar sits in a television news archive to study a newscast you watched last night. Needless to say, his experience of it will be different from yours. He will have additional knowledge of various kinds. It may include knowledge of how others, at different times and in different places, have interpreted the events of last night's newscast. He will certainly have knowledge of later events that may, or may not, have been foreshadowed by last night's telecast.

What will this scholar's overall reactions be? Will he be surprised at the perceptiveness with which the newscast identified problems about to explode into a crisis, and at the accuracy of its information? Or, on the other hand, will he sense that the newscast agitated disputes that turned out to be irrelevancies in the light of subsequent history?

One cannot answer such a question and probably should not try, though some readers may have tentative thoughts on it. The question is raised here to suggest the service television news archives can and will perform in the democratic process.

The reliance of democracy on an informed public is axiomatic. Most Americans now depend mainly on television for information about "what's going on in the world today." Most people say they trust television more than other news media, and many seem to rely almost wholly on television. There is no sign of this reliance diminishing.

That television has in so short a time achieved this status is remarkable and is a source of pride to the industry, which sometimes describes its audience as "the best-informed nation in the world." But can we really know how well informed we are, or are not?

Leading television newsmen often remind us that each day they face a task so enormous as to be essentially impossible and quixotic. The affairs of four billion people, in two hundred nations, speaking thousands of languages, are each day distilled into twenty-three minutes of words and images. The elimination is so drastic that it

inevitably distorts, even if done with the greatest integrity and goodwill. The very process of selection—where to maintain camera crews, where to dispatch them, what they should shoot, how they should shoot it, who should be shown, who interviewed, what footage should be chosen, how juxtaposed, and what should be said about it—is bound to confer on a few items a huge importance and to relegate other matters, people, places, and problems to a secondary level of reality, and perhaps oblivion. Producers and editors generally feel they are responding to "news value" in their selections. They may not be aware they are responding to some extent to "news value" they have helped to create. When they explain an omission by saying, "People are not very interested in that," they may in effect be saying, "We have never mentioned that before." What they decide to mention, to show, tends to become "the" news, "the" subject of interest. Thus a network news service is inevitably caught in a self-legitimizing process. Attitudes generated by its choices justify its choices.

The public is caught in a similar self-regenerative circuit. The more that people rely on the tube for their idea of world events, the less they can know what may be missing. So their trust begets more trust.

Trust is valuable to a learning process, but its dangers are clear. A powerful and trusted medium can presumably produce unprecedented national enlightenment—or national self-deception.

The selection process we have mentioned involves countless people, none of whom sees more than a fragment of the process. Dependence on cameras makes it inevitable that many newscast events are staged events, planned for camera purposes by governments, corporations, associations, and sometimes individuals. Thus television news is seldom a record of events that would in any case have happened. It is rather the dramaturgy of current history, in which many, with diverse motives, collaborate.

All this emphasizes the importance of studying on a continuing basis the selection process by which our daily newscasts come into being. This is not a matter of detecting malfeasance, but of monitoring a process that is at best impossible and that no one can wholly see. Through television archives we can gain hindsight knowledge of how the selection process is working and how its procedures might be usefully amended.

Not so long ago, no such possibility existed. We assumed that newscasts were here today and gone tomorrow forever. Scholars have

pointed out that the years 1850-65, when Americans looked mainly to newspapers for information and were facing great issues, are extremely well documented in surviving newspaper files available in many libraries. But the corresponding twentieth-century years 1950-65, when Americans were beginning to look mainly to television for information and were again facing great issues, are represented by a crucial archival void. Virtually nothing of television journalism of the period survives to help us understand how we drifted so confidently into many problems, including our most disastrous war. Presumably we are now better armed for the future.

Legal and technical problems once clouding the idea of television archives have abated. Such archives are now a fact of life. They will be an extraordinary asset to scholars and should be even more important to our society.

Preface

In the last few years, a number of important studies have been published on the nature of network news and its implications for American politics and society. At the same time, archives of network news, most notably the Vanderbilt Television News Archive, have begun to provide accessibility to resources which allows research on a scale that would be impossible for any solitary scholar. There is now an opportunity to build on the findings of recent research and to take advantage of the new resources for research.

This collection of essays is designed to aid students and researchers interested in the study of television news, especially newscast content; it is published under the auspices of the Television and Politics Study Program of the School of Public and International Affairs, George Washington University. Its publication coincides with the opening of extensive new facilities, in the Audiovisual Department of the George Washington University Library, for the archiving and viewing of television network news and of instructional video resources.

Television news research is scattered across a variety of disciplines and is published in a wide range of journals. This book is intended to bring together into one forum discussion of some of the more important issues in the study of network news content. Three areas were selected for special attention—the status of existing research, methodological issues, and future directions in research. The first three essays focus largely on the state of current research on television news. In the second section, four articles examine various methodological issues in the study of newscast content. Future directions in research are suggested in the final three essays.

The first section offers commentaries and an extended bibliography on recent research. In the introductory essay, William Adams evaluates the importance of content research in the context of

production and effects research and argues that content analysis is too frequently limited to the study of network bias. George Comstock and Robin Cobbey review findings of studies using the Vanderbilt Archive and address the problem of studying news bias in the absence of objective standards of fairness. David Paletz and Roberta Pearson critique the methodologies, prescriptions, and explanations of newscast content and effects found in six recent books. Paletz and Pearson also suggest factors which should receive greater attention in future research.

In the second section, practical questions about methods of content research are considered. Fay Schreibman provides a detailed account of the collections and procedures at major archives of network newscasts. For researchers interested in using these archives, her guide summarizes their policies and holdings. Lawrence Lichty and George Bailey next offer some reflections and advice on the application of content analysis techniques to television news. David Culbert comments on the analysis of visual images in newscasts from the perspective of a historian studying a particular episode. William Adams then analyzes the merits of visual analysis of newscasts in light of the findings of content analysis, psychology, and recent experiments.

The final section offers three varied perspectives on directions in future content research. Thomas Patterson suggests some guidelines and stresses the importance of cumulative research, reliability and validity measures, and comparative designs. George Gerbner and Nancy Signorielli emphasize the need to interpret news content in the overall context of entertainment television and propose a research agenda grounded in the cultural indicators approach Gerbner has previously applied to prime-time television. Michael Robinson notes limitations of organizational theory as applied to television news and calls for a reconsideration of ways in which personal opinions of news personnel determine content. Robinson outlines several new avenues of research to test the political directions of news content.

At this stage in television news research, a number of significant questions about methods and directions deserve more attention and more discussion. In addition to serving as a sourcebook for reference to archives and to published research, this volume is one effort to promote that discussion. Appreciation is extended to the contributors for helping illuminate these issues in political communications research. Gratitude is also due a number of other people for their

encouragement, advice, and assistance—especially to Dennis Johnson, Lyle Brown, Robert Darcy, Joan Thiel, Paul Poppen, Hugh LeBlanc, Burton Sapin, William Lucas, Jeff Freyman, Mary Jane O'Donnell, Wilma Adams, C. B. Adams, William D. Johnson, David Dickson, Jeanne Ratchford, Veronica Mezzina, Michael Schacter, Russell Scott, James Pilkington, and, for photography, to Kevin Foster. Special appreciation is due Rupert Woodward and Maxine Schiffman for their unique and indispensable help in the completion of this volume. The dedication of the volume is to a man to whom all communications researchers are indebted for his successful pioneering of television news archives—Paul C. Simpson.

William C. Adams
Fay C. Schreibman

August 1, 1978

I
Current Research

Network News Research in Perspective: A Bibliographic Essay

William C. Adams

TELEVISION NETWORK NEWS is praised for scrupulous neutrality. It is also accused of promoting liberalism or radicalism or the status quo. The networks are credited with reaching a vast audience of people who might otherwise not seek news. They are also blamed for providing those people with superficial, sensational stories. The networks are lauded for courageous, independent news coverage. They are also charged with succumbing to commercial and political pressures.

Some scholars maintain that television news has become a powerful force molding American society. Others say its impact is inconsequential. Some observers argue television news was the catalyst for the civil rights and peace movements of the 1960s. Others contend its effects were trivial.

Millions of Americans go for weeks without watching the nightly news. Millions of others rarely miss a newscast. Some politicians follow network news faithfully. Others seldom watch, although they may receive staff summaries of the newscasts each morning.

Newscasters are popular and trusted individuals who are applauded as meriting the public's confidence. They are also assailed as

untrained and egotistical celebrities who are stronger on image than expertise. Network news is extolled as a massive corporate enterprise with the resources to gather news around the world and the power to resist machinations of angry occupants of the White House. It is also condemned as a powerful oligopoly, concentrated so as to threaten diversity and centralize control over the flow of news.

Over thirty years ago, CBS broadcast the first regularly-scheduled television network news program. Joined a few months later by NBC and ABC, network news soon emerged as a major and controversial presence in American life. Scholars are still trying to catch up with the changes wrought by network news in the period since 1948.

A few things are relatively clear: Television network news reaches a massive heterogeneous audience each night, is heavily relied on as a national news source, and is trusted as credible and reliable (Steiner, 1963; Troldahl, 1965; McCombs, 1968; Bogart, 1968-69; Lemert, 1970; Erskine, 1970-71; Robinson, 1971; Israel and Robinson, 1972; Bower, 1973; Roper Organization, 1973, 1975, 1977). Network news has transformed political campaigning (Mendelsohn and Crespi, 1970; Mickelson, 1976; Lang and Lang, 1968). And network news is a large, complex business enterprise (Brown, 1971; Sterling and Haight, 1978; Noll, Peck, and McGowan, 1973; Manning and Owen, 1976).

In 1976, the Roper poll asked respondents to name "the most believable news medium." Television received 51 percent of the responses, compared to 22 percent for newspapers. When asked their major source of information about national campaigns, 75 percent of those polled chose television, while only 20 percent mentioned newspapers (Sterling and Haight, 1978, p. 277).[1]

All of these factors underscore the importance of examining aspects of television news which are much less clearly understood. The suspicion that newscasts have become a potent ingredient in the dynamics of American society has aroused the interest of researchers. They are turning to issues that have been less thoroughly and less convincingly addressed: the processes through which news is selected and shaped, the nature of newscast content, and the implications of that content for viewers.

These three subjects comprise distinct areas of inquiry. In this essay, they are termed production research, content research, and effects research. Different methodologies and issues apply to each area. Production research examines the determinants of news content

during the phase when news stories are chosen, compiled, and produced. Participant observation and institutional-level analysis are the usual methodologies. Production research asks the question: What factors influence the selection and shaping of newscast content?

Content research is concerned with the composition of broadcast news. Quantitative measures are derived from the formal techniques of content analysis. Content research asks: What are the patterns, textures, and substance of newscasts? What are the priorities of news stories and how are those stories portrayed?

Effects research studies the consequences of network news for viewers and for society. Surveys and experiments provide the data base for most effects studies. Effects research asks: What are the processes through which exposure to newscasts informs or influences viewers? What impact does network news have on citizen orientations toward politics and society?

This essay considers the state of research in these three areas. Research has come from disciplines such as political science, sociology, speech, social psychology, and history as well as broadcast journalism and communications; studies have been published in an equally wide array of journals. In sketching an overview of network news research and in citing examples, particular emphasis will be given to the relationship between the general study of television news and analysis of newscast content. With content analysis as the primary focus of the articles in this volume, this review seeks to place the study of news content in perspective and to comment on selected issues.

Production Research

Factors thought to influence the composition of newscasts are the subject of production research. Study of the determinants of the final news package must focus on the period when stories are chosen, interpreted, filmed or taped, written, edited, and produced. A limited number of news stories must be sifted from a wide variety of potential stories. A large number of decisions must be made on how to convey those stories. Production research attempts to assess the process through which news stories are selected and shaped.

The standards of news judgment used while constructing newscasts are about as difficult for broadcast journalists to articulate as standards of justice and truth are for philosophers. Predictably, the old

question of "what is news?" yields a series of circular and redundant responses: news is the new, news is important, news is meaningful, news is reality—objectively presented. These insights have been reinterpreted by some social scientists as representing weak attempts to mask the inherently arbitrary selections and portrayals of news. As sociologist Gaye Tuchman writes (1972, p. 660):

> To journalists, like social scientists, the term "objectivity" stands as a bulwark between themselves and critics. Attacked for a controversial presentation of "facts," newspapermen invoke their objectivity almost the way a Mediterranean peasant might wear a clove of garlic around his neck to ward off evil spirits.

In Tuchman's view, the reluctance of news personnel to evaluate critically subjective influences on news stories, coupled with an insistence on undefinable news judgment, represent "strategic rituals" designed for self-protection. She suggests that journalists, like social scientists, evade basic epistemological problems by conforming to professional norms and expectations.

Tuchman goes on to outline a number of techniques journalists employ to promote the sense of impersonal objectivity in news coverage, but the notion of the reality and objectivity of news content reaches to a fundamental issue. Production research does not allege that news is typically a fabrication or a fantasy, nor does it assert that news is necessarily without a reasonable resemblance to actual events. The premise that underlies production research is that reality is not all of the final picture, that news is not a mirror reflection of reality. The production of news invariably requires making debatable decisions about the priorities and depictions of events and issues. Those decisions must be made within legal, technical, and commercial confines that further influence the news product. Scholarly research on determinants of news seeks to understand these decisions and influences.

Understandably, then, the entire question of the determinants of news content can be an uncomfortable one for news personnel who assert the sole determinant to be news reality. For many, any challenge to this particular "clove of garlic" is threatening. Though few scholars doubt the motives of journalists, the different views and vocabularies of academicians and practicing journalists impede

exchanges on the topic of news determinants. Literature on the criteria and presentation of news by social scientists and by broadcast or print journalists differs substantially in assumptions as well as in jargon. (Pool, 1976, comments on the contrasts in a review of almost two dozen recent books; see also Phillips, 1977; Sasser and Russell, 1972).

In the long run, it may well be a healthy reaction for news personnel to resist academic reinterpretations of their craft. Internalized norms serve useful functions and the defense of news as a clear reflection of reality encourages the quest for objectivity. (Academic researchers are still surprised, however, if the champions of openness, access to information, and "the people's right to know" happen to recoil defensively from them.)

In addition to diverging from the perspectives of broadcast journalism, social science approaches to production research may be categorized several ways. Paul Hirsch (1977) distinguishes among approaches to media organizations according to the unit of analysis. At the individual level, research has examined factors such as career norms and roles, occupational socialization, gatekeeping, and systems of rewards and sanctions. The second level of analysis looks at the news organization as a whole and how its administration and operations affect the news product. The third level is interorganization analysis of the influence on media organizations that is exercised by other institutions and by the political and social environment.

Edward Jay Epstein (1973) contrasts alternative explanations of broadcast news content as the mirror theory (news as a reflection of reality), the professional analogy (news as the discerning verdict of news specialists), political theory (news as a product of ideological biases), and organizational theory (news as a consequence of institutional processes and goals). Similarly, Robinson and McPherson (1977) outline three major interpretations—reality, political, and organizational. In a contribution to this volume, Robinson adds the "newsworthy" interpretation (the inherent validity of news judgments) and the "collage" interpretation (news as a constant mixture of sensational, political, and human interest stories).

Robinson goes on to evaluate the domination of the organizational interpretation since the appearance of Epstein's book and, in their essay, Paletz and Pearson also critique aspects of Epstein's work. One problem, unmentioned in either essay, is that the term "organizational theory," as applied to network news, has been used

indiscriminately. Aside from conscious imposition of personal political values on news content, any explanation that does not take news to be an undistorted reflection of reality can acquire the organization-theory label; the catchall vagueness of the concept has reduced its usefulness. Under the rubric of organization has been collected four general kinds of factors: law, technology, commerce, and group norms.

Legal factors refer largely to regulations of the Federal Communications Commission pursuant to its mandate to insure that broadcasters operate as trustees of the "public interest." The FCC strongly encourages public affairs programming. The largest legal penumbra over newscast content is that of the FCC's Fairness Doctrine. By requiring that American political issues be given balanced and fair coverage, the FCC retains jurisdiction to hear challenges to "fairness." And, although the FCC appears to grant a presumption in favor of network coverage, the mere existence of the Fairness Doctrine is said to exert significant pressures to promote dialectical presentations of news, to insure that "the other side" is told, and to inhibit controversial news content (e.g., Epstein, 1973, pp. 63-72; Geller, 1973; Petrick, 1976). Other legal constraints affect the structure of the broadcast industry itself, the system of small television markets, the power and role of the networks, the relationship between affiliates and the networks, and cross-ownership of television and newspapers. (See Noll, Peck, and McGowan, 1973; Baer, Geller, Grundfest, and Possner, 1974.)

Technology also sets bounds for news operations. Epstein maintains that the arrangement of costly closed-circuit lines for transmitting stories skewed news content toward the cities with those special connections (1973, pp. 106-107). According to Epstein, difficulties in getting late-breaking newsfilm from California lead to an emphasis on feature stories from California (frequently about bizarre West Coast lifestyles, pp. 244-246). Other technological developments such as lightweight and portable cameras, electronic news-gathering equipment, and satellite communications change the limits of feasible news reporting. (On news technology, see Bagdikian, 1971.)

Commercial goals are also seen as shaping the news. In the lucrative world of television, massive audiences must be attracted in order to sell advertising time, the source of network profits. Some interpretations of news content weigh heavily on this audience-ads-profit

linkage. The packaging of news is thus understood as driven by the need to dazzle and entertain viewers with drama, action, conflict, pathos, humor, and narrative. Use of violent newsfilm is interpreted as evidence of what producers believe audiences find exciting. The short time given each story is cited as evidence of the fear viewers will become bored. (On television for profit, see Barnouw, 1978; Brown, 1971; Epstein, 1973, pp. 78-100; Bunce, 1976.) Television news is not a philanthropic activity of a generous foundation. By stressing the motives of making money for corporate investors and providing higher salaries and prestige for news executives and other news personnel, commercial interpretations point to the primacy of high ratings and economics.

Organizational theory, then, covers a wide variety of explanations of network news content. Some scholars advance particular components—legal, technological, or commercial—to the virtual exclusion of the rest. Others, including Epstein, merge them all into a general organizational-process approach (e.g., Krieghbaum, 1972; Batscha, 1975; Altheide, 1976). More problematic and sometimes misleading is the inclusion of group norms as part of organizational theory.

As with any occupation, broadcast journalism has evolved norms setting accepted practices for tasks of news-gathering and news-presentation. Occupational sociology studies just these sorts of group folkways. Tuchman's research (1973a, 1973b, 1976, 1977) attests to the importance of informal codes and routinized practices of journalists in directing their work and output. Because these norms are sustained and sanctioned in the ongoing processes of organizations, they are properly incorporated into organizational theory, broadly construed.

Confusion arises when group norms—as organizational interpretations—are placed in contraposition to attitudinal or political interpretations. Organizational process theories since Epstein have been strictly distinguished from interpretations of news content as value-laden products of identifiable ideologies. In this instance, the dichotomy becomes misleading because group norms include many values not entirely derived from organizational needs and goals.

That current group norms are ostensibly nonpartisan and nonideological does not mean they fail to have powerful consequences for the judgments and values implicit in news content. Thus, while not explicitly political, group norms of broadcast journalists confound

debate between organizational and political-attitudinal interpretations of newscast content. Insofar as they comprise a set of practices and criteria not intrinsicly attached to organizational necessities, group norms represent collective attitudinal forces shaping the news. (On the role of journalism norms and news judgments, see Roshco, 1975; Sigal, 1973; Breed, 1955; and White, 1950.)

The more unmistakable version of political-attitudinal theory sees the personal political opinions of newspeople as regularly influencing decisions about what to cover and how to cover it. Such explanations run the gamut from suggesting subtle effects to charging conspiritorial ideological designs by a (leftist/establishment/radical/reactionary) cabal. More commonly, representatives of this view contend that personal values enter inevitably into news decisions; thus, they insist that news must be understood as a product of those values. Because news personnel live in a similar world, it is suggested that their values are prone to become shared ones and that the imposition of these values on news content is systematic rather than random. (This tie to group norms again indicates that there is a thin line betwen attitudinal-political interpretations of news and at least one aspect of the organizational approach.) For further discussions of the political interpretation, see, for example, Epstein (1973, pp. 200-236), Efron (1971, pp. 173-207), Keeley (1971), and Herschensohn (1976).

The sum of research and commentary proposes a wide assortment of variables influencing the selection and shaping of news stories: from the Fairness Doctrine to time zones, from the political views of reporters and producers to the costs of satellite transmissions, from new light-weight cameras to stockholders' dividends. Elements in this complex equation are accorded vastly different weights by various observers.

Elements thought to predict or influence newscast content constitute independent variables, while content is the dependent variable. Content studies test the inferences of production research. For example, the impact of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* on nightly network news has been the subject of speculation and some research. Although production research has found that many news producers read one or both newspapers regularly each morning, content research can document the actual similarities in the news agendas of each. Thus, content analysis establishes the predictive accuracy of interpretations of factors that influence news content.

In addition to testing the predictions of production research, content analysis can uncover anomalies or patterns that should be explored with production research. If certain parts of the country are covered more extensively than other equally populated areas, a number of possible factors may be operating; production research could examine the alternative explanations. Much of the worth of production research lies in its success in identifying forces affecting news content. In turn, this research rests on the worth and credibility of careful content analysis.

Content Research

Research into television news content focuses on the composition of news broadcasts. Questions about content are posed to satisfy one or both of two different types of purposes: social science explanations or reform critiques. The questions may focus on coverage of a single episode, groups of stories, or entire broadcasts. They may involve comparisons among networks, among media, and over time. Content research cannot, in itself, establish either the consequences of content for the viewer (effects research) or the determinants of content (production research). Instead, content research can ask two questions: What was the priority (agenda) of coverage? What was the nature (depiction) of that coverage?

Agenda. Questions of priority refer to story emphasis, frequency, length, and order in newscasts; a story or subject's place on the network news agenda is examined. The amount of coverage that a topic or topics receive is frequently the first issue addressed in content analysis studies. For example, Almaney (1970) measured the extent of attention given to international coverage; Pride and Clarke (1973) looked at the various levels of emphasis given to issues in race relations; Lefever (1974) was concerned with the low priority given coverage of the Soviet arms buildup. Assessing coverage in the context of overall newscasts is a logical first step.

In some instances, agenda research is the only step. McCombs and Shaw have expanded and developed a concept called "agenda setting," which suggests that news media establish or strongly influence priorities for subjects of public debate. Exposure to media news, so agenda-setting theory indicates, may not tell people what to

think, but they are told what to think about. The content analysis component of this line of research is thus confined to determining the subject of stories arrayed on the evening news.

Methodologically, the priorities and the airtime given various topics are usually the least problematic aspects of newscasts to analyze. In fact, an index such as Vanderbilt's *Television News Index and Abstracts* by itself may be sufficient for summarizing the news agenda of the networks. As the evidence of the impact of the media news agenda continues to grow, extensive content research on agendas appears increasingly useful. For other purposes, however, it becomes important to examine not only the priorities of coverage, but also how a topic was covered—termed here "depiction research."

Depiction. Most content analyses proceed to the second general question, that of determining the way in which news was depicted. Depiction research is directed toward how stories were covered in terms of slant, depth, or form. By far the most common approach is to study the direction or slant of a story—that is, whether coverage is favorable or unfavorable to particular regimes, ideologies, parties, institutions, issue positions, or newsmakers. These efforts are often referred to as "bias studies," although serious issues arise with the indiscriminate use of the term "bias"; unfavorable coverage of a subject does not by itself establish the prejudices of news personnel. Yet, long before Spiro Agnew's Des Moines speech, and even before Dwight Eisenhower's one critical reference to "sensation-seeking" commentators prompted a prolonged thundering endorsement from angry conservatives at the 1964 GOP convention, the fairness of television news was a matter of sustained controversy. Consequently, much of the published content research is a direct examination of the charges of liberal bias in network news (American Institute for Political Communication, 1972; Efron, 1971, 1976; Stevenson, Eisinger, Feinberg, and Kotok, 1973; Frank, 1973; Hofstetter, 1976; Meadow, 1973; Lowry, 1971a, 1974; Pride and Wamsley, 1972; Pride and Richards, 1974; Doll and Bradley, 1974).

Slant or bias research is not confined to the dimensions of liberalism-conservatism or Republican-Democrat. Analyzing the implied or expressed evaluations contained in news stories also can involve measuring the proportion of favorable, neutral, and unfavorable coverage of institutions (Pride and Richards, 1974) or individuals (Einsiedel, 1975).

Less frequently studied are two other aspects of content depiction—depth and form. Depth research explores the thoroughness of coverage, but not its slant. From almost a civic education perspective, depth research is concerned with the adequacy of television as a news source, given its limitations of time. The massive audience relying heavily on network news makes questions of the thoroughness or superficiality of coverage not insignificant ones. Examples of this approach may be found in Patterson and McClure (1976), Patterson (1976, 1977), Almaney (1970), and Harney and Stone (1969).

A final assortment of content studies will be termed "form research." Form research is non-issue specific and looks into general types of news (bad news, Lowry, 1971b; aggressive news, Singer, 1970-71; individual helplessness in news, Levine, 1977; see also Gerbner and Signorielli in this volume), or the technical and visual presentations of news apart from perspectives of bias or depth (in this volume, see Paletz and Pearson, Culbert, Adams).

Content analysis research topics. Published research on television news has investigated coverage of a variety of topics, but no subject rivals the 1972 presidential election campaign as the object of many extended analyses. Three major books (Patterson and McClure, 1976; Frank, 1973; and Hofstetter, 1976) are based on network treatment of the Nixon-McGovern clash. Articles have explored coverage of the 1972 primaries (Robinson and McPherson, 1977; American Institute for Political Communication, 1972; Pepper, 1973; Tyrrell, 1972), conventions (Paletz and Elson, 1976), the Eagleton affair (Einsiedel, 1975; Altheide, 1976), the fall campaign (Meadow, 1973, 1976; Lowry, 1974; Graber, 1976; Evarts and Stempel, 1974; Buss and Hofstetter, 1977; Frank, 1974; Doll and Bradley, 1974), and election night (Pepper, 1973-74).

By comparison, published 1968 campaign research is limited to Edith Efron's book *The News Twisters* (1971), an article attempting to refute Efron's findings (Stevenson, Eisinger, Feinberg, and Kotok, 1973), and a useful work by Doris Graber (1976) which includes comparisons with 1972 data. To date, only a few studies have appeared on the 1976 Carter-Ford news coverage (Patterson, 1977; Robinson and McPherson, 1977), although more studies on nightly newscasts and on the televised debates are in press.

In addition to the 1972 presidential election, war in Southeast Asia is the only other single topic which has received extensive analysis.

Bailey (1976a) calculated Vietnam's place on the network agenda and classified the subjects of Vietnam news stories from 1965 to 1970. Bailey (1976b) also studied the nature of interpretative reporting by anchormen. The extent of anti-Western bias in television news was assessed by Lefever (1974, chap. 5) and Russo (1971-72) for Vietnam coverage and by Pride and Wamsley for the Laos incursion (1972). A detailed account of broadcast and press coverage of the Tet offensive and its aftermath is authored by Peter Braestrup (1977).

Outside of Southeast Asia, international issues have received the attention of few content analysts. Almaney (1970), Larson and Hardy (1977), and Warner (1968) reported the priority given countries and regions in international news. Harney and Stone (1969) reviewed coverage given the 1965 Dominican Republic crisis. Ernest Lefever's scrutiny of CBS news (1974;1975) included the agenda and depiction of United States diplomatic and military relations with both China and the Soviet Union.

Published studies of American domestic political issues have been almost as few and as diverse. Pride and Richards (1974) examined coverage of the student movement, and Lowry (1971a) looked into the portrayal of the Nixon Administration. Efron critiqued stories on nuclear power development (1976) and coverage of the New Left and issues of the late 1960s (1971). Three studies explored news about race relations and the status of minorities: Pride and Clarke (1973), Roberts (1975), and the Civil Rights Commission (1977).

One final series of studies is not issue specific. Included here are comparisons by Scheer and Eiler (1972) and by Singer (1971) of the overall approaches taken by CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) and CBS. Dominick (1977) computed the geographic distribution of network news coverage which originates in the United States. Lemert (1974) compared the amount of story duplication present across all three networks. Levine (1977) investigated the proportion of news time devoted to stories suggesting the helplessness of individuals. And, Lowry (1971b) determined the place of negative or "bad news" on the television newscast agenda (cf. Clark and Blankenburg, 1972).

Almost all of these three dozen published content analyses employ formal content analysis and report their numerical results. The review demonstrates the difficulty of generalizing on many subjects from existing literature, given the limited research in many areas; it also indicates a focus on coverage of the 1972 election and of the war in Southeast Asia.[2]

Comparative designs. In his essay, Patterson emphasizes the utility of comparative research across media. Adding newspapers to the analysis is a strategy, he maintains, that offers perspective and prevents researchers from entirely attributing the content findings to the unique properties of television news. Only a few studies, however, have employed a comparative media approach. Among them are Harney and Stone (1969), Clark and Blankenburg (1972), Meadow (1973, 1976), Evarts and Stempel (1974), Lefever (1974), Graber (1976), Braestrup (1977), and Patterson (1977).

Patterson also stresses the advantages of comparisons over time. Bailey's (1976a) study of trends in coverage of Vietnam from 1965 through 1970 represents the most detailed use of this approach. Graber (1976) compares certain content variables in both 1968 and 1972 campaign coverage, and Robinson and McPherson (1977) contrast 1972 primary coverage with that in 1976. Lowry (1971a) examined the structural form of reporters' sentences in the years before and after Agnew's attacks on television news. Patterson (1977) juxtaposes the 1972 and 1976 proportions of coverage devoted to the horserace aspects of the presidential election campaigns. (In the absence of more works using comparisons over time, creating time series conclusions from two or more separate studies is difficult because of variations in methodologies for measuring content.)

A third comparative strategy is to contrast networks. With only a few exceptions, the studies cited earlier report separate data for ABC, CBS, and NBC, and in varying degrees discuss the nature of network similarity or diversity. (Comstock and Cobbey consider this network diversity issue in the next essay in this book.) While most of the studies include all three networks, two studies focused on CBS entirely (Stevenson, Eisinger, Feinberg, and Kotok, 1973; Lefever, 1974); others on CBS and NBC (Russo, 1971-72; Levine, 1977), CBS and CBC (Scheer and Eiler, 1972; Singer, 1970-71), or CBS and ABC (Pride and Wamsley, 1972). Three studies added together the data from all three networks (Civil Rights Commission, 1977; Dominick, 1977; and Graber, 1976). Findings have sometimes shown significant variations in coverage among the networks, so the justification for collapsing network categories into one and depriving the reader of that information is unclear.

Research goals. Whatever comparative designs are used and whether researching news agenda or news depictions, content

questions are derived from one or both of two different purposes: social science explanations or reform critiques. Both purposes are concerned with the role of television network news in society. One view is the non-judgmental perspective of social science understanding—to learn more about the dynamics of public opinion and information dissemination. The other impetus comes from the desire to critique the way networks render the nightly news. As the survey of recent research revealed, the latter perspective has been at least as influential as the former.

A spirit of reform animates much of the writing on television news. While not always crusading and muckraking, the tenor is often judgmental and prescriptive. These reform critiques of nightly newscasts take two tacks: contrasting network news' accounts of reality with a model of neutral reporting and instructing the networks in how to upgrade the news product.

"Watching the watchdogs," as Comstock and Cobbey put it in the essay that follows, has become the goal of many media researchers as they monitor the degree of factual and ideological distortion in news coverage. Surveillance of the media for evidence of such bias has emerged as a popular rationale for examining television news content.

This concern with news bias is not confined to individuals with undisguised ideological interests in obtaining more and better coverage of their viewpoints. Social scientists, armed with scholarly detachment and empirical technology, address the subject as well. Even when the impetus for academic research is not that of evaluating the networks' performance, an assessment of actual news coverage prompts a temptation to conclude the analysis with a summary judgment of the merits and defects of that coverage. Having learned how the news was covered, why not include a tutorial in how it should have been covered?

Confronting the empiricist-as-reformer is one insuperable barrier—the absence of any objective standard to which the fidelity of network news can be measured. (Comstock and Cobbey explore the pervasiveness of this problem in their discussion of recent research.) Is it imbalanced for the U.S. Senate to receive far more television attention than the U.S. House? If Democrats hold the White House and dominate Congress, how much news visibility do Republicans deserve (Adams and Ferber, 1977)? If Nixon stays in the White House to appear "presidential," is it unfair for McGovern to receive more

campaign coverage? Whether focusing on news images of individuals, institutions, issues, or campaigns, evaluations of bias clearly require the observer to impose subjective criteria of what would constitute a fair portrayal. This conceptual obstacle, however, inhibits few of us. The impulse is to treat newscasts as term papers which must somehow be graded.

Zeal for reform manifests itself in a second way. After asserting opinions on inaccurate or inappropriate news coverage, researchers may dispense a series of prescriptions for refashioning and elevating the news. Some recommendations are directed toward improving the organizational structure that packages news, while other suggestions are aimed at changing the approach and agenda found in news content. (The essay by Paletz and Pearson includes an examination of some of the advice social scientists have offered to network news departments.)

Few areas of current social science research are quite as imbued with this inclination to monitor and reform as is television news research. The degree to which media research reflects this reformist concern with both the inadequacies and improvement of television news is necessary to note; several fundamental issues revolve around it.

The great strength in the reform approach lies in the simple beliefs that television news performs many significant functions in American society; that no institution should be exempt from reasoned, external criticism in a plural, open society; and that such criticism is too important to be left to polemicists who have written their conclusions prior to any content analysis. Scholarly news criticism therefore makes a vital, useful contribution.

At the same time, there are problems with the stance of overt or covert reformism. By offering a rationale for research grounded in critiquing the fairness of coverage, research is undermined by the unresolvable absence of objective standards of comparison for those critiques. And by emphasizing prescriptions for improvement of content, the rest of the justification is lost in the likely event network personnel resist the suggestions of scholars.

The basis of television news content research does not ultimately have to rest on asserting personal opinions of preferred types of news coverage and on offering unsolicited counsel to the broadcasting industry. As much as the reformist impulse may have permeated many recent studies, it does not represent their only contribution.

Conducted properly, television news research should help us better understand the dynamics of American politics and society. That understanding alone, whether or not it leads to change in news content or industry practices, is a sufficient rationale for its importance as an object of academic inquiry.

If this were nothing more than the endless scholarly tension between disinterested analysis and committed activism in yet another guise, then it would not warrant another consideration here. But for a variety of reasons, the issue is an especially crucial one for newscast content research. Some of the early efforts in the area were viewed as tendentious and propagandistic. Lawrence Lichty and others believe this damaged the reputation of work in the field. Although writers now make an obligatory swipe at Efron's study (1971), few entirely avoid offering their own verdicts on the fairness and worth of network newscasts. The special risk of the empiricist-as-reformer comes in neglecting the implications of the findings for social science explanations of political and social processes. Emphasis on devising a plausible judgment on the merits of coverage and on methods of their improvement may direct attention away from the meaning and potential consequences of the coverage itself.

The contribution of newscast content analysis toward understanding public opinion rests heavily on the parallel development of effects research. Much of the justification of content analysis as a tool of the social sciences, rather than strictly for testing accusations of network bias or for intrinsic interest in patterns of news, lies in the notion that news content affects mass or elite opinions and attitudes. A better grasp of the nature of mass media messages becomes essential as research into the impact of those messages becomes increasingly sophisticated.

Effects Research

Effects research seeks to determine the political and social consequences of network news broadcasts for individuals and for society. Effects studies may be divided into those concerned with "processes" and those emphasizing "impact." Process research asks questions about how television news has an impact, while impact research is more interested in what the television-influenced attitudes ultimately

are. Process research stresses the psychological and interpersonal dynamics that determine the way in which media messages are received and interpreted. Impact research stresses the nature of television's effects on the orientations of individuals, and often ignores or presumes held constant the psychological and interpersonal processes leading to that impact.

The primary purpose of this outline of effects research is to show its relationship to content analysis of network news. Studies on media effects are far more numerous than are content analyses, and the discussion that follows makes no attempt to provide as thorough a listing of these studies as was offered for content research. For more detailed syntheses and bibliographies of the effects literature, George Comstock et al. (1975, 1978), Sidney Kraus and Dennis Davis (1976), and Steven Chaffee (1975) should be consulted.

Process research. Explanations of how the mass media come to have an impact emphasize interpersonal processes and individual psychological processes. Interpersonal sociological explanations are provided by the "social influence" model and the "two-step flow" model.

Social influence theory highlights the role of social groups in mediating the impact of mass communication. Messages are not absorbed in a vacuum, but rather are received in a rich context of social networks and reference groups that serve to delimit and remold messages.

Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, in their study of Erie County, Ohio (1944), discovered the significance of group norms in mitigating the impact of mass media messages; very few individuals appeared to change their candidate preferences due to news or advertisements. A more detailed statement of social influence theory came with the "two-step flow" view that social influence rests primarily in the hands of opinion leaders. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954) sought to identify such leaders and found their coterie was usually a relatively small and somewhat homogeneous one. Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) provided the classic exposition of the two-step flow theory by drawing on data for a large survey in Decatur, Illinois; they maintained that personal influence is much more consequential than mass media messages. (See Lazarsfeld and Menzel, 1963, for a survey of the findings of social influence research.)

The two-step flow notion has been increasingly attacked as simplistic (Bostian, 1970) and various revisions have been offered. John Robinson (1976) presented two major qualifications: many people are exposed to mass media messages without the accompanying benefit of interpretations by local opinion leaders and many other people exchange, as equals, opinions related to media content.

Learning from the mass media may involve the acquisition of information either purposefully (Maccoby and Markle, 1973) or incidentally and passively (Krugman, 1965; Krugman and Hartley, 1970). Turning from sociological to psychological explanations of the processes of media impact, several concepts should be noted, including selective exposure, cognitive dissonance, uses and gratifications, and social utility. Selective exposure hypothesizes that information seeking is guided by preferences for information that supports predispositions. At the same time, exposure to conflicting information is avoided. As with sociological models, selective exposure theory has not entirely withstood empirical testing. Its application has been reduced to an increasingly narrow set of circumstances (Sears and Freedman, 1967). However, even if selective exposure is not employed as consistently as was once thought, other psychological processes remain to mitigate the direct influence of media messages. Festinger's concept of cognitive dissonance (1957) points up the mental defense mechanisms that operate to block or recast new information that is discrepant with existing views.

Uses and gratifications theory postulates that individuals use the media for a variety of purposes and that their interactions with media messages vary according to these purposes (e.g., Lometti, Reeves, and Bybee, 1977). In this view, audiences are not truly passive. Instead, gratifications sought from the media will determine which medium is used and how it is used. Enumerations of the types of gratifications people seek have differed across studies. The four dimensions Atkin (1973) proposed were surveillance, guidance, performance, and reinforcement. Greenberg's data on English school children (1974) suggested seven factors: learning, habit, arousal, companionship, forgetting, passing time, and relaxation. Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973), McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1972), and McLeod and Becker (1974) have suggested other gratification categories.

One perspective on news media usage stresses its social utility. Drawing on two Wisconsin samples, Atkin (1972) shows the impor-

tance of political discussions in predicting media use. Moreover, specific conversational content appeared to direct attention selectively to particular news sources and items. Thus, anticipated conversations and other potential social communications are seen as major motivations for exposure and receptivity to television, newspaper, radio, and magazine news. (See also Atkin, 1974; Lucas and Adams, 1978.) Using slightly different strategies, analyses of news diffusion have also documented the considerable extent to which news items translate into conversation topics (Troldahl and Van Dam, 1966; Greenberg, 1964).

Uses and gratifications research offers the potential to explain more about social utility, information-seeking, entertainment, reinforcement, and other motives in viewing newscasts. Presumably, as this approach is developed, it can help to explain how various media uses might differentiate the impact of media messages on viewer knowledge and opinions.

Impact research. Ignoring process questions about the way media messages come to have an impact, some researchers are more concerned with the nature of ideas acquired from exposure to news media. Typically, they employ correlational designs to compare various opinions of respondents with their amount of exposure to television news, newspapers, radio, or magazines. Such research is often accused of presuming that no intervening social and psychological factors exist; it is charged with overlooking the complex context of social influences and uses and gratifications. Correlational impact research is thus sometimes labeled as resembling the "hypodermic needle model," also popularly called the "discredited hypodermic needle model."

The notion that media "injected" ideas like a needle directly into the minds of the audience was discredited because it excluded personal and social factors as barriers that screen and reinterpret media ideas. By omitting these processes from the research design, impact research is vulnerable to the charge of being an anachronism akin to simplistic propaganda studies of the 1930s. The charge is unfair.

Recent correlational research does not by implication reject intervening social and psychological processes. By failing to address process issues, such research merely supposes that direct exposure may still be associated with certain viewer orientations whatever the panoply of social contexts and individual uses in which exposure takes

place. Impact research is interested, after the mitigating influences of peers and personality, in the net impact of media messages.

A second issue surrounding impact studies derives from the non-experimental character of most research designs. In all non-experimental research, many variables hold competing claims of causality. Even with appropriate statistical controls, correlation alone is insufficient to infer that exposure to newscasts caused particular effects. Newscast viewing may be the effect, rather than the cause. Also, an association may be spurious because some antecedent third factor may have impelled both newscast watching and the political effect. For this reason, experimental studies make a special contribution.

Michael Robinson's survey data correlations between reliance on television news and political alienation were reinforced by findings from an experimental showing of the CBS documentary "Selling of the Pentagon" which induced similar responses (1976). The correlational data alone, from Michigan Survey Research Center national polls, would have been far less persuasive and would not have indicated the direction of the causal arrow.

David Paletz and Richard Vinegar (1977-78) conducted an imaginative experiment on the impact of "instant analysis" of presidential remarks by network commentators. Subjects who heard the analysis interpreted the press conference quite differently than those who did not hear it. Paletz and Vinegar concluded that "the very nature of instant analysis undermines presidential authority" as "credible, familiar, apparently disinterested newsmen . . . comment on the self-interested performance of a politician" (pp. 496-497).

Unlike those two studies, most impact investigations have consisted of non-experimental correlational designs. This research has examined the impact of media exposure on various orientations of members of the audience. Examples of some of these studies will be used to illustrate the following four general areas of impact research: (1) agenda-setting of public issues; (2) transmitting factual public affairs information; (3) affecting orientations toward the social and political system, and the citizen's role in the system; and (4) influencing opinions about candidates, other political figures, and public issues.[3]

Agenda-setting has become the most theoretically-developed and empirically-tested distinct area of impact research. Findings from agenda-setting research conclude that "the mass media may not be

successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think *about*" (Shaw and McCombs, 1977, p. 5). While the idea that the media strongly influence the salience and ordering of events and issues goes back at least to Walter Lippmann (1922), Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw have led its recent explication and refinement.

In surveys during the 1968 presidential election, McCombs and Shaw (1972) discovered that undecided voters were likely to hold the same priorities of campaign issues as those presented by the news media. Subsequent surveys have found similar and even stronger patterns of agenda-setting in a variety of contexts (Shaw and McCombs, 1977; Tipton, Haney, and Baseheart, 1975; Gormley, 1975; Weaver, McCombs and Spellman, 1975; Benton and Frazier, 1976). Funkhouser (1973a, 1973b) showed that Gallup poll responses to the "most important problem facing America" question reflected priorities of the news media. However, years of the most media coverage of particular issues (such as racial unrest, Vietnam, crime, student militancy, and inflation) did not coincide with the years in which the most actual activity occurred in these areas.

The precise relationship between television and newspapers in the agenda-setting process is still being disentangled. Some evidence indicates that newspapers are able to initiate public issues at an earlier stage than can television, but that when those issues do obtain prominence on television, their salience is heightened, an additional audience is reached, and a slight variation on the newspaper agenda is presented (Shaw and McCombs, 1977, pp. 89-105). One study by Palmgreen and Clarke (1977) found that, for national topics, network news exerts an even stronger agenda-setting force than do newspapers. If television and other news media do act as a powerful agenda-setting force in American life, do they also act to influence orientations toward social and political objects?

A second series of impact studies has sought to measure the association between respondents' store of factual information and their degree of exposure to various media. How much specific political learning occurs while watching newscasts? Most results have not reflected too favorably on network news in transmitting political facts to the audience. Tests of viewer recall of news stories broadcast earlier in the same evening have generally revealed modest levels of recall.

Booth's data (1970-71) suggest that recall of television news stories is at least equal to recall of newspaper stories. Neuman (1976) found aided recall of television news stories to average about half of all stories on a newscast. ("Aided recall" asks respondents to remember details of a story when prompted about the general nature of the story.) While the aided recall of those purposefully watching "to keep informed" (57 percent) did exceed the recall of those watching much more casually, the latter group still remembered 42 percent of the stories.

Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien (1970) have argued that mass media information increases the knowledge gap between higher and lower socioeconomic-status groups because the better educated and affluent acquire news media information more rapidly. Consistent with this "knowledge gap" hypothesis, V. O. Key (1961, pp. 348-357) had suggested that one effect of a presidential campaign was to accentuate differences in information levels between the more and the less educated, because the latter have less media exposure.

While the print media may promote a knowledge gap, there is some evidence that television operates more as a leveler, or at least exacerbates the gap less than do print media. Neuman's study (1976, p. 119), for example, found only a small difference between education levels in terms of aided recall of newscast stories. Non-college-educated individuals remembered only five percent fewer of the stories than the college-educated people. Because it demands fewer cognitive skills, television news may act to more nearly equalize information levels across social and educational groups. Moreover, television is the only major news source which attracts proportionately about as many or more lower socioeconomic-status individuals as it does those of higher status.

People relying on television as a news source are still markedly less informed than those relying on newspapers, as Wade and Schramm, Patterson and McClure, and others have shown. Wade and Schramm (1969) used four national surveys to examine the association between science, health, and public affairs knowledge and mass media usage. In no instances were the group of respondents who relied on broadcast news better informed on a series of factual questions in all three fields than those relying on print news. Patterson and McClure (1976), using panel surveys, came to even harsher conclusions regarding television news as a disseminator of factual issue information. They found that

"individuals who faithfully tuned in network news during the election learned not much more than people who spent that time doing something else. By way of comparison, newspaper readers became much better informed on these same election issues during the 1972 campaign" (p. 51).

Despite these findings, the impact of television as an information source for adolescents is increasingly recognized as an important factor in political socialization (e.g., Chaffee, Ward, and Tipton, 1970; Atkin and Gantz, 1978). Also, Lucas and Possner (1975) found significant relationships between local television news viewing and knowledge of local officials, especially for middle and lower socioeconomic-status citizens.

The weight of this and other current evidence suggests that television is not nearly as successful in transmitting factual information as newspapers and that it is especially weak in conveying facts on certain topics, such as candidate issue positions. Nonetheless, television is an important information source for adolescents and young adults, and for lower- and middle-strata citizens who rely relatively heavily on newscasts for public affairs information. Television plays a large role in diffusing awareness of major news stories (Deutschmann and Danielson, 1960), and newscasts do succeed in getting across some information.

A third group of impact studies has considered the effects of television news on citizens' orientations toward the government generally and toward their role in the political system. Michael Robinson's research (1976) was mentioned earlier as having found network news viewing to be associated with "political malaise" and a lowered sense of political efficacy and trust. The overall consequences of media exposure for citizen "politicization," however, remains uncertain.

Verba and Nie explain sizable variations in local political participation rates (controlling for social class) in terms of "boundedness," their word for "the extent to which the community is an autonomous political, social, and economic unit" (1972, p. 243). As they pursue the notion of boundedness, they emphasize the degree to which communities are penetrated by external communications channels. Dividing communities into those with high or low density of external communications channels produced a significant difference in local parparticipation rates. Respondents living in highly-penetrated communi-

ties participated in local affairs at much lower rates than those residing in communities less dominated by externally-originating media sources.

In contrast, Johnson's natural experiment (1973) contrasting parts of Appalachia with and without television reception did not find television created additional political interest. Instead, television news better informed and stimulated those young people who were already more politicized due to primary social relationships.

Becker and Preston's (1969) correlations of political activity with media use illustrate the problem in inferring causality in survey data. Using a 1964 national election poll, correlations were calculated between media usage and campaign interest and participation. Strong associations were found between media usage and measures of participation such as voting and writing public officials. Survey measures from only one point in time cannot show how much political interest was stimulated by media exposure; political interest may have been the motivation for exposure.

Whether attention to news media does prompt increased political interest is important, because interest is closely associated with participation. Using cross-lagged correlation techniques from panel interviews before and immediately after the 1972 election, Atkin, Galloway, and Nayman (1976) tentatively concluded that "media exposure contributes to political knowledge and interest," although the pattern is quite complex with "each pair of variables" appearing in a "reciprocal relationship, each stimulating increases in the other" (p. 237).

A final group of studies has explored the relationship between newscast viewing and opinion about political figures, issues, and parties. Although earlier interpretations of mass media effects stressed a limited capacity to persuade and influence opinions (Klapper, 1960), recent research is revising those conclusions.

Lucas and Adams (1978), drawing on a large sample of Pennsylvania voters, explored factors associated with voter uncertainty in choosing between Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford during the 1976 campaign. Decided and undecided voters were unexpectedly similar in almost all civic participation, political knowledge, conversation topic, media use, and demographic variables. They stood apart in two important respects: frequency of viewing network news and frequency of interpersonal discussions about the campaign. Individuals

who watched network news daily were much more decisive about their candidate preferences than less frequent viewers. Concerning these associations, Lucas and Adams offer a number of explanations which suggest that newscasts played an "authenticating" role that prompted closure.

Haight and Brody (1977) found that a large portion of the variations in Nixon's presidential popularity ratings could be explained by his coverage in the daily press and number of television appearances. Using panel data, Dobson and St. Angelo (1975) show that people who changed party affiliations were attentive to news media, rather than being isolated from it. Robinson and Zukin (1976) discovered that support for George Wallace in 1968 correlated with reliance on television as a campaign news source; the pattern remained after controlling for education, age, income, and political party. For explanations, they suggest television's "unsettling" images of society and the attention network news gave to the "social issue" and to Wallace.

Examples cited above point up several features of the state of current research on the impact of television news with regard to setting the public agenda, transmitting factual information, influencing orientations toward the political system, and affecting opinions about public figures and issues. After years of presuming effects were negligible, reexamination of the news media effects has proven fruitful in several areas. The tentative findings are sufficiently provocative to attract more sustained scholarly attention. Moreover, the findings confirm the role of content analysis in understanding and interpreting impact research.

The Role of Content Research

Content research is at the center of television news research. It is the dependent variable for production research. It is the independent variable for effects research. As do some of the essays that follow, this discussion underscores the role of careful content studies in complementing the findings of both production and effects research.

As the dependent variable for production research, content is the final outcome of the process of selecting and shaping news stories. Content becomes a test of the predictions of production research.

When used in conjunction with impact studies, newscast content analysis makes a significant contribution to understanding the dynamics of public opinion. Sometimes content analysis is indispensable for impact research. The study of agenda-setting, for example, requires both measurement of news priorities as chosen by the media and measurement of issue priorities of the audience (e.g., McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Patterson and McClure (1976) offer another design combining content analysis with impact research; they tested the substantive campaign knowledge of respondents after having coded the amount of substantive campaign information provided by network newscasts.

While not always an absolute prerequisite, content analysis can aid in interpreting and understanding all impact studies. For example, Robinson (1976) uses several earlier content analyses to help explain the associations he uncovered between newscast viewing and "political malaise." Lucas and Adams (1978) draw on content findings of Lang and Lang, Lowry, and others to understand better the relationship between news viewing and voter decisiveness.

Content analysis and impact studies interrelate in another way. Results of newscast content analyses may suggest subjects for impact studies; conversely, impact studies may indicate the need for additional content analysis. In revealing useful hypotheses for impact research and in providing explanations for impact findings, content analysis informs the study of television's role in the political system in crucial ways. In his essay later in this volume, Robinson suggests a number of areas for future newscast content analysis. Although Robinson outlines these new directions in research for other purposes, they would strongly complement studies on the impact of newscast viewing on images of the political world.

News content also holds some relevance for "process" effects research. The degree to which news content diverges from the worldviews of individual viewers and their reference groups would suggest different degrees of resistance to the content. For various audiences, particular types of news content may fulfill certain needs and provide gratifications stemming from the different uses and perhaps different "meanings" of content.

Television news represents a part of American society that cannot easily be put under a microscope. The most influential participant observation study of network news—Epstein's *News From Nowhere*—has not been replicated. Analysis of content must confront significant methodological questions, involving issues such as coding reliability and validity, and visual analysis. And, studies of the impact of television news must struggle with the problems endemic to all social science field research (self-selection and causal ordering) and experimental research (external validity).

Television news research cannot evade such theoretical and methodological issues, but inquiry on the subject is now clearly important enough to warrant careful study. Thanks to the Vanderbilt Television News Archive that study has become feasible. The nascent, interdisciplinary field of television news research includes an increasingly expanding range of studies and perspectives. The importance of content analysis of broadcast news is not confined to bias studies, but extends to help explain the dynamics of public opinion, political socialization, agenda-setting, and information dissemination. The essays that follow explore further the current state of research, methodological issues, and future directions in content research.

In surveying the accomplishments of television news in 1957, CBS Vice-President Sig Mickelson cited Oliver Wendell Holmes and declared, "The great thing is not so much where we stand as in what direction we are moving" (1957, p. 49). The goal of scholarly research is now to assess as precisely as possible just where television news has moved, and where it may be moving society.

NOTES

1. Cf. Carter and Greenberg (1965), Clarke and Ruggels (1970), Shaw (1973), and Comstock and Cobbey in the following essay.

2. Television news is more than just the evening national network news. Local television news attracts large audiences and some studies have examined its news content (e.g., Dominick, Wurtzel, and Lometti, 1975; Adams, 1978). Although their ratings are usually low, network documentaries are broadcast during prime time. Several content analyses of network documentaries have also been published (e.g., Maines and Ottinger, 1973; McNulty, 1975).

All worthwhile commentary on television news content is not quantitative, of course. Provocative assessments of television news content, using less quantitative methods, have been provided by scholars such as Edwin Diamond and Irving Kristol, and by media critics and columnists such as Tom Shales, Ron Powers, Michael J. Arlen, Paul Weaver, Charles Seib, and Nora Ephron.

3. Another group of studies concerns the impact of newscasts on the political strategies of protest groups, campaigners, and other political actors (e.g., Mendelsohn and Crespi, 1970; Lipsky, 1968).

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Watching the Watchdogs: Trends and Problems in Monitoring Network News

George Comstock
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THE HONORABLE ROLE OF THE PRESS is to gaze sternly and remark promptly upon the foibles of those who govern or seek to govern. Only its responsibility to report quickly and fully events of the day, and to analyze their import, equal this role in importance. In practice, the three—critical scrutiny, full coverage, and interpretation—are inextricably bound together. A partisan pronouncement, accompanied by interpretative analysis, may stand apart as an editorial, but the partisanship that continually engages the attention of those concerned with the performance of the press is that appearing in the guise of news.

News, to inform the citizen adequately, presumably should be as free from bias and distortion as human minds can make it. The protection of the First Amendment, of course, is not at all contingent on the absence of such qualities; but the fact is fairness, candor, and honesty have become the criteria by which we judge the press. So strong are these values that rectifications proposed to prevent departures from them often encroach on the First Amendment, thereby disclosing an ignorance that its efficacy in serving the citizenry rests on their perspicacity in evaluating the news.

The ideal of an alert citizen who critically evaluates the news obviously imposes a harsh optimism on reality. Skepticism is not currently in short supply, but doubt over fairness or accuracy is not equivalent to reaching an informed judgement. The individual sufficiently prepared to weigh fairly the hundreds of thousands of words and images parading as news through a community each week is a very rare person. Most people are simply too ill-equipped and too busy to evaluate the news.

This fact does not render the First Amendment less desirable. What it means is that the response of citizens to the news can never be as well-grounded in knowledge as we would like. In turn, such a realization quickly directs us toward ostensibly objective, empirical means of monitoring the news.

The Importance of Television

These circumstances have been with us since the birth of news peddling by the mass media. Television has not changed the problem, but it has transformed the circumstances on which the solution depends. The central problem is the inadequacy of the individual when faced with evaluating the news. Television has heightened the urgency of this problem, posed new difficulties for its resolution, and brought to light certain resistant puzzles in responding to what we call news. So what we face is in many ways new, not in principle but in character and complexity.

Television is a newly-predominant medium seen in the public mind as the principal disseminator of news. Whether the issue is the principal source of news, the completeness of news, rapidity of delivery, or its fairness, over the past two decades television has become the medium most frequently named by the public as excelling (Steiner, 1963; Bower, 1973; Roper, 1973). Some discounting of the impression of television's preeminence has resulted from various studies of newspaper vs. television use and actual reliance on one or the other of the two media (as opposed to declarations of affinity), of the relative influence of newspapers and television in establishing public priorities on issues, and of the degree of knowledge gained by voters from television during election campaigns (Robinson, 1971; Comstock, et al., 1978; Patterson and McClure, 1976; Carter and

Greenberg, 1965; Clarke and Ruggels, 1970). However, the same body of evidence reveals no sound reason to downgrade the evidence of television's greater credibility.

The credibility commanded by television appears to be based on different criteria which emphasize the visual, dramatic, and participatory nature of television news reportage (Comstock, et al., 1978; Clarke and Ruggels, 1970). This has two implications: the public's conception of "news" may be changing as the result of the influence of television, and television introduces a variety of dimensions that do not arise when news coverage is confined to printed or orally-delivered words.

As a mass medium, television embodies those characteristics said to identify the most accomplished of all media. It can attract a huge national audience for a message conveyed both in words and moving pictures and it can do so for events not only past but also transpiring. Neither radio nor newspapers can match it; magazines, movies, and recorded tapes and discs are simply not in the same league. These factors find their greatest expression in certain aspects of news coverage, such as congressional hearings, presidential crises, and unexpected scoops such as the murder of an alleged presidential assassin.

These factors raise some interesting questions for the news analyst and consumer. Whether we wish to accord the degree of change attributable to television sufficient weight as to be described as a change in kind, or simply a set of shifts in magnitude, we do find ourselves confronting questions that are compelling; and we are not dissuaded from our view by evidence suggesting television may not be quite as significant a news source as the public believes it to be.

The public clearly perceives television as the principal news source. Public opinion can be compared using two often-cited surveys conducted a decade apart, in 1960 by Steiner (1963) and in 1970 by Bower (1973), or using the continuing series of Roper polls on media use that began in 1954 (Roper organization, 1973, 1977). In either case, the conclusion is the same: television is believed by the public to be its major news source and has attained that position by displacing newspapers in the perception of completeness and quantity of news and by displacing radio in the rapidity of diffusion. That about half the adult public does not view a national television news program over a typical two-week period, that a greater proportion look at a newspaper, and that the audience profile for news programs indicates a smaller

audience and one older and more male-dominated than for any category of entertainment programming (Robinson, 1971; Comstock, et al., 1978) does not alter the preeminence in public consciousness of television as provider of news.

The obvious fealty of politicians to television coverage that has been sufficient to transform the conduct of politics in America (Mendelsohn and Crespi, 1970; Lang and Lang, 1968) indicates that this perception of importance by the public may well transcend the reality of audience attention. No one seriously believes that the full acceptance by politicians of the evidence that television news viewing during fall campaigns fails to increase voter knowledge about politics (Patterson and McClure, 1976) or that newspapers are more effective in establishing voter priorities about the importance of issues (Comstock, et al., 1978) would dissuade them from making television news exposure a major goal. The fact that television news when attended to apparently does enjoy a decided credibility advantage (Clarke and Ruggels, 1970) gives the rasp of empirical support to the intuitive judgement of the politicians. The basis of that judgement, however, is identical to the foundation of the public's continuing declaration of television as a principal news source—the emergence of the medium as the symbol of public attention.

Research and Basic Issues

The problem posed by news is the unavoidable conflict between the values of fairness, balance, and comprehensiveness, and the critical and interpretative function assigned to the media. This conflict is exacerbated by the limited news-gathering capabilities and restricted space for reportage. In the case of television, the problem is raised to a new level by its character as a national mass medium and the acknowledgment of that character among public and politicians alike.

The principal conceptual problem posed for the monitoring of news bias is the absence of any concrete standards. Description of news content is not difficult, although it will inevitably fall short in conveying various subtleties; the inference of bias, however, depends on the imposition of some standard against which such a description may be compared. The principal methodological problem posed by television news is treating the ostensible myriad of variables that audiovisual coverage adds to the newspaper script. The principal

practical problem posed by television news is access by critics and analysts to its ephemeral flow.

The practical problem has been largely solved on a national level by the establishment of archives that contain videotapes of all network newscasts and related coverage, such as that of national political conventions. The conceptual problems are not so amenable to solution, although this is not likely to diminish the attractiveness of television news as an object for close scrutiny.

There also remains an issue not yet confronted—the specific topic on which the investigation focuses. Obviously, the news barrel, while not infinite, is no small mailing container when it comes to the various subjects of coverage. High order abstraction can reduce these to a few (war, politics, and people, perhaps), but those willing to allow their thoughts to conform more closely to the curves of news treatment will find themselves faced with the problems of choice. What is less obvious is that the eventual choice often reflects a conception of how the world functions or should function.

Researchers may try to resolve these conceptual, methodological, and practical problems in a variety of ways. We will summarize some recent publications which have drawn on the Vanderbilt Television News Archive and then consider their response to these various concerns.

J. R. Dominick. Geographic bias in national TV news. *Journal of Communication* 27 (Autumn 1977): 94-99.

Investigates the charge that network news coverage favors certain geographical areas. In order to evaluate how regions and states are represented in network newscasts, composite weeks of the three network newscasts for each month from June 1973 to July 1975 were analyzed. Results confirm that certain places are news-privileged. Two-thirds of total news minutes devoted to domestic coverage concerned Washington, D.C. (50%), California (9%), and New York (7%). The strong Washington bias was also seen in additional "reaction stories"—those that originated from other locations but concerned events in the capital. Excluding news from the capital from the analysis, regional and state differences persisted and remained when coverage was weighted according to population. To assure

adequate representation, the author suggests that newscasts could systematically allocate additional time to regional reports.

E. Efron. Nuclear Catastrophe? Television has tried to trigger one in California. *Barron's* (June 7, 1976): 3, 18-26.

Reviews on a network-by-network basis for the period February 1 to June 1, 1976, each story relating to nuclear power safety and the California referendum to limit nuclear plant construction. Such qualitative analysis leads the author to conclude that all three networks were consistently anti-nuclear. ABC news, which gave the least attention to the issue, in the author's opinion was thoroughly slanted and contained scientific inaccuracies. NBC, where coverage was greater and more mixed in favorability, is said to have been aggressive in its anti-nuclear coverage. CBS, which gave the most attention to the issue, also is said to have been biased in reporting scientific inaccuracies and extreme statements by nuclear energy opponents.

C. R. Hofstetter. 1976. *Bias in the news: Network television coverage of the 1972 election campaign.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Analyzes all relevant network evening news stories broadcast between July 10 and November 6 in order to evaluate the 1972 presidential campaign coverage in terms of bias favoring one party or candidate. The unit of analysis was the news story, which was classified as emphasizing a party, candidate, issue, campaign, or some combination of these subjects; other variables included story emphasis, thematic treatment, and the use of sources.

Results indicate that network news coverage was extremely similar in profile. Structural bias, defined as a deviation by television from newspaper coverage, was identified, showing that the Democrats were given more coverage by the networks. Coverage did vary in reporting mechanics. Instances of partisan bias were few, and the author concludes that it was not a significant factor in 1972. Extensive treatment is given various types of bias involving lying, omission, exaggeration, and aggrandizement of values.

D. L. Paletz and M. Elson. Television coverage of presidential conventions: Now you see it, now you don't. *Political Science Quarterly* 91 (Spring 1976): 109-131.

Evaluates the validity of criticism directed at television coverage of national conventions in general and the 1972 Democratic convention in particular. Data from a small sample of delegates indicate they perceived the convention as more orderly than did home viewers. However, a subsequent quantitative analysis of NBC convention coverage refuted any charges that NBC emphasized events outside the convention hall or emphasized the unusual elements of the convention. The authors conclude that the selection of interviewees was not made on the basis of personal or political dispositions of NBC personnel, and therefore any charge of pro- or anti-McGovern sentiment is unfounded. The authors are nevertheless convinced of the justification of the complaint that the networks portrayed the convention as rife with conflict, disorder, and confusion. They attribute this primarily to journalistic norms and the production techniques by which television news departments depict a national convention. These include the thematic approach adopted by anchormen and reporters, coverage which juxtaposes opposing views, interviewing techniques that emphasize conflicts, and visual techniques such as camera switching that give an impression of shifting action.

R. A. Pride and D. H. Clarke. Race relations in television news: A content analysis of the networks. *Journalism Quarterly* 50 (Summer 1973): 319-328.

Investigates variation in network coverage of race relations and tendencies for such coverage to be biased either against the black community or political authority. Analysis covers a random sample of network evening news programs between August 1968 and April 1970, with each sentence from all race-related stories coded. Dependent measures are the emphasis placed on the issue, language structure used in coverage of the issue, and the portrayal of prominent symbols such as blacks, the President, and the police.

NBC placed the most emphasis on the issue. There were additional differences in the reliance on anchormen, reporters, or third parties such as news sources; however, all networks relied most heavily on the reporter. Language structure was fairly consistent across the networks; however, ABC attributed fewer of its reports and inferences. In general, the portrayal of symbols was negative, and much of this is the result of statements attributed to third parties. NBC portrayed the authority figures more positively than CBS. The

authors conclude that their results dispel the notion that the three networks operated the same, or that there was consistent bias against either set of parties.

R. A. Pride and B. Richards. Denigration of authority? Television news coverage of the student movement. *Journal of Politics* 36 (August 1974): 637-660.

Investigates the possible denigration of authority by television news through its alleged unbalanced and predominantly negative treatment of authority symbols. The authors focus on the student movement, coding sentences from relevant stories selected randomly from each week between September 1968 and April 1970. Dependent measures include the treatment given to authority figures (national administration, police, university) and students, language structure used in reporting, and the emphasis given to student activism.

No differences were found in treatment of symbols and none were given substantially negative treatment. Negative portrayals of the national government and police differed between networks in the magnitude of negative coverage. All networks used a significant proportion of inferences, with third parties using inferences most often. Networks differed in the emphasis given the issue over time, with CBS providing the most coverage and ABC the least.

The authors conclude that there was a lack of disproportionate negative portrayals of symbols of authority, both within the networks or on the part of television news as a whole. Some authority figures were portrayed more negatively than positively, but the authors do feel that these differences were not great enough to support the denigration model, which implies a more one-sided presentation.

R. A. Pride and G. L. Wamsley. Symbol analysis of network coverage of Laos incursion. *Journalism Quarterly* 49 (Winter 1972): 635-640, 647.

Examines thirty days of coverage by CBS and ABC evening news of the Laos incursion in light of the charge of disproportionately negative treatment of the United States and South Vietnam and disproportionately positive treatment of North Vietnam. The unit of analysis was the cut-to-cut segment. Symbols were coded for direction and dimension. Minor but statistically significant differences were

found between ABC and CBS coverage, with ABC being regarded as somewhat more favorable to the administration. CBS presented the United States less positively. The presence or absence of the visual component was not found to alter coder perception of the segment. The authors conclude that differences between the networks were great enough to call for examination of coverage of other issues. Based on their findings, they also suggest that transcripts of broadcasts can be used as a data base.

The Baring of "Bad News"

Pride and Richards (1974) focus on the alleged proclivity of television reportage to emphasize the negative. This is an issue around which debate has crackled. Spiro T. Agnew, before securing his small place in history by resigning from the Vice Presidency, embellished his 1969 assault on news media liberalism by charging that network news unfairly highlighted dissent, confrontation, irrationality, and violence. Affronted by this charge, the news media were inclined to see a First Amendment issue instead of one of White House propriety. The public, although not ready to subscribe to the attribution of liberal bias (Comstock, et al., 1978), was inclined to agree with regard to bad news. In 1970, about half the public named television when asked which medium most emphasized the "bad things going on in America," while only a third named newspapers. (Bower, 1973).

The empirical evidence is ambiguous because of the absence of a criterion for balance of "good" and "bad" news. In their sample of network news stories broadcast over the two-year period ending in August 1970, Pride and Richards (1974) found very little evidence that television news consistently cast officials in a light unfavorable to their honesty, judiciousness, or competence. City government was the only entity to receive decidedly negative treatment, yet the largest percentage of its treatment was neutral. Lowry (1971b) found that a third of all news items in forty-five newscasts on the three networks during the summer of 1970 reflected dire events, such as armed conflict and war, crime, international strife, strikes, riots and other social conflict, or accidents and disasters, with such news given greater prominence by being nearer the beginning of newscasts and receiving greater visual accompaniment. Clark and Blankenburg (1972) found that the

quantity of violent stories on network television news was about the same as that on the front pages of four metropolitan newspapers for the same nine days in July 1970, thus providing no documentation for unusual attention to "bad news" by television.

Behind this ambiguity is the ambiguous nature of news itself. As many writers have argued (Altheide, 1976; Bailey and Lichty, 1972; Epstein, 1973; Patterson and McClure, 1976), news is not solely the product of events but represents the application of the values and perceptions of newsmen to events. To say that news is manufactured is not necessarily pejorative. However, that it must be manufactured means there is no clear standard against which to judge it. Reality, from which news is selected, is too diffuse, and the events reported are ordinarily beyond firsthand experience. The result is that we are in a quandry as to whether it can be said that bad news receives excessive attention. Yelling "fire!" in a crowded theater surely is bad news, but the meaning changes with the presence of flames and their magnitude.

Balance in Reporting Issues and Campaigns

Beyond the issue of prominence given "bad news," concern with fairness and balance in television news has frequently focused on coverage of specific issues as well as presidential election campaigns. Pride and Wamsley (1972) found that CBS and ABC coverage of the fighting in Laos, when analyzed with regard to the morality attributed to the combatants, gave about equal attention to the justification or impropriety of U.S. involvement and almost no attention to either with regard to South Vietnam or North Vietnam. Weakness rather than strength was more frequently attributed to the United States, strength than weakness to North Vietnam, and about equal proportions for South Vietnam. Russo (1971-72) found that CBS and NBC coverage of the Vietnam war in 1969 and 1970, when assessed in terms of the perceived degree to which statements were pro- or anti-administration policy, was slightly negative, with no statistically detectable shift over the two years. The degree to which these varied findings support the administration's charge of hostile treatment of the war by television news depends on the introduction by the observer of a standard for what constitutes fair treatment.

Dominick (1977) demonstrates convincingly that network news gives greater attention to events in the Northeast, particularly New York and Washington, than elsewhere in the nation except for California. Pride and Clarke (1973) examine the treatment of principal "symbols"—persons, issues, and organizations—employed in the coverage of race relations, and find the President and administration treated negatively. Efron (1976) presents a series of examples of reportage advanced as imbalanced by favoring the 1976 California anti-nuclear power plant referendum. Whether the work of these authors leads to a conclusion of distortion once more depends on the imposition of some standard of fairness by the observer.

Television coverage of national elections has been the subject of debate. Sometimes television coverage is the explanation offered for the election outcome by politicians, journalists, and scholars. Efron (1971) and Stevenson, et al. (1973) examine 1968 campaign coverage of Nixon, Humphrey, and Wallace. Lowry (1974), Meadow (1973), Doll and Bradley (1974), Frank (1973), and Hofstetter (1976) examine coverage of the 1972 Nixon-McGovern contest. These accounts of network television broadcasts lack the drama, detail, and occasional flurries of insight found in some journalistic portrayals of the media in elections. Nonetheless, they provide an empirical check on individual impressions.

The findings, although highly varied, converge on three conclusions. First, a great deal of material that would appear to be neutral is included in campaign coverage. Any analysis that purports to deal with bias will fail to give any findings of "unbalanced" coverage a proper weight if it ignores the larger context of neutrality in which the favorable or unfavorable segments are embedded. Second (excluding Efron, 1971), the degree of bias toward one candidate or another, as measured in quantity or favorability of coverage, was not found to be very great. Third, strategies adopted by candidates affect the conclusion that might be drawn from empirical evidence. This is exemplified by the greater coverage found to have been given McGovern when analysis is confined to the contestants as candidates and by the opposite finding when analysis includes Nixon in the role of President. Depending on the observer's perspective, coverage of the 1972 campaign can be said in this respect to reflect events or the successful manipulation of the media by the incumbent President, who chose to present himself primarily as chief executive until late in the contest. Obviously, we have introduced our own criteria in concluding

that these varied studies do not consistently support contentions of bias; those criteria are rough equivalents of quantity or favorability of reportage.

Network Diversity

Network diversity in news coverage is a state toward which there is approach-avoidance behavior. When diversity occurs, observers may suspect the deviation represents less than ideal news treatment by one or more networks. Such a conclusion derives from the unrevolutionary homily that not everyone can be right. At the same time, viewers may often demand and hope for differences in coverage so that three such expensive endeavors as network television news are not redundant with one another.

Every analysis that compares the content of even two of the three networks offers evidence on the degree of diversity. Pride and Clarke (1973) find that one network gave much more attention than the other two to racial issues in 1968 and 1969; Pride and Richards (1974) conclude that the anchorman on one network advanced more inferences and carried a greater burden of the reporting as a whole in covering the student movement between 1968 and 1970; Hofstetter (1976) and Frank (1973) find sufficient differences in emphasis of coverage to be termed (in the words of one of them) "striking." One might easily conclude that this body of evidence demonstrates that network news programs are measurably different, but that they seldom exhibit radical differences. (Again, however, such a judgment requires employing an external standard for the degree of network diversity necessary to be viewed as significant and meaningful rather than trivial.)

Taking into account the manufactured nature of news, we cease to consider the moderate differences demonstrated to exist among the networks as minor in importance. Instead, we would suggest that the evidence of divergence, although never by itself proof of distortion at variance with good reporting, should be taken as the starting point for scrutiny. Divergence is not wrong, but it deserves acknowledgment as the products of choice, not happenstance. Otherwise, the concepts of news judgment and news value so often advanced by newspeople to justify what they do are verbiage.

The Measurement of Bias

Most analyses have chosen to treat television as analogous to newspaper coverage, with airtime substituted for column inches and position in the newscast substituted for placement in the paper. Such an approach covers important dimensions, but it does not fully encompass them.

Every analyst implicitly enters a debate on the desirability of measuring particular dimensions of content by having chosen certain measures and not others. Television has markedly heightened controversy about measure selection because its audiovisual character offers so many options. Frank (1973), for example, employed twenty-nine dimensions in his study of 1972 election coverage, including duration of airtime, issue or topic reported, whether the news was "hard" or "soft," the kind of candidate activity reported, and camera treatment. Closeups are certainly a measurable attribute of television news; the problem for studies of bias is whether they should be judged as favorable, unfavorable, or neutral. Researchers may sometimes be uncertain whether verbal coverage that is to some degree favorable or unfavorable is fair, but in the case of the visual components of television news, neither a grammar nor syntax is available for determining and measuring the degree of favorability.

The appropriateness of a measure, of course, is a function of the judgment to be rendered. Lowry (1971a) astutely chose the attributing of information to named sources as a means of evaluating possible effects of Agnew's criticisms on network news practices, and found an increase in attributed statements when comparing summers before and after the attack. He also found a decline in total coverage devoted to the administration. These two dimensions—use of identified sources and quantity of attention—are certainly two plausible indices that might reflect network response to Agnew; but we must remain uncertain in any conclusion because of the inevitable shift in time periods, in this case from a new administration whose first year in office might alone account for the greater attention and more unattributed statements in 1969.

We have emphasized that a persistent and unresolved issue in the detecting of bias is the standard by which it may be recognized. If it is argued that events dictate news, then balance is no standard for events, which may not transpire in any symmetrical way. If it is

acknowledged that news is manufactured by the imposition of the values of news personnel onto events, there are few opportunities to match the product against the raw material.

Hofstetter (1976) introduces the concepts of "structural" and "political" bias as a solution. The former is defined as bias introduced by the character of the medium and the latter as bias introduced by partisanship. Structural bias is detectable when the outlets for a medium, such as the three networks, differ as a whole from the outlets of another medium, such as the nation's principal newspapers. Political bias is said to be detectable only by the deviation among outlets of a medium. This neatly solves the problem of introducing an empirical standard for the detection of bias, but evades two major issues. First, certain biases could pervade the media or the outlets of a medium because of uniformity of economic or political interest, or the backgrounds or allegiances of news personnel; insofar as they were pervasive they would not constitute bias under these definitions. Second, since some diversity among the networks is often advanced as desirable, should differences be viewed as a symptom of one or another news department's errors or biases?

The concept of a real-life referent is easy to advocate but difficult to apply. Lang and Lang (1953) document the way that a medium may distort an event in their well-known comparison of the actual Douglas MacArthur Day parade in Chicago with the portrayal of the same events on television. Paletz and Elson (1976) ingeniously attempt a similar approach by employing the perceptions of delegates to national political conventions to evaluate the accuracy of the convention portrait displayed by television. The difficulty with this scheme—which leads to the conclusion that television presents conventions as much more disorganized, chaotic, and filled with trivial activity than they really are—is that the perceptions of participants in an event are not necessarily accurate. Point of view, as Durrell made so much of in his Alexandria quartet, is often everything. Of course, in most media research even an imperfect real-life criterion is absent.

In Conclusion

The inevitable conflict between the media's role as watchdog and that of disinterested observer means news can never be simply a record. The manufactured character of news means it can never

mature beyond the risk of distortion. The elusiveness of criteria of bias means no research study is likely to satisfy all observers in evaluating the adequacy of television news. Pursuit of this particular white whale (Melville, 1851) is nevertheless certain to continue. The importance accorded television news by the public and by politicians ensures that its fairness, balance, and comprehensiveness will remain subjects of controversy. Empirical evidence, however imperfect, in this context is the flashlight beam in the darkened cavern. And the fact that the basic issues raised by news analysis may be beyond final solution has a magnetizing attraction for empiricists. This is fortunate, for the findings are not formulas but each is part of the recurring process of investigation that more clearly defines the reality of our news.

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"The Way You Look Tonight": A Critique of Television News Criticism

David L. Paletz
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SOCIAL SCIENTISTS' SCANDALOUS NEGLECT of the political dimensions of the mass media is ending. No longer are the media the province of erstwhile or practicing journalists, journalism educators, politicians, or polemicists.[1] Those undaunted social scientists who have persisted in trying to unravel the relationships between politics and the media need no more bemoan their isolation.[2]

Many books, monographs, and articles on the media and politics have appeared in the past few years. In order to assess the present state of research on television news, this essay will focus on the following six books:

David L. Altheide. 1976. *Creating reality: How TV news distorts events.* Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications;

Robert M. Batscha. 1975. *Foreign affairs news and the broadcast journalist.* New York: Praeger;

Richard Bunce. 1976. *Television in the corporate interest.* New York: Praeger;

Edward Jay Epstein. 1973. *News from nowhere: Television and the news.* New York: Vintage;

Robert S. Frank. 1973. *Message dimensions of television news.* Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books;

Thomas E. Patterson and Robert D. McClure. 1976. *The unseeing eye: The myth of television power in national politics.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

We intend to identify areas of accomplishment, confusion, and neglect, and to propose felicitous directions for future research. Our thesis is that research has been lopsided. On some aspects of television news, a substantial body of knowledge now exists. On other topics, research can most charitably be described as primitive; indeed, some important questions have hardly been raised at all.

Our review uses four categories of analysis. We begin with the determinants and concomitant content of the news. The asserted political effects of television news are considered next. Third, we analyze the research methods which subtly shape the books' data and conclusions. Fourth, we describe and assess the authors' prescriptions. The first part of the essay deals explicitly with the six volumes under review. Although they concentrate on different aspects of television news, whenever possible the books will be compared in terms of our categories. The second part of the essay discusses deficiencies in existing research and suggests ideas for future research.

Content

Television news is an uneasy combination of show-biz and sobriety. Of what does it consist and why? What images and sounds are selected, organized, abstracted from a complex reality and transmitted in its name? One of the strengths of the books under review is their attempt to isolate and identify the determinants of the content of television news. And although they rarely document direct connections, they do provide examples of content which presumably resulted from the determinants they identify. The authors emphasize different factors, but many of their explanations are consistent, even compatible.

There is one exception. For Bunce, television is controlled and run in the corporate interest: "What we see . . . is a few mammouth

organizations . . . actively shaping social welfare, health and education programs and implementing them; producing a multitude of consumer items and shaping consumer interest in them; and controlling the substance and shape of the communications flow to the public on all these matters of public interest" (p. 125). Bunce attributes the dearth of provocative public affairs programs to this corporate domination of the television industry.

Epstein rejects this corporate control explanation. Borrowing from James Q. Wilson, he assays an organization approach. The requisites facing the networks, Epstein says, are their budgets, their need to maintain and sustain audience flow, their affiliates' need for news of a seemingly national scope, and government regulation. These requisites determine content. Thus, budgetary constraints cause newsmen to prefer to film predictable events that will produce usable material (press conferences, briefings, interviews, hearings, speeches, trials), as well as foreign stories that are not dated by delay and can be flown in by plane rather than transmitted immediately by costly satellites. Because the networks have permanently leased cables to certain cities, stories from these locations appear disproportionately.

For audience appeal, stories contain movement, pictures, and easily understood symbols; they are structured around simple or simplified issues "in terms of highly dramatic conflicts between clearly defined sides" (p. 263), which reflect low estimations of the audience's interests and intelligence. The use of continuing themes to link disparate stories also enhances audience appeal. Epstein points to the pervasiveness of such institutionally related themes as the mystique of the President, Congress as an investigatory agency, bizarre California, and Europe in turmoil. Other common themes are bureaucratic bungling and congressional inaction. The national "imperative" means that stories must appear to illustrate dominant trends, moods, conflicts, crises. For example, New York City's problem of rat control is tied to the theme of urban crisis.

An original, seductive study, Epstein's *News From Nowhere* supplies new information and identifies constraints within which television newsmen and women operate. More ambitious than the other books under discussion, it is unconvincing as theory. Epstein fails to set forth his theoretical framework or hypotheses, or to cite any of the pertinent organizational literature. Moreover, his findings, as he concedes in part, can be explained largely without recourse to purely in-

ternal organizational factors: budgetary concerns and audience maintenance are commercial considerations, while the affiliates' need for national news (FCC dictated) and government regulation are political requisites.

Altheide analyzes the local newsmaking process—scheduling, selecting, reporting, editing, writing, and presenting—as Epstein does the national. His conclusions are similar: "News is the product of an organized process which entails a practical way of looking at events in order to tie them together, make simple and direct statements about their relationship, and do this in an entertaining way" (p. 112). The resultant news perspective is a function of commercialism (need for ratings), scheduling, technology, and competition. In addition, the community context is important at the local level, because station owners and managers, even some reporters, often have intimate ties with local business and public officials.

Altheide informatively explains how organizational considerations help determine local stations' news content. Given the amount of time spent gathering, processing, and editing material, most stories to be filmed must be known about hours or days before the actual newscast and before the events take place. Assignment editors therefore tend to depend on press releases, local newspaper(s), and wire services for forthcoming news. Thus most news has been planned and scheduled in advance—sometimes specifically for the cameras. For unplanned news, local stations rely extensively on police and fire monitors. Crimes and fires are disproportionately reported because they are convenient, especially on weekends when assignment editors are not working and radio monitors are more audible. Altheide concludes that "from the desk's perspective, news is defined in terms of scheduling, rather than of substantive importance" (p. 70).

Batscha, like Epstein, emphasizes such "mechanical characteristics of television news coverage" (p. 216) as lack of time, need for pictures, and cost limits. In contrast to Epstein, for whom organizational factors sometimes seem to have a life of their own, Batscha argues that these constraints "are the result of the policy interpretations of the mechanical capabilities of the medium as part of the overall intent of its product" (p. 218). It is doubtless true that news producers may have more freedom of choice than they allow, but it would be useful to ask why they seem reluctant to change drastically their formats, to explore how powerful in fact the constraints are.

As to content, according to Batscha, most foreign news comes from Washington, "unless there is a major foreign event, such as a conference, a Presidential trip, or a flareup in a major world capital" (p. 140). Roughly eighteen news stories are covered each day by a network news bureau in Washington. Three are usually broadcast on the evening news; the others are shown on the morning news or syndicated. When stories do emanate from abroad, Western Europe and the Middle East predominate because news stories about these areas are believed to appeal to large segments of the American audience. Stories from other regions disproportionately feature natural and man-made disasters, replete with violence and destruction.

For Patterson and McClure, network news coverage of the 1972 presidential election was determined by "film value" (p. 40), the desire to keep viewers interested and entertained (Epstein's audience flow), and a lack of time to treat complexity. They complain that the result was campaign trivia (hecklers, crowds, motorcades, balloons, rallies, and gossip), while the networks ignored major election issues and the candidates' qualifications. However, there are other, less pejorative reasons for this coverage. Patterson and McClure conducted their research during the waning days of the 1972 presidential campaign, when campaign trips and rallies were the most prominent and visible behavior of the candidates and their surrogates. Television reporters may have been more adroit at infusing issues into their stories, more subtle in exposing campaign hoopla as they showed it, than Patterson and McClure allow. Reporters did not explicitly analyze the candidates' characters because to do so required the kind of risky interpretation, speculation, and judgement which "factual" reporting and the norms of objectivity virtually preclude.

Patterson and McClure do not ask why all presidential elections receive such inordinate coverage, although reasons can be extrapolated. Elections are full of human interest, rooted in time and space, and aimed at the news media (statements by candidates, press conferences, staged events). They contain conflict (usually with two sides), recur predictably (thus facilitating the logistics of coverage over the years), and have measurable outcomes. Of course, elections are also viewed as the newsworthy lynch-pin of democracy—a view the news media propagate through their coverage.

As an explanation for the coverage of particular events, newsworthiness is acknowledged in these books but essentially dismissed as unworthy of extensive consideration. Certainly news consists of disasters, conflict, human interest, etc. Batscha summarizes industry sentiment by stating that "foreign news must be something that has 'meaning' to Americans" (p. 97). The authors have accepted this idea and try to explain how the term "meaning" is defined. Why one disaster or conflict? Why not another?

Consequently, journalists' defense that they are professionals dedicated to objectivity receives the shortest of shrift. That theory is seen as chimerical, precluded by the very process of selecting, editing, structuring, and presenting stories. As Epstein puts it: "News is essentially protean in character. Any happening can be reported in a multitude of different forms. . . . Nor is there necessarily one correct way of reporting an event" (p. 258). Not that he feels newsmen can or should be unfair, or are biased. Indeed, Epstein purports to document news correspondents' lack of ideology. Rather, as Batscha writes: "The television film report is not simply the record of an event; the mechanics of the medium prevent this. Rather, it is a focus on one segment or one idea or fact that is thematic . . ." (p. 138). And he contends that when television journalists deny participation and claim just to be disseminators of conflicting views on issues or events, they often become "mere transmitters of government and political propaganda" (p. 59). In sum, to edit is to interpret, to speak is to define, to communicate is to structure reality.

Some of the books under discussion do more than ask why certain subjects are emphasized; they are concerned with how the subjects are treated in the news. According to Altheide, "Reporters select and present the content as evidence of the angle" (p. 76). He cites as an example a television news story on massage parlours in which the theme was "illicit behavior: sexual exchanges, drug use, organized crime, and venereal disease. Masseuses were interviewed to obtain answers to these questions, and the film was edited to focus on these concerns" (p. 76). Implicit here is the argument that subjects can be viewed from a variety of relatively arbitrary angles. Presumably, the massage parlour story could have been discussed from such other perspectives as good health, sexual satisfaction, onerous governmental regulations, and career opportunities. But this raises more unanswered questions. Do different reporters accept or carry with them as

part of their intellectual-conceptual baggage different definitions of a news story? Do themes evolve over time as reporters learn more? Is it not possible, at least over time, to include more than one angle in a particular story? If particular kinds of themes predominate, as most of the authors contend, why is this so?

Political Effects

Polemical criticism on the asserted effects of television news abounds from both left and right. Conservatives see, and deplore, the supposedly liberal and effectively persuasive content typified by coverage of civil rights, the Vietnam war, and government derelictions. Radicals perceive, and deplore, news which they claim legitimizes America's political and economic system, while it omits or denigrates the radical perspective.

Before praising the books under review for advancing research on the relationships between politics and the media, we need to consider their contributions to the study of political effects. For why should we care about the processes of news gathering and dissemination if different processes would result in similar content, or different content would have similar political effects?

Empirical data in the books under review tend to substantiate both the conservative and radical ideological perspectives as being disparate parts of the same reality. But discussion of effects is incidental, confined virtually to speculation of the "if this is the content, then that must be the effect" sort. Prior research on the effects of television or of motion pictures is ignored. (See Klapper, 1960; Comstock and Fisher, 1975; Pool, 1973.)

Epstein discusses effects almost as an afterthought. He contends briefly that challenges to authority tend to be legitimized by the way they are presented on television news, while "the legitimizing myths of authority, which depend on complex historical analogies and cannot easily be illustrated by current news happenings, suffer for want of explanation" (p. 266). This analysis fails to distinguish different kinds and dimensions of authority. Content analysis would reveal that television news is sometimes no more than a conduit for authority-holders, especially the President, to articulate concerns and positions —usually in hortatory language. Leadership rituals are frequently

shown because public officials are conscious of the importance of such activities in enhancing their authority and because the rituals and ceremonies occur at designated times for which television cameras can be prepared and put in place. Even when authority-holders are shown challenged, viewers may be inspired to rally to their support—especially if the public officials are depicted as beseiged or threatened while upholding decency and virtue.

Indeed, for authority-holders in the United States, the most significant effects of television news on Americans may stem from coverage of foreign affairs rather than domestic affairs. As Batscha points out, foreign policy stories, covered predominantly from Washington, are usually conveyed from the perspective of the administration in power. Do Americans, then, understand foreign affairs from their government's perspective? When news does emanate from abroad, it often consists of violence, conflict, and disaster. Do Americans believe life in other countries to be more strife-ridden, less desirable than life here? Are foreigners seen as less willing to compromise, more irrational than Americans? Are ideology and fervent religious convictions, shown as animating violence in Ireland, Lebanon, and elsewhere, viewed as leading to disastrous conflicts? Such questions are as important to investigate as they are difficult to answer.

Among the books under consideration the major contribution to effects analysis is made by Patterson and McClure, who set forth a simple model in which effects are dependent on amounts of exposure to television content.[3] Their conclusion: exposure to the news during the final weeks of the 1972 presidential election had "no effect on voters' images of the candidates" (p. 23). However, this hypodermic model is increasingly discredited. Viewer interest, attention, and uses of content all intervene to complicate the relationship between news content and viewer responses. Patterson and McClure insist they are shattering myths. Readers may overlook the two cautionary footnotes and be tempted to extend the findings of this study to all elections. Yet, in many elections, particularly primaries in which voters may be faced by little-known candidates of the same party, television may be crucial to the outcome. In the 1972 Nixon-McGovern contest, the voters had in most cases made up their minds before they were surveyed. Television may have strengthened or weakened their resolve (an effect unfortunately not reported in the book) without changing it.

This was a highly structured election from which it is imprudent to generalize.

Concentrating exclusively on the voters' responses to television newscasts and advertisements, Patterson and McClure may have overlooked effects not on the public, but on the candidates themselves, their influential supporters, and potential donors. Even more important, the abundant and almost ritualistic coverage, the generally respectful attention devoted to the candidates, the treatment of the campaign as saga (and of all presidential campaigns as saga) may contribute to legitimizing the election process, the victor, and the American political system.

Methodologies

Research methods used in the books under review include somewhat random surveys of the literature, unstructured interviews, and personal observation at the networks. These are all respectable ways of gathering data, but intriguingly, they do not insulate the authors from the same kind of attack they level against television news personnel. That is, the data sometimes seem to have been collected to fit a particular model of the news process or are susceptible to several interpretations, and the one selected by the author, while fitting his thesis, is not necessarily the most appropriate.

Research on television news is therefore sometimes vulnerable to accusations of tendentiousness. For example, Epstein cites the use of filmed stories that are a day or more old as an instance of the effects of budgetary constraints. Yet such a delay is also used by reporters to improve their stories. Similarly, in his concern to ratify an organizational approach, Epstein too quickly dismisses alternative explanations of television news content. His analysis of reporters', editors', and producers' political values is surprising; he neither credits them with the wit to moderate their views in his interviews nor considers that they may be unaware of their values.

Batscha blends observation, questionnaire responses, and public statements of people connected with television news. Although there is considerable criticism of process and content from former broadcasters, and although the anonymous field correspondents criticize the lack of airtime and the demand for visual stories, they are neither particularly revealing nor perceptive about the effects of their

work. In some cases, they lead Batscha into contradictions. Thus he praises the networks for trying to emulate the *New York Times*: "Every day the network news producers and Washington bureau chiefs check the front page of the *Times* to see whether it contains a story that was not included in the previous evening's broadcast" (p. 220). But then he points out that foreign news on television is simply written, assumes an audience without much background, contains only one major idea, and uses stereotypes (p. 221). Surely this makes it qualitatively and quantitatively different from news reported in the *Times*.

Even the books that seek to be serious about methodology are not above criticism. Patterson and McClure have been accused of being vague about their statistical tests, failing to set an Alpha level, rarely analyzing effects in combination, and neglecting to advise readers of the weaknesses endemic in panel studies. Their percentages of increased or decreased issue awareness are assertedly "totally insensitive to the number of persons changing" (Anderson, 1977, p. 13).

The content analyses of television news, which all the authors undertake with varying degrees of dedication, are also not without important methodological shortcomings. Typically, little attention is paid to television news visuals. There is no use of Gaye Tuchman's sensitive discussion of the framing distances used by television camera crews, no consideration of her argument that Americans "trust" television news because what they see on the screen "draws upon taken-for-granted cultural definitions of visual perception and patterned role expectations concerning the use of space" (Tuchman, 1973, p. 24).

One problem is to devise a coding scheme that will encompass the totality of the news broadcast rather than any single aspect of it. Doris Graber (1974) has worked on approaches to this issue. She argues that a viewer's understanding of a broadcast derives from a combination of clues, both visual and auditory, and that a valid coding scheme must account for this. Graber's method of content analysis provides for "the delineation of a general theme and supporting episodes, the identification of cues and clichés used for different subject areas, factors of external setting and internal situation, and the concept of noise [irrelevant information unnoticed by the viewer] which permits elimination of non-relevant images" (p. 12). Analysis of television

news undoubtedly would profit from a method very similar to Graber's total approach. Unfortunately, no one has as yet attempted holistic coding.

Robert S. Frank's *Message Dimensions of Television News* is the only book under consideration which presents a detailed, systematic content analysis. Perhaps for this reason, it discovers and describes differences between the networks. Indeed, Frank states: "Our data clearly show that there is wide news-reporting diversity, both among and within networks over different message dimensions and news topics" (p. xv). For example, NBC devoted more and earlier airtime to Vietnam, while CBS gave more airtime to "domestic" stories. "Government ethics was the big news issue during the [1972] campaign period" (p. 67), but received fifty percent more airtime from CBS than the other networks. Civil rights was prominent on CBS and ABC, but not NBC. In contrast to the other networks, NBC devoted considerable time to ecology. Contrary to Patterson and McClure, Frank found significant differences, some subtle and others explicit, in the network's coverage of the 1972 presidential election. "CBS generally portrayed Nixon as more intimate, approachable, war, and 'big' than did ABC and NBC . . ." (p. 68).

Frank's book is devoted in its entirety to explicating and applying a technique of content analysis. Many statistics are presented, but their implications or the guiding hypotheses of the book are never made clear. The only rudimentary hypothesis present is a postulated variance among the three network news broadcasts, which the analysis does substantiate, but why this is important or even interesting is not explained.

Prescriptions

Having analyzed the processes and diagnosed the ailments of television news, most of the books contain prognoses and some venture perfunctory prescriptions. Based on their belief that television news should inform and educate viewers, an objective at which it is assertedly manifestly failing, the authors propose four kinds of changes: providing better training for journalists and the recruitment of different ones; changing the content of television news by making it less urgent, less superficial, and more interpretive; affording access to

more and diverse sources of news; and educating viewers to the deceptions supposedly inherent in the way news is developed and presented. The writers do not consider the political effects of implementing these proposals other than that of increasing viewers' understanding (assuming television news continues to be watched).

"Too often," Batscha complains, "the African or Asian story becomes a pictorial guide to the natural wonders of the area rather than a discourse on the ideas of nation-building, emerging nationalism, socialism, and modernization. . . . Soviet news becomes a Presidential visit or parades of tanks and ICBMs, with little or no discussion of Marxism-Leninism or Communism versus Capitalism" (p. 216). Needed are "the underlying issues, the common characteristics, background, perspectives, and implications . . ." (p. 225). Batscha thus decries conventional news in the name of theoretical essays which reporters are neither equipped to prepare nor television news prepared to deliver. He does not tell us, or the broadcasters, how to depict or discuss these "isms" in the news.

For Patterson and McClure, full responsibility for the lack of substantive coverage of a presidential election rests squarely on network personnel. Television news should inform viewers. They propose the networks "set aside up to 10 minutes each night for in-depth comparisons of the candidates on important issues or leadership dimensions" (p. 149). Such explicit comparisons are feasible if confined to expositions of the candidates' stated stands, even though this may involve some deviations from conventional news reporting. But, like Batscha, Patterson and McClure want comparisons which involve more overt interpretation and judgments, which violate traditional journalistic norms.

Altheide wants "news reports to present events in context, complete with uncertainty . . ." (p. 196). Achievement of this objective, he concedes, requires that "present commitments to commercialism, and organizational and scheduling priorities must be reconsidered" (p. 196). Consequently, he opts for newswatchers to view defensively, aware of the processes which influence and determine what they see. Certainly his book and the other works considered contribute to this desirable end.

Epstein concludes that changing the organizational structure of television is not the answer because "a different set of requisites might simply mean that the contours of network news would be propelled in different directions" (p. 272). Instead, "alternative sources of

national news are necessary for balance. Presumably, different news media with different organizational requirements would produce different versions of the news" (pp. 272-73); he mentions local television stations, public television, radio, and cable television. There is no assurance that the sources mentioned will in any sense produce diversity or balance (whatever that is). And even if more alternative sources are spurred by Epstein's exhortation, most people would probably continue to rely on the visually potent network television news anchored by its masters of credibility.

Finally, Bunce's prescriptions are at once the most radical and the most pessimistic. Like Bertolt Brecht, he recognizes that the ideal of "a freely accessible communications system" is utopian (p. 141). He acknowledges that (p. 139):

> as business control over communications is reproduced; as communications control structures become fused with those of the larger industrial system; and as the exercise of the resulting incentives is legitimated by regulatory authorities. . . . the possibility of achieving alternative uses for public communications resources if further foreclosed. And diminishing with it is the potential for a free and open communications flow . . . which respects the rights to free expression of diverse and antagonistic interests . . .

Observation from within often results in a sense of immutability, of the inevitability of the status quo. These books therefore have a timebound quality. Yet, even if the constraints they identify persist, even if the evening news remains at thirty minutes, the content of television news can change more than the books allow. Stories can be shortened or lengthened, different topics covered, entire newscasts devoted to just one or two subjects. Indeed, some changes have occurred since the books appeared. NBC's anchormen, acting as average man surrogates, now question their field correspondents on camera—which, if not spontaneous and unrehearsed, is at least a livelier way of having the correspondents say what they were perhaps going to report anyway. Special reports, mini-documentaries extending over several evenings, appear more often as regular parts of the news. At ABC, the evening news has become perceptibly less formal, simpler, more oriented to the everyday concerns of viewers, replete with more on-camera interviews and feature stories than its rivals.

Variations in form and content are also affected by changes in technology including live electronic hookups and news gathering in which stories can be filed by microwave and edited by computer while dispensing with film processing and editing. On the horizon are reliable portable videotape recorders weighing less than ten pounds, powered by batteries permitting hours of use before recharging, and requiring portable, lightweight videotape editing equipment.

Future Content Research

We have assessed research on television news through a description and critique of the recent literature. By focusing now on subjects, ideas, and approaches which have been overlooked or neglected, we shall suggest directions for future research.

Perhaps because they cite the actual content of television news primarily to illustrate whatever determinants they have identified, authors of the books under review tend to slight certain characteristics of the news which may contribute significantly to its political effects. Most obviously, they neglect its form: its ritualistic quality, its use of what we call the "cluster," the reporting mode, and the functions of anchorpersons. Individually and in combination, these contribute to the credibility and legitimacy of television news and, in turn, to its political effects.

The form of the news, both of the entire program and of individual stories or items, is structured, repetitive, and ritualistic. There is pacing and rhythm; filmed or taped reports edited for visual interest are followed by the anchorperson. The procession arrays stories in order of declining importance, then an undisputed commentator's segment, and a concluding story which amuses or uplifts. Local news, and some network news, contain teasers ("professor massacres class; that and sports following these messages"). Anchorpersons abide for years; set changes are infrequent; the manner, format, order, mode of presentation similarly persist. News may be unpleasant, and often is; but the ritualistic format is familiar, comforting, reassuringly embracing events no matter how unexpected or untoward.

Our own analysis of television news suggests the existence of what we call a "cluster"—related stories packaged into a segment.[4] A

cluster consists of a general topic, subdivided into two or more stories, and suffused with one or more ongoing themes. Clusters are created in three ways: first, through narration by anchorman and reporters; second, through graphics and other visual stimuli (maps, charts, key quotes) which accompany the story or group of stories being presented. And third, clusters emerge through a juxtaposition of filmed segments and the anchorperson's narrative which takes such forms as a brief introduction of each story at the start of the cluster, a complete listing of all the segment's stories, or a specific explanation of why and how the stories are connected.

In recent years, the most prevalent clusters concerned Watergate, the economy, energy, kidnapping, and detente. Clusters help viewers remember general categories even if, or as, they fail to recall specific stories.[5] They may also create misleading equations: Middle East conflict equals American support of Israel equals Arab oil embargo equals the energy crisis. And the connections within a cluster may be forced, even arbitrary; sometimes quite disparate stories were grouped under "Watergate." Since filmed or taped stories originating from different parts of the world are clustered, viewers may be persuaded of the national or international pervasiveness of the events or themes irrespective of their accuracy.

News clusters are consciously devised, both because logic dictates that related stories be linked and to help viewers comprehend more information. Former television newsman Maury Green (1969, p. 240) has written the following about packaging local news stories:

> In general, as the show progresses, its hard news element diminishes, while its philosophical and feature content increases. . . . The audience cannot be expected to jump back and forth too abruptly, or too often, between moods of tragedy and comedy, importance and trivia.
>
> To avoid transition-induced shock caused by wide variations in content, it is desirable to "package" related items: international news in one package, domestic politics in another, urban problems all together. Within each package variations in mood can be achieved without inducing shock simply because the items within the package are related in subject.

But this does not explain which particular clusters will be created, how many stories, and in what order, will be subsumed under each one, or how much airtime each receives, and how often a cluster will be repeated.

The reporting mode and the functions of anchorpersons are consistent with ritualistic form and use of clusters. Correspondents are authoritative and factual, their demeanor unemotional, uninvolved, dispassionate. They authenticate their presentations by reporting them from the scene of an event (in front of the White House, the Capitol, the Supreme Court building), or from a studio simulation. Anchorpersons obviously link items and stories, and they provide continuity and stability night after night. But they do more. They bring apparent qualities of common sense, rationality, and sanity to the manner in which news is presented. They are reasonable, undramatic, low-key. Like the correspondents, they present, clarify, summarize. They do not reveal strong opinions about the news they bring us and they are hardly ever emotional on camera. They appear knowledgeable, informed, and, above all, impartial. They summon forth images at will, control what we see, and often seem to sit in explicit or implied judgement on people and events in the news. Adding to their credibility are the formal way they are announced, their dress, their vocal inflection and resonance, and the concluding nightly benedictions they bestow.

In sum, the form of television news is designed to sustain the legitimacy of its anchorpersons, correspondents, and commentators. In so doing, it enhances the credibility of the information and opinions, the assertions and assumptions which compose the news. This form disguises the process of selecting, framing, structuring, contextualizing, and linking stories; it conceals the reconstitution and reconstruction of reality. Sources may be unreliable, motives obscure, facts disputed and confused, meanings unclear, yet the news is presented with a straightforward clarity which denies, even belies, uncertainty. The political implications of this form deserve analysis.

Future Research: Methodology, Political Effects, and Prescriptions

Aside from lack of attention to form, authors of the books under review have produced a substantial body of knowledge about the de-

terminants and content of television news. The same cannot be claimed for the political effects of television news. Research into this subject is bedeviled by problems of casuality and inadequate methodology. The possible diversity of viewers' responses has not been elucidated, nor have the problems of developing suitable content analyses been resolved.

Effects research should take into consideration the direction, intensity, and stability of viewers' opinions, attitudes, values, and cognitions. This research cannot ignore the expectations and needs viewers bring to television news, the uses and gratifications they make of it. Surprisingly, we know little about why people watch television news and what they obtain from the experience. There have been a few attempts to tap short-term recall of the specific stories shown. The most sophisticated of these revealed that of some twenty stories, roughly half were remembered if different kinds of responses were combined (Neuman, 1976). And, according to Patterson and McClure, "many viewers have only a hazy memory of what they have seen on network news" (p. 57). This fails to explain whether people understand the stories they recall or what they do with the material provided by the news whether they recall it or not.

Viewers' acceptance of the perspectives and themes of the news conveyed by clusters may be more important than recall of individual stories. Characteristics of the news cluster may appeal to the psychological needs of many viewers by infusing a sense of order and coherence into news stories which, if presented in a discontinuous, more random fashion, might confuse and frustrate viewers. In addition, clusters may have an agenda-setting function, telling viewers which groups of subjects are important, which are not. And there appears to be an underlying common theme of crisis and conflict in many of the categories—crises in government, energy crises, economic crises, crises in foreign countries. This theme may create a crisis mentality among viewers, manifested among some by an inability to become exercised about any event save the most dramatic and threatening.

More important, perhaps, when and how do elites respond to the news which appears? How are their attitudes, behavior, and actions determined by their efforts to influence news content? In elite analysis, crucial distinctions are of course necessary between the political system as a whole, levels of government, institutions (e.g.,

Congress, the Presidency), positions within institutions, occupants of these positions, and particular governmental outputs (laws, regulations, pronouncements).

A systematic content analysis could test many of the assertions, hypotheses, and hunches contained in the books discussed. It might show the extent to which different kinds of stories are presented in different ways using facts, symbols, inferences, and interpretations. It should help researchers categorize clusters and subjects; specify the incidence of clusters; identify and note the prevalence of conflict, themes, stereotypes, values, and speculation in stories; dissect the structures of stories; and analyze the sources of their content. The content analysis would be sensitive to visual style and the possible effects of color, variations in camera angles and distances, pictorial ambiguity, and the relations between words and pictures. It would distinguish the linguistic codes used by anchormen and women, reporters, and interview subjects (and the differences among each group); it would trace the different ways people are treated in interviews (accused, interrogated, given a forum). This research could be longitudinal and comparative, involving news programs in America and abroad.

Above all, a sophisticated content analysis might ask explicitly political questions about television news. What kinds of political socialization and political participation are encouraged? Which issues are made salient and how are they formulated? Are certain kinds of public expectations and demands stimulated, while others are discouraged? How are different interest groups treated? How is government portrayed? Is it shown as responsive to the public's needs, as operating morally, and as effective and efficient? Are such values asserted as desirable? If government is depicted as failing to meet these standards, is this primarily because derelictions are the stuff of news?

When the effects of television news are more clearly identified, prescriptions for changing its content and form may be more convincingly advanced. For the nonce, television news remains unlikely to fulfill the educational functions expected by its critics. Walter Lippmann's comment is still instructive (1965, p. 228):

> . . . the press is not constituted to furnish . . . the amount of knowledge which the democratic theory of public opinion

> demands. . . . And when we expect it to supply such a body of truth we employ a misleading standard of judgment. We misunderstand the limited nature of news, the illimitable complexities of society; we overestimate our own endurance, public spirit and all round competence. We suppose an appetite for uninteresting truths which is not discovered by any honest analysis of our own tastes.

Most people tend to view the world as a series of discrete and unrelated events, they lack any overarching liberal or conservative organizing perspective (Converse, 1964; Lane, 1962). To receive and retain information about the world, it is useful either to have such a set of organizing concepts or, at least, considerable information already stored. For those with limited skills in decoding print and broadcast media, extracting, interpreting, and storing new public affairs information is an arduous task. The inability to comprehend complex messages may be so threatening to self-esteem that an individual abandons entirely the effort to make sense of them. Harold Mendelsohn (1973) argues that among people of lower socio-economic status there is a strong anti-intellectual streak which combines with the above factors to cause the rejection of complex information.

If this description is accurate, then critics (including the authors of most of the books reviewed) are misguided in demanding more treatment of substantive news, less emphasis upon conflict, and reduction of entertainment in television network news. For a variety of reasons, television news, as presently constituted, may be well suited to convey information to most people. The very similarity of television network news to non-news shows makes it familiar and reduces its intellectual threat. As with entertainment shows, there is a continuing cast of characters with whom the audience feels comfortable and who fit the person-centered predispositions of most viewers. Events are personalized. Symbols are familiar and repeated. Stories are framed and often placed into a cluster—in contrast to the random distribution of major stories found in newspapers. The cluster provides context—even if a sometimes misleading one. Paradoxically, viewers may learn from television news because of, not despite, its defects.

NOTES

1. (One can belong to more than one of these groups.) In a review of twenty-two books on the press, Ithiel de Sola Pool (1976) found only three using social science analysis. His essay categorizes the concerns of this "journalistic" research on the media.

2. In acknowledging the new we should not fail to celebrate the recent past. Among the undaunted in the United States are, most prominently, Professors Kurt and Gladys Engel Lang (1968). See also Gary L. Wamsley and Richard A. Pride (1972). For a summary of literature on the effects of the media on political knowledge, see John P. Robinson (1972), Steven H. Chaffee (1975), and Sidney Kraus and Dennis Davis (1976).

3. Michael J. Robinson (1976) has also contributed imaginative and provocative research on the possible effects of television news. Since it has not yet appeared in book form, his work falls outside the ambit of our chapter.

4. We are indebted to Lori Ann Haubenstock for assistance in "cluster" research.

5. George Miller (1956) suggests that memory may be closely related to what psychologists call "re-coding": "The process of memorizing may be simply the formation of chunks, or groups of items that go together, until there are few enough chunks so that we can recall all the items." Thus re-coding is "an extremely powerful weapon for increasing the amount of information that we can deal with." Broadcasters, by placing related stories into a cluster, may be re-coding for the audience and thus increasing people's capacity for recall.

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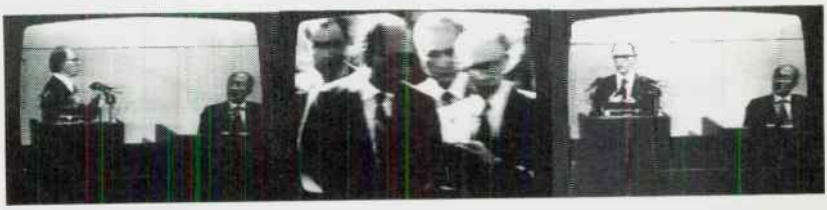
II
Methods and Resources



Television News Archives: A Guide to Major Collections

Fay C. Schreibman

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE to television news researchers?[1] Must they record newscasts off their own television sets? What is available from television news archives? Were any newscasts preserved before the advent of videotape? What is the future for television archive preservation? This article answers these questions by surveying the collections of the Vanderbilt Television News Archive, the National Archives and Record Service, and the CBS News Archives, and by explaining the services of the Television News Study Center at George Washington University.[2]

As a guide for researchers, the history and administration of each archive is first reviewed. Then archive holdings are described by using the following categories:

Newscasts (evening network news);

News special events (coverage of events such as inaugurations, presidential conventions, presidential debates, election night, presidential speeches and press conferences, and congressional committee hearings);

Other television news programs (news magazines, documentaries, and interview programs such as *Face the Nation, Issues and Answers,* and *Meet the Press*);

Other news resources (e.g., newsreels and radio news archives).

Each section also identifies for each archive: finding aids (primary guides to news collections), special services, use (the hours, procedures, any fees, in-house viewing facilities, mail request procedures, and material formats), and future goals. This survey concludes with a discussion of archive associations and the future of news archives.

VANDERBILT TELEVISION NEWS ARCHIVE

Joint University Libraries
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, Tennessee 37207
(615) 322-2927

Background and Administration

In August 1968, Vanderbilt University began a pilot project to videotape weekday evening network news programs and news specials. This project began because of the initiative of Paul C. Simpson, an alumnus of Vanderbilt University. During a business trip to New York in early 1968, Simpson toured the television networks' news departments. He learned that specific film segments from news programs were archived and kept for potential later use, but entire newscasts were only kept for a few days after the broadcast. Consequently there was neither general public access to past newscasts nor any systematic collection of them. Simpson knew that television news had become the public's primary source of news information and strongly believed in both the historical and educational necessity of archiving television news.

With funds contributed by Simpson, Vanderbilt purchased tapes and on three borrowed 1" Ampex video recorders began videotaping the weekday evening newscasts on August 5, 1968. The Joint University Libraries of Vanderbilt University, Peabody College, and Scarritt College was designated to administer the operation. Until 1971, the activity was funded by two Nashville-based foundations. These two

were later joined by others outside Nashville. In 1971, when sufficient funds for the purpose were available, a staff was employed for the newly-named Vanderbilt Television News Archive. At this time policies and procedures were set for use of the collection on an in-house and mail loan basis.

In December 1973, the Archive received national attention when the Columbia Broadcasting System sued Vanderbilt University charging that recording and archiving network news constituted a violation of copyright.[3] After three years in adjudication proceedings, the lawsuit was dropped following passage of the Copyright Revision Act of 1976 which includes provisions assuring the legality of television news archives.

The Archive continues to be supported by grants and contributions made to Vanderbilt University for this purpose. As a not-for-profit service of the University, the Archive is available to anyone having need of the tapes for purposes of reference, research, and study. The Archive is directed by a committee named by the Chancellor of Vanderbilt University on authorization of the executive committee of the University Board of Trust. Presently, the committee consists of Robert A. McGaw, secretary of the University; Frank P. Grisham, director of the Joint University Libraries; and Paul C. Simpson, administrative consultant. James P. Pilkington is the archive administrator. In addition, another University committee serves in an advisory capacity on academic matters.

Collection

At the Archive, newscasts are recorded off the air onto Ampex 1" helical scan black-and-white videotape. Since January 1, 1971, the initials of the network, date of broadcast, and Nashville time (at ten-second intervals) have been placed at the top of the screen during the off-air recording of the broadcasts. This information facilitates reference to the tapes and aids in documentation of studies based on the collection.

Newscasts:

ABC weekday evening network news	August 5, 1968-present
CBS weekday evening network news	August 5, 1968-present
NBC weekday evening network news	August 5, 1968-present

News special events:

ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS	August 5, 1968-present

Collection includes: coverage of 1968, 1972, 1976 presidential campaigns and elections (Republican and Democratic conventions, primaries, election night, inaugurations, Ford and Carter debates, Dole and Mondale debate, and selected paid-political commercials); Nixon trips to China and Russia, 1972; Nixon's resignation and farewell address; Bert Lance congressional hearings and resignation; 182 tapes of presidential (and other government officials') speeches and press conferences, including confirmation hearings; and 370 tapes of Senate Watergate hearings and House impeachment debates.

Other television news programs:

Interviews from *Face the Nation, Issues and Answers,* and *Meet the Press* with candidates for presidential nominations.

Finding Aids

Newscasts: *Television News Index and Abstracts*

Since January 1972, Vanderbilt Television News Archive has been publishing a monthly index and abstracts of ABC, CBS, and NBC weekday evening news and commercials, in addition to an annual index. Recently-completed indices and abstracts for newscasts from August 5, 1968, through December 31, 1971, are available on microfilm. The annual index for 1972 to the present year is distributed in print copy and the 1968-1971 annual index should be available in print as of the winter of 1978. *Television News Index and Abstracts* is currently distributed on request and at no charge to libraries and institutions, and to individuals engaged in continuing television research for teaching and publication. Microfilm back files of the publication may be purchased.

News special events: chronological shelf list

News programs: chronological shelf list

Special Services

Compilation tapes consist of news stories specifically selected by the user from the *Index and Abstracts,* duplicated in their entirety, and separated by brief intervals of blank tape. Vanderbilt is the only archive that currently will provide compiled tapes. These compilations usually represent a saving of time and expense to the user, especially for longer studies. In addition to lending videotapes, the Archive makes audio-only tapes, either from entire broadcasts or as a compilation.

If a user does not receive *Television News Index and Abstracts* and needs abstracts regarding certain subjects, Vanderbilt Archive will provide copies at a cost of 10c per page. Not-yet-published or out-of-print indices or abstracts are copied at the same cost.

Use

In-house:

The Archive is open 8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Weekend appointments are available by prior arrangement with Archive staff. Researchers should contact the Archive in advance to reserve the viewing facility and to identify materials to be used. The charge for use of the viewing facility is $2.00 per viewing hour.

Video playback facilities:

(2) 1'' black-and-white reel to reel
(2) black-and-white monitors

Mail requests:

All news programs are available by mail request. "Application for Use of Tape Recording" forms are available from the Archive. On this order form users are also asked to describe the manner in which the tapes are to be used and must agree not to

rebroadcast material and not to duplicate it on audiotape, videotape, motion picture film, or any other audiovisual format. In cases judged by the Archive to be public showings, users must agree to have a representative of the Archive present, at the users' expense, to assure accuracy of statement regarding the Archive. All tapes leaving the Archive are on loan; nothing is sold. The borrower agrees to pay replacement cost for any damaged tape.

Compilation tape orders:

The compilation research process is, of course, entirely the responsibility of the researcher. Users must do their own research in selecting items to be viewed, duplicated, or compiled. Along with the "Application for Use of Tape Recordings," compilation orders must be accompanied by a detailed record of requested materials. Vanderbilt provides a form for compilation orders (available upon request) for recording the exact dates and times for stories on each network. Use of the *Television News Index and Abstracts* simplifies this task. Copies of the forms are now published with the *Index and Abstracts* for the borrowers' convenience.

Fees (as of June 1978):

$30 per tape hour of compiled material, video or audio (half-hour minimum).
$15 per tape hour of duplicated video (half-hour minimum).
$ 5 per tape hour of duplicated audio (half-hour minimum).

Formats available:

Videotape	1" reel to reel
	½" reel to reel
	¾" videocassette
	½" videocassette
Audiotape	audiocassette

Future Goals

In the near future, it is planned that the entire collection will be duplicated for preservation and safekeeping purposes. After October

1978, the Archive includes weekend network news broadcasts recorded at the Television News Study Center at George Washington University, Washington, D.C. (Prior to that date, some weekend broadcasts in the collection, back to May 1970, were recorded off the air in Nashville.)

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Audiovisual Archives Division
Motion Picture and Sound Recording Branch
Washington, D.C. 20408
(202) 523-3267

Background and Administration

The National Archives and Records Service became involved in the archiving of television network news as an outgrowth of their preservation of film newsreels. In 1972, at the American Historical Association, CBS announced an interest in depositing television news materials for preservation purposes. Negotiations between CBS and the National Archives were finalized in 1974 when an agreement was signed. Subsequent agreements were made with NBC in 1976 and ABC in 1977.

James Moore is the Director of the Audiovisual Archives Division. William Murphy, Chief of the Motion Picture and Sound Recording Branch, supervises the television news materials.

Collection

The Archives holds off-air news program recording licenses with ABC, CBS, and NBC. Evening newscasts for ABC and NBC are recorded off the air in color at the Pentagon by the Department of Defense onto ¾" videocassettes and sent to the Motion Picture and Sound Recording Branch of the Archive on a monthly basis. CBS directly sends ¾" videocassette color copies of all their news programs bimonthly. The tapes do not have time-date notations.

Newscasts:

ABC evening newscasts (daily except Sunday)	April 11, 1977-present
CBS evening newscasts and *Morning News, Midday News* (daily)	April 1, 1974-present
NBC evening newscasts (daily)	July 19, 1976-present

Department of Defense Kinescopes, approximately 600 reels of television network news programs from 1965-1976, which cover stories of interest to the Defense Department including Vietnam, arms limitation, and foreign relation news.

News special events:

CBS *News Special Reports*	April 1,1974-present
ABC and NBC selected news special events	1976-present

Collection includes State of the Union addresses, impeachment hearings, Humphrey memorial ceremony, Watergate hearings, 1976 Democratic and Republican conventions, 1976 election night, Carter's inauguration, Ford and Carter debates, and all televised presidential speeches.

Other television news programs:

Longines Chronoscope, a weekly series of 15-minute interview television programs on the CBS network, originating in New York, from June 11, 1951, until April 2, 1955. (Eleanor Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., Joseph McCarthy, Robert Moses, Dean Rusk, and John Foster Dulles are among the 460 individuals interviewed.) These programs are on kinescope and in the public domain.

American Enterprise Institute (AEI) *Public Debates of the 70's,* 30 videotapes of programs broadcast on local television stations from 1972-75.

Other news resources:

Universal Newsreels (entire library of newsreels from 1929 to 1967). Viewing copies are available from 1956 to 1967 and indexed in a card catalog. The earlier nitrate copies of the newsreels eventually will be copied onto videotape for public viewing.

Other newsreels—*March of Time* (Stock Film Library), 1935-1951; *Fox-Movietone,* 1957-1963; *Paramount News,* 1940-1957; *Hearst News of the Day,* 1963-1967. (Indexed in card catalog.)

CBS-WTOP radio newscasts (Washington, D.C.)	1937-1955
NPR (National Public Radio) newscasts and public affairs shows (continuing donation, 5 years' delay)	1971-1973
ABC radio network newscasts	1945-1967

Copies of WTOP newscasts and some other radio materials are available for purchase.

Finding Aids

ABC/NBC/CBS evening newscasts: *Television News Index and Abstracts* (described under Vanderbilt Archive finding aids section)

Department of Defense Kinescopes: chronological shelf list

CBS newscasts and specials:

CBS News Index, prepared by CBS News and distributed on a yearly basis since January 1975. Stories are alphabetically arranged by name and subject, the index references newscasts of *CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite, CBS Evening News, CBS Sunday Night News, CBS Morning News, CBS Midday News, CBS Newsbreak, 60 Minutes, CBS Reports, CBS News Special Reports, CBS News Special, Magazine, and Razzamatazz.*

CBS News Television Broadcasts, all CBS evening news transcripts from 1975 to present on microfiche.

Microfilming Corporation of America, 21 Harristown Road, Glen Rock, New Jersey 07452, (800) 631-8994, distributes the index and transcripts of all newscasts and news programs produced by CBS News. As of June 1978, the cost is $60 per annual index and $395 per year for transcripts. Indices are available 6 months after the preceding year; transcripts are on a bimonthly basis. Back issues of the index (beginning 1975) are $60 per copy and $450 per year for transcripts.

Longines Chronoscope:	chronological shelf list
American Enterprise Institute:	chronological shelf list
Radio newscasts:	chronological shelf list

Use

In-house:

National Archives is open to the public from 8:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Researchers should call the Motion Picture Section, (202) 523-3267, to identify materials to be viewed and to reserve playback facilities. The staff has experience helping researchers to use the collection effectively. Before entering the Motion Picture Section, all researchers must have a Researcher Identification Card. (This may be obtained from Room 200B on the second floor of the Archives Building, Pennsylvania Avenue entrance.) There is no charge for in-house viewing. At this time, compiled excerpts from newscasts are not available through the National Archives.

Playback facilities:

Video	(1) ½'' reel to reel (1) ¾'' videocassette (1) color monitor
Film	(2) 16mm flatbed film viewing table (Steenbeck) (4) 35mm flatbed film viewing table (Steenbeck)
Audio	(3) reel to reel (1) cassette
Microform	(1) microfiche reader

Regional archive branches:

Although each center has its own procedures for ordering and viewing news programs, ABC, CBS, and NBC newscasts and CBS News Special Events may be viewed at the presidential libraries and the regional archive branches which follow:

Lyndon B. Johnson
Library
2313 Red River Street
Austin, TX 78705
(512) 397-5137

(Atlanta area)
1557 St. Joseph Avenue
East Point, GA 30344
(404) 763-7477

(Boston area)
380 Trapelo Road
Waltham, MA 02154
(617) 223-2657

(Chicago area)
7358 South Pulaski Road
Chicago, IL 60629
(312) 353-0161

(Denver area)
Denver Federal Center
Denver, CO 80225
(303) 234-5271

(Fort Worth area)
4900 Hemphill Street
(building)
P.O. Box 6216 (mailing)
Fort Worth, TX 76115
(817) 334-5515

John F. Kennedy Library
Federal Archives and
Records Center
380 Trapelo Road
Waltham, MA 02154
(617) 223-7250

(Kansas City area)
2306 East Bannister Road
Kansas City, MO 64131
(816) 926-7271

(Los Angeles area)
24000 Avila Road
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677
(714) 831-4220

(New York area)
Building 22-MOT Bayonne
Bayonne, NJ 07002
(201) 858-7245

(Philadelphia area)
5000 Wissahickon Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19144
(215) 951-5591

(San Francisco area)
1000 Commodore Drive
San Bruno, CA 94066
(415) 876-9001

(Seattle area)
6125 Sand Point Way NE
Seattle, WA 98115
(206) 442-4502

Mail requests:

Only CBS News materials on ¾'' videocassette may leave the Archives and are requested through standard inter-library loan procedures. Orders are usually processed in 10 business days. A fee of $5.00 is charged for postage and handling of materials.

Purchase of materials:

Longines Chronoscope, AEI *Public Debates of the 70's,* and *Universal Newsreels* are available for purchase on videocassette. As of December 1, 1977, charges for videocassettes are as follows: 10 minutes, $28.40; 20 minutes, $36.70; 30 minutes, $41.40; 60 minutes, $62.70

Minimum order: 10 minutes; Rush overtime adds 40%;
Shipping costs add $0.85; discount if videotape is supplied.

Future Goals

The National Archives intends to continue its activities in collecting television news and public affairs programs. Under negotiation are arrangements with the Library of Congress' newly-formed American Television and Radio Archives to complement rather than duplicate archiving of news programs.

CBS NEWS ARCHIVES
524 West 57th Street
New York, New York 10019
(212) 975-2834

Background and Administration

The CBS News Archives began in 1969 as the information department for the CBS News Division. The Archives contain films, videotapes, and audiotapes from CBS television and radio news broadcasts and specials. The materials are kept for information to update news stories, for potential sales of stock footage, and for preservation of

materials with historic value. Archive operations have incorporated computer retrieval of daily newscast and public affairs program transcripts, and film and videotape segments of these programs.

Samuel T. Suratt directs the CBS News Archives. The staff includes Neil Waldman, Director, Film and Videotape Libraries; Robert Rogers, Manager, News Film Library; David Mlotok, Manager, Videotape Library; Deborah Richardson, Manager, Documentary Film Library; and Martin Werber, Manager, Audiotape Library.

Collection

In 1959, the Archives began maintaining portions of hard news broadcasts of 2" quad videotapes. Since 1974, ¾" videocassette copies of the newscasts have been kept and are used for internal purposes. A ¾" videocassette copy of every hard news broadcast is also donated to and maintained by the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Film inserts of segments used in the newscasts, with varying amounts of outtakes and selected kinescopes of newscasts, have been archived since 1950, and videotape segments since 1959. The materials do not have time-date notations.

Newscasts:	
Videotape of entire newscasts	January 1974-present
Selected videotapes of entire newscasts	1960-1974
Audiotape of entire newscasts	1950-present
Selected kinescopes of entire newscasts	1948-1960
Film segments/selected outtakes used in newscasts	1950-present
Videotape segments/selected outtakes used in newscasts	1959-present
Film outtakes from newscasts	1950-present
Videotape outtakes from newscasts	1959-present
News special events:	
Kinescope	1952-1959
Videotape	1959-present

Other television news programs:[4]

Documentaries (*CBS Reports, CBS News Specials, CBS Special Reports)*	1950-present
60 Minutes, Magazine, Face the Nation, In the News, 30 Minutes	entire series

Other news resources:

Radio network newscasts (such as *World News* and *The World Tonight*) and news specials are available at the Milo Ryan Phono Archive, School of Communications, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195, (206) 543-9686. The collection ranges from the mid-1930s to 1940s. The University has a detailed card catalog for the collection. The CBS News Archives holds the complete collection from the later 1950s to present and materials are identified in a separate card catalog. Newscasts may be purchased by license agreement through CBS News Archives at a flat fee of $30 for reel to reel or audiocassette tape.

Finding Aids

Newscasts, news programs, and outtakes:

Card catalogs (divided by subject, name, and location of individual film and videotape segments since 1953)

Transcripts (newscasts and news programs since 1965)

Computer (stores data from transcripts of all newscasts and public affairs programs since 1971 and every film and videotape assignment, whether aired or not, since 1975)

CBS News Index and *CBS News Television Broadcasts* (index and transcripts since 1975; described under National Archives finding aids section)

Documentary films: internal shelf list

Use

In-house:

The Archives' primary purpose is to provide data to the CBS News Division, to service purchase requests for outtakes and

other available footage, and to assist outside television news researchers (priority in that order). Weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., a special librarian is assigned to assist people not affiliated with CBS.

Researchers should call or write the Archives to ascertain if their research needs can be accommodated. Because the Archives are not set up for large-scale public use, decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. When permission is granted, an appointment is arranged. Researchers are permitted to use the card catalog. Once selections are made, $15 per hour is charged for the librarian's retrieval of materials, use of viewing facilities, and computer searches.

Playback facilities:

Video	(1) color monitor
	(1) ¾" videocassette
Film	(1) 16mm flatbed film viewing table
	(1) 35mm flatbed film viewing table
Audio	(1) reel to reel
	(1) cassette

Mail requests:

Write or call the Archives on availability of news programs outside of the Archives. (See National Archives section for availability of programs since 1974.)

Licensing of materials:

All film and videotape newscast segments without the voice or image of a CBS News correspondent or reporter may be obtained via a licensing agreement.

Contact the Archives for prices on film and videotape segments, and royalty fees for commercial use of these materials.

Future Goals

CBS News plans to integrate their archival data into a retrieval system encompassing a broader range of media, to develop a CBS News Thesaurus for commercial distribution, and to study effective long-term preservation of videotape materials.

TELEVISION NEWS STUDY CENTER
George Washington University Library
Audiovisual Department
2130 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20052
(202) 676-7218

Background and Administration

George Washington University Library opened its Television News Study Center in the fall of 1978. The Center is open to all students and scholars of television news. The facility is not an archive in that it does not house or maintain a collection of newscasts. The Center is designated to create greater access to the Vanderbilt Television News Archive by providing playback facilities for these materials and by offering reference services on the Vanderbilt collection. Reference and referral service to other television news archives, such as the National Archives, the CBS News Archives, and the Museum of Broadcasting, is provided to researchers as well. The Center is responsible for recording weekend network news programs and news special events to be added to the Vanderbilt Television News Archive.

The George Washington University Librarian is Rupert C. Woodward, and the Center's Director is Fay C. Schreibman, Head of the Library's Audiovisual Department.

Finding Aids

The Center houses major finding aids to television news archives. (Preceding sections describe these aids in more detail.)

Vanderbilt Television News Archive:	
Television News Index and Abstracts Pre-publication abstracts of recent newscasts	1968-present
News special events and other news programs	shelf list

CBS News Archives:

CBS News Index 1975-present

Audiovisual Distribution of CBS Television Broadcasts (titles and distributors of news and other CBS programs)

National Archives:

AEI *Public Debates of the 70's* chronological shelf list

Longines Chronoscope chronological shelf list

Motion Pictures in the Audiovisual Archives Division of the National Archives catalog

Sound Recordings of the National Archives in the Audiovisual Archives Division of the National Archives catalog

Museum of Broadcasting:

A Subject Guide to the Radio and Television Collection of the Museum of Broadcasting catalog

Other media resources in Washington, D.C.:

Scholar's Guide to Washington, D.C. Film and Video Collections
Author: Bonnie Rowan (Smithsonian Press, 1979)
As part of its interest in supporting media studies, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars has sponsored this guide to assist researchers in identifying major collections of film and video resources in Washington, D.C. Educational institutions, governmental departments and agencies, embassies, associations, business, and private collections are cited in this source book.

Use

Staff will assist researchers in the use of finding aids and procedures for ordering materials from archives, although, of course, users must do their own research in selecting material requested for viewing.

Although subject to change, there is no charge for use of the playback facilities. Call or write the Center to arrange an appointment for reference questions or to use a viewing area.

Playback facilities:

3 Video carrels (for individual use)
Color monitor, ¾'' videocassette playback, automatic search control (two additional carrels will be equipped in 1979)

2 Video booths (for individual or small group use)
Color monitor, ¾'' videocassette playback, audiocassette playback, automatic search control, locked facility

Preview room (for small group use)
Color monitor, ¾'' videocassette, other audiovisual playback

Audiovisual classroom (seats 32)
Color monitor, ¾'' videocassette, other audiovisual playback

Studio/classroom (seats 74)
Color video projection onto 7' x 7' screen, lectern with remote control for video, 16mm and slide projectors in projection booth, black-and-white video studio recording capability

Future Goals

Two video carrels and a video disc projector will be added to the playback facility and referral services will be expanded.

. . . . .

Television Archive Associations

Since 1968, the International Studies Association Electronic Media Data Archives Committee has been collecting information on American and foreign television archives collections and services. The committee uses this information to identify archival storage and retrieval problems, to serve as a clearinghouse for information about existing and new collections, and to disseminate advances in methods of archiving and use of materials. The ISA Electronic Media Archives Committee is chaired by Alden Williams of Kansas State University's Political Science Department, Manhattan, Kansas 66502.

To promote the preservation of television programs in the United States, the Library of Congress hosted a national television archive conference in February 1978. Archives represented included the Library of Congress; the Peabody Collection, University of Georgia; Academy of Television Arts and Sciences; Television Library of the University of California at Los Angeles; International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House; Museum of Broadcasting; Museum of Modern Art; National Archives and Records Service; Public Television Library-Public Broadcasting Service (PBS); Vanderbilt Television News Archive; Peter Vest Collection of Dumont Kinescopes at Washington State University; Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin; National Film Archive of Canada; and the Television News Study Center, George Washington University. Information was exchanged on the archives' collections, acquisitions, services, cataloging, indexing, and preservation methods, and the meeting represented a step toward establishment of a consortium of television archives. For further information on development of this consortium, contact Paul Spehr of the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20542.

Representatives from the television archives of broadcasting companies have organized the International Federation of Television Archives, known as FIAT. The Federation includes companies from France, England, Germany, Italy, Japan, Canada, the Netherlands, Turkey, Spain, Brazil, Iran, and the United States. The only current United States member is CBS, represented by Samuel T. Surratt, CBS News archivist. Other television archives unaffiliated with broadcasting companies may join as observers or associate members. The Federation meets twice a year and is presently coordinating projects to create a continuing education program on archiving broadcasted television materials, to develop a more effective preservation medium, and to establish an international cataloging system for television archive materials to facilitate international exchanges of collection materials. For more information, contact Christian Castellani, Secretary General FIAT, 1, Place des Mercurials 93170 Bagnolet, France, Telephone 362.12.02.

The Future of Television Archives

In the revised copyright law of 1976, Congress mandated establishment of the American Television and Radio Archives under the auspices of the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Sound Recording Branch of the Library of Congress. By 1980, daily national prime-time television programs will be recorded off the air, indexed, and stored for public use. Section 108 of the new copyright law also affirmed the right of "libraries and archives of audiovisual news programs" to reproduce and distribute by lending "copies and excerpts" of "audiovisual work dealing with news."

In the growth of television news archives, a major problem remaining is the preservation of videotape materials. The lifespans of videotapes and videodiscs are uncertain. As archival tapes deteriorate, there are problems in transfering videotape programs to another medium. Transfer from archive videotape to another videotape can only be made three times. If transfer is made to film, then problems of film preservation ensue. Research into these questions has only recently begun due to efforts of archive associations.

In the future, audiovisual technology will improve and archives will expand their collections and develop better finding aids, thus increasing accessibility of television news resources. As Erik Barnouw stated in the foreword to this volume, "Legal and technical problems once clouding the idea of television archives have abated. Such archives are now a fact of life. They will be an extraordinary asset to scholars and should be even more important to our society."

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Jim Pilkington of the Vanderbilt Television News Archive, Bill Murphy of the National Archives, and Sam Suratt of the CBS News Archives for their assistance in the preparation of this article.

2. Other archives have some national and local television news programs and newsfilm. However, these collections are not complete and access is limited:

Selected local news programs

The Rhode Island Historical Society
52 Power Street
Providence, RI 02906
(401) 331-8575

Ohio Historical Center
Interstate 71 & 17th Ave.
Columbus, OH 43211
(614) 46-4663

Mass Communication
History Center
Wisconsin State Historical
Society
University of Wisconsin
Madison, WI 53706
(608) 262-0585

Sacramento City
and County Museum
1009 Seventh Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 447-2908

Selected network news programs

Library of Congress
Motion Picture, Broadcasting and
Recorded Sound Division
Washington, D.C. 20540
(202) 426-5840

Antioch Television
Communications Study Center
Antioch College
Yellow Springs, OH 45387
(513) 767-7331, ext. 494

Museum of Broadcasting
1 East 53rd Street
New York, New York 10022
(212) 752-4690

News Study Group
Political Science Department
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 253-3371

3. U.S. Congress, Senate, Copyright Law Revision S. 22, 94th Cong., 1st Session, 20 November 1975, Report #94-473, p. 69. Further information about the lawsuit can be found in the following articles:

Vanderbilt U. sued by C.B.S. on sales of Cronkite tapes. 1973. *New York Times* (December 22, 1973): 48.

CBS and its tapes. 1974. *Wall Street Journal* (February 20, 1974): 18.

CBS, Inc. versus Vanderbilt University copy—'right or wrong.' 1974. *The Video Report* 4 (May 20, 1974): 1-2.

CBS proposes an act of oblivion. 1974. *Columbia Journalism Review* 13 (November/December 1974): 1-2.

John Weisman. 1974. The network versus the university. *TV Guide* 22 (June 29, 1974): 2-6.

Kathy Sawyer. 1974. The battle for Walter Cronkite. *The Tennessean Magazine* (July 7, 1974): 14-19.

Christopher Wright. 1975. Washington news. *School Media Quarterly* 3 (Spring 1975): 249.

Christopher Wright. 1976. Washington news. *School Media Quarterly* 4 (Winter 1976): 171-173.

Anne Rawley Saldich. 1976. Access to television's past. *Columbia Journalism Review* 15 (November/December 1976): 46-48, 50.

Melinda V. Golub. 1977. Not by books alone: Library copying of non-print copyrighted materials. *Law Library Journal* 70 (May 1977): 153-170.

4. Contact Dolores Sura at CBS News Archives for information on CBS News Programs available through commercial distribution. Distributors to date are:

BFA Educational Media
211 South Michigan Avenue
P.O. Box 1795
Santa Monica, CA 90406

Carousel Films, Inc.
1501 Broadway
New York, NY 10036

McGraw-Hill Films, Inc.
1221 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

Association Films, Inc.
600 Grand Avenue
Ridgefield, NJ 07657

Films, Inc.
1144 Wilmette Avenue
Wilmette, IL 60091

5. The Poynter Center's Citizen and the News Project distributes instructional audiovisual and print materials about the news media. For more information about the program, its continuing education activities, and forthcoming publication, *The Newsroom and the Classroom,* contact:

Robert Schmuhl
Citizen and the News Project
The Poynter Center
Indiana University
410 N. Park Avenue
Bloomington, Indiana 42401

Reading the Wind:
Reflections on Content Analysis of Broadcast News

Lawrence W. Lichty
George A. Bailey

> UNLIKE THE PRINTED MEDIA, television writes on the wind. There is no accumulated record which the historian can examine later with 20-20 vision of hindsight, asking these questions: "How fair was he tonight? How impartial was he today? How honest was he all along?"

So spoke President Johnson on April 1, 1968, addressing the National Association of Broadcasting in convention in Chicago. It was noon on the day after he said, "Accordingly, I shall not seek . . ." Beginning that very day and until his last day in office, the White House made videotapes of all three network evening news programs; those tapes are now kept in the Presidential Library in Austin. In this and other archives, the "accumulated record" is being compiled. The chief tool with which to study this record is content analysis.

In what follows we try to present practical advice on aspects of content analysis (CA) of broadcast news.[1] There is much to be said about the theory and need for such analysis. Little of that is here. Our objective is limited to reviewing some practical aspects of applying the

technique. A reader should not, however, expect to use our advice either without studying the history, theory, and criticism of news analysis presented in this volume and in other sources, or without consulting several sources on CA methods, such as those cited in the selected bibliography at the end of this essay.

The "news" is so pervasive and commonplace that many assume they know what is there. The scientific study of television news content requires the use of CA. Selective exposure, perception, and recall make it impossible to have a broad and accurate overview of all that is on "the news." People tend to over-generalize from what they do see and remember. Some method of counting is necessary simply to keep track of all the "items" in a newscast or series of broadcasts. Systematic counting can reveal changes, trends, and emphases, and make comparisons and correlations possible. CA is a specialized method of measurement. We analyze the content of news because a valid and reliable study is sharply different from casual watching. (See especially Wright, 1975, and Holsti, 1969, for more information on the rationale for CA.)

Unfortunately, CA is often done for the wrong reasons, such as trying to prove the "effects" of television. Some have persisted in jumping to conclusions about effects, while ignoring variations in the way different people perceive and assimilate the same content and forgetting that the cumulative impact of all news stories rarely outweighs the impact of family, job, neighborhood, religion, schooling, and personal experience.

Another wrong reason for CA is to prove an accusation. The analyst is already convinced, for example, that television news is "left" or "right" biased and to "prove" it produces an empirical study. The classic case to be cited in this regard is Edith Efron's *The News Twisters* (1971) which scholarly reviewers (Stevenson and others, 1973) usually found non-rigorous. CBS paid for a replication of the Efron study by International Research Associates and many argued the merits of the study (Rivers, 1972; Weaver, 1972; *Columbia Journalism Review,* 1974a, 1974b). A number of other books collected examples arguing that television was biased in favor of the right (Herschensohn, 1976; Keeley, 1971) and the left (Cirino, 1971, 1974, 1977).

One of our students proposed in a research paper to prove his belief that American television was biased against the Israelis in favor of the

Arabs. After a detailed study using Vanderbilt's *Television News Index and Abstracts,* he concluded the networks gave more time, more film, and more unrebutted access to the Israeli side. Another, who set out to prove the same point, also concluded, after listening to tapes for a week, that much more access was given to Israel and that its position was treated more "emotionally."

Our point is not that Efron, our students, or others were right or wrong in their accusations. Rather the dilemma is that even a rigorous study is likely to be accepted or be persuasive only if it disproves the accusations or known biases of the analyst. There is no easy escape. This emphasizes the problem that such studies must be so methodologically sound that the very need for detail and replicability may confine them to small, trivial parts of the content.

Another bad reason for doing such studies relates to availability. The how and the why of method and rationale cannot be separated. Media effects are abstractions; audiences are large, difficult and expensive to survey. Producers are distant, anonymous, very busy, and sometimes uncooperative. But the content is there. Earlier there were more studies of newspapers. With the increased availability of network transcripts and videotape recordings, too many studies seem to be designed primarily to use the materials that are available.

We have not meant to be discouraging so much as to underscore a key point that a good research question comes before good methodology. A network television news executive recently complained to us that a researcher who had done an analysis of his program started with his own preconceptions about what news was covered and why, and then looked for everything he could to prove the opinions he already held. "I guess," the news executive said, "that's not only acceptable, but expected for academic work. You have to have a thesis to do a thesis."

Just looking for material that supports a researcher's ideas is not, of course, any more acceptable in scholarly work than it would be for a journalist. A hypothesis is not the same as an accusation. Begin with a good question and be objective in considering material that supports, rejects, or is immaterial to that hypothesis.

Even experienced researchers should not start without a careful review of the literature. A review of other studies of broadcast journalism may show that the conjecture has already been tested. This volume contains references to a number of such studies. It may still be

worthwhile to go ahead in order to check the veracity of the earlier research, to show changes or trends, or for other reasons. A review of content analyses of print journalism can also be useful (e.g., Antunes and Hurley, 1977; Butler and Paisley, 1978; Merrill, 1965; Miller, 1977). Do not overlook the part of scholarly studies that describes suggestions for further research. Researchers can certainly learn from the mistakes, triumphs, and suggestions of others. Depending on previous research experience, careful consideration might also be given to several general textbooks that describe the scientific approach and the development of hypotheses (e.g., Kerlinger, 1973; Selltiz, Wrightsman, and Cook, 1976).

CA is time consuming. It cannot be done in a weekend before a research paper is due. And while coding is hard routine work, the analysis can be exciting and rewarding, if the study has been well designed. With a good research question in hand, the content analyst must confront a variety of methodological issues. The remainder of this essay examines various approaches to these issues. First, we consider sampling strategies and the unit of analysis. Then, content analysis categories and coding issues, including validity and reliability, are reviewed. And finally, we discuss problems in the analysis and evaluation of the data.

Sampling

One constant complaint about television public affairs coverage is that there is so little of it—only about one-tenth of all television programming. Few words are spoken compared with the number appearing in newspaper columns. Yet any analysis must summarize the newscasts with even fewer words. Few researchers could or would spend the time to view and code even one year of network evening news (more than 500 hours of newscasts). Consequently, sampling may be required.

Random sampling is often necessary. Either a table of random numbers or a computer program for this purpose may be used. Most research which uses a pure random sample has selected for analysis between one-fourth and one-half of the days during the period under study (e.g., Lowry, 1971a, 1971b, 1974; Patterson, 1977). Evarts and Stempel (1974) sampled 25 days from a two-month campaign period and Lowry (1971a) randomly chose 15 days from a two-month period.

(In an unpublished analysis of 12 weeks of 1972 presidential election coverage, Ray Carroll and Lichty found that any sample smaller than about one-fifth of all days showed a rapid decrease in reliability.)

A variation on this approach is to stratify the drawing to insure that the final sample will be evenly distributed across the days of the week, weeks, months, or even years. What producers think is newsworthy varies among days. Saturday and Sunday newscasts typically have more "soft" stories and attract a much smaller audience; most studies have focused exclusively on weekday evening news. Patterns in news content may vary among weekdays as well. August is usually considered a "slow" news month. Consequently, some researchers randomly sample using a "quota" to guarantee that a certain number of newscasts are selected for each year, month, week, or days of the week.

Pride and Clarke (1973) and Pride and Richards (1974) chose one day at random from each week across a two-year period. Russo (1971-72) chose two days at random from each month across a two-year period. Dominick (1977) selected 24 Mondays, 24 Tuesdays, etc., at random over a two-year period.

Under appropriate circumstances, an alternative to random sampling or stratified random sampling is to take all the newscasts from entire selected weeks. In conducting an analysis of the network evening news coverage of "Watergate" between May 1973 and August 1974, Marlene Daniels (1976) chose 10 weeks to represent various stages of reporting. She argued that there were clear-cut periods of the coverage that should be recorded and analyzed—the Senate and House hearings and the week of resignation, for example. Her purpose was not to study how much coverage there was, everyone knew there was a lot, but rather to compare the networks' coverage at particular stages in the story. Other studies using entire selected weeks include those of Bailey (1976b); Scheer and Eiler (1972); and Frank (1973).

If the subject matter was short-lived, such as the Six Day War, examining the entire period is much better than attempting to sample. Sampling newscasts for any topic which was limited to less than a month is probably not advisable. Some studies have covered one-day events, such as election night (Pepper, 1973, 1973-74), or the resignation of President Nixon (Levine, 1974). Others have analyzed coverage of week-long or month-long episodes, such as political

conventions (Paletz and Elson, 1976), the Eagleton affair (Einsiedel, 1975), the Dominican Republic crisis (Harney and Stone, 1969), the Tet offensive (Braestrup, 1977), and the Laos invasion (Pride and Wamsley, 1972). All of these studies have examined consecutive days throughout the entire period rather than sampling. (If the topic of interest is covered infrequently, researchers may examine all network coverage over a long period by using Vanderbilt's *Television News Index and Abstracts* to find the relevant stories.)

Units of Analysis

The unit of analysis may range from an entire program as the largest unit (Carroll, 1978; Guback, 1962; Lichty, Ripley, and Summers, 1965; Maines and Ottinger, 1973; McNulty, 1975; Topping and Lichty, 1971) to a single word as the smallest. (Any analysis that focuses only on "words" would be better done using a more detailed methodology such as evaluative assertion analysis described below.)

Most CAs of newscasts have used the story as the unit of analysis. In most instances "story" is an easy unit to describe and code. A "reporter story" might be described as typically starting after an introduction by the anchor, such as Walter Cronkite, saying, ". . . Jed Duvall reports." The next picture and sound are a report prepared with and narrated by Duvall taken on film or electronic camera (called ECC at CBS for electronic camera coverage; EJ for electronic journalism at NBC). Nearly always such a reporter story also ends with the reporter's name, such as "Jed Duvall, CBS News, Balmor, Maryland."

The anchor portion of the newscast should be studied separately from stories reported by correspondents. During the course of a newscast, the anchor portion can take several forms: introduction of reporter stories (lead-ins); reading of stories for which there is no film, usually brief items ("tell stories"); voice-over narration of film; and live talk with reporters on the scene or interview of "newsmakers."

Some studies have counted leadins as part of the reporter story if the introduction was short (not more than 20 seconds) and closely related to the story. When the anchor narrates a story with no other reporter identified, it should be counted as a "reporter story"; code the anchor as the reporter. The anchor may also sometimes provide

the explanation and introduction for an excerpt from a press conference or a speech by a "newsmaker" that is shown without a field reporter. Some studies have concentrated only on the anchor or only on reporter segments, but such an analysis should serve a specific research purpose (Bailey, 1976b).

Presentations that are exclusively commentary should also be separated, such as the regular news analyses by Howard K. Smith (ABC) and formerly by Eric Sevareid (CBS) and David Brinkley (NBC). These, and some others, are usually clearly labeled verbally or visually as "commentary."

In the hope of some standardization in analysis and since the Vanderbilt *Index* and CBS transcripts generally indicate the distinctions, we suggest three categories of stories: reporter, anchor, and commentary. There may need to be further distinctions by subject matter for the anchors, although division of the anchor's time among stories and topics is more difficult than distinguishing "reporter stories." Variations are sometimes tried with the anchor-reporter format. In 1967-68, NBC had "contributing editors" who were part anchor, part correspondent. In 1977, ABC added "sub-anchors" which the networks called "chief correspondents"; in 1978, they became regional anchors. Most importantly researchers should always report in detail the distinctions which were employed; some studies are confusing because such explanations are lacking.

Since reporter stories are generally longer than individual items read by the anchor, coding both the number and length of each story is important. Before beginning, check carefully that the tape recorder runs at the proper speed; time a tape on several machines and check the stop watch. Time is also valuable as a unit of analysis to note significant deviations from the norm . The most dramatic example was a *CBS Evening News* story, October 29, 1972, about White House involvement in "Watergate" that ran over 14 minutes. This length was so unusual that a second story, 8.5 minutes long two nights later was alleged to have been ordered shortened by CBS executives, but that charge was denied (Daniels, 1976, p. 15; Diamond, 1975, pp. 214-15; Gates, 1978, pp. 304, 337).

Much CA, then, can be done from categories examining reporter and anchor "stories" as described here and from material within stories. In most cases the "story" as a unit is most logical and useful, although some studies have broken news reports into other units (Pepper, 1973-74).

While it is possible to do detailed analysis based on summary indices, transcripts, and audiotape recordings, it is best to base a complete analysis on an examination of the actual newscasts in context including the visual. Even if a videotape recorder is not available, it is possible to make detailed notes on the visual and make slides.

To shoot color slides or prints off any television screen, using a camera with through-the-lens metering and focusing is advisable, but simpler cameras will work. Speed should not be more than 1/25 (because of the technology of television, faster speeds will get only part of the picture); less than 1/8 often will not stop movement. Typically, 1/15 is good with a fairly fast lens and 200 or 400 ASA film. Practice shooting at just the right movement to stop action and keep a careful log to identify the pictures later. (See also "Photographing Television Images," Kodak Customer Service Pamphlet AC-10, Photo Information, Department 841, Eastman Kodak Company, 343 State St., Rochester, NY 14650.)

Categories

Development of categories that accurately describe the content is crucial. As in all research, the categories should be mutually exclusive and all inclusive. But a number of categories can be used to describe various attributes of the same unit.

For basic identification a number of categories are needed regardless of the subject matter under study. Usually each story is identified using such variables as:

news program (e.g., *AEN, CEN, NNN, Today*);
date (for computer analysis June 14, 1978 should be recorded as 780614);
reporter's name (a number or abbreviation);
anchor-report-comment (as noted above);
time (minutes and seconds);
position in the newscast (lead story, second story, etc.).

The use of these and additional categories depends on the specific research hypotheses. These identifying categories also make it easy to pull out examples. Data cards can be sorted by hand, or using a

program for sorting, to get a listing of all stories by each reporter or the stories for each variable in any category.

Much of the earliest CA only counted the frequency with which certain words were used; word counts were especially used in the early propaganda studies (Lasswell, Casey, and Smith, 1935; Smith, Lasswell, and Casey, 1946; Green, 1939; Sussmann, 1945). Word counts can still be done profitably (e.g., Bailey, 1973, 1976b). However, most studies about the 1972 election coverage, and others discussed here, used a combination of non-judgmental and judgmental categories. Most of the identification categories listed above are non-judgmental. That is, researchers should have no difficulty agreeing on the network, name of reporter, time, and order. On the other hand, judgmental categories require that coders make some evaluation and even with experienced coders, evaluations are open to argument. (The most judgmental task might be to code whether an entire story was fair or biased.)

The distinction between judgmental and non-judgmental coding is not always clear. Coders could easily indicate if the word "environment" is mentioned while a more difficult decision would be whether a particular piece represents an "environmental" story.

Since no television news topic has had more CA, studies of 1972 election coverage offer examples of how a number of different researchers approached coding a similar subject. During the 1972 primary and general elections at least nine published content studies conducted by university researchers attempted to measure "bias" in evening network news programs. While nearly all used different measures of what was more frequently called "direction" than bias, all generally agreed that network news coverage did not uniformly favor either McGovern or Nixon. Many of these studies used the non-judgmental variables of time and story order to determine if either candidate was given more attention than the other. For example, Meadow (1973) found that McGovern got more coverage than Nixon as a candidate; when "Nixon as President" was considered, however, Republicans received slightly more time. Most judgmental categories also suggested that the overall network treatments tended to be balanced. In putting partisans on the air or quoting them directly, the networks carried more anti-Republican and anti-Democratic statements than statements favorable to either group (Lowry, 1974).

In an analysis of 11 weeks of the 1972 general election campaign that included all network evening news programs seven days each week, Lichty and his students used several different measures of direction. They concluded that: (a) ABC gave earlier position to Nixon, (b) CBS gave earlier position to McGovern, (c) overall, nearly 90% of the stories were judged to be "neutral," (d) there were far more unfavorable statements than favorable about both candidates on all three networks, (e) contrary to some reports, CBS was judged to have given the most "favorable" treatment to Nixon, (f) NBC was most favorable to McGovern, (g) judging only statements made by network reporters, all three were more favorable to Nixon than McGovern, but CBS was the most "fair." Combining four different measures of "direction" we conclude that all three networks were negative to McGovern, ABC was negative to Nixon, CBS was neutral to Nixon, and NBC was the most positive toward Nixon. Thus, the contradictions in our own study, and the different conclusions for other studies were, in part, a result of the measures used. This demonstrates the importance of using a variety of measures of direction rather than relying on a single one. (On this point, see Hofstetter, 1976, pp. 197-203.)

Measures of "direction" often ask coders to evaluate a story as to whether "considered as a whole" the story seems very favorable, favorable, neutral, negative, or very negative to the object (say a political candidate). Coders may be asked to make the judgment solely on the basis of a concluding or summary statement by the reporter (the "standupper"). Such a measure can give some information on the direction, but is still "soft" data. This evaluation process by coders, of course, leaves CA open to alternative judgments about the same content and can lead to the controversy that surrounded Efron's study. Other measurements can help give "harder" data such as position in the newscast and the frequency of statements by supporters or opponents of a candidate.

In developing measurements, create the smallest sub-categories possible, particularly if using computer tabulation. These codes can easily be collapsed into larger categories later. If the original categories are large, however, they cannot ever be split into smaller ones without recoding all of the data. In a study of foreign news, for example, code each country separately. Later the option remains to combine them into larger regional categories. If two words have

similar but slightly different meanings, code each separately. Subtle measurements sometimes can be achieved only by developing a large number of rating scales from many content categories (Judge and Hofstetter, 1974).

A sample of a coding protocal that was used in a CA of the 1976 presidential election coverage is included to give an idea of a coding sheet for election stories. Some of the results using these categories are also presented below. (Not included are the several pages of definitions and instructions to coders.) During the coding and practice sessions, regular discussions of any conflict are necessary.

This coding sheet was set up so that data for each story could be easily transferred onto one IBM card for tabulation; the numbers on the left in parentheses represent the card columns for keypunching each variable. The categories measured included: identifiers; issues; polls and media; statements (attributed or on camera); two evaluations of direction; and duplication (if essentially the same story was carried on other networks). Because this particular content analysis was conducted in graduate and undergraduate classes almost simultaneously with the campaign, the categories are simple and were developed more for learning about the campaign and the coverage than for detailed analysis later.

Some CA reports have given fairly detailed information on coding procedures and can be consulted for other examples (Frank, 1973; Hofstetter, 1976; Patterson and McClure, 1976).

Coders and Coding

A difficult task in CA is recruiting and training coders. It is best to have as many coders as possible, even covering the same material more than once, to hold detailed training sessions, and to compute and report reliability among coders. This ideal is too infrequently met.

Results of CA must be reliable, that is, capable of verification by other observers. Reliability derives both from the skill and training of the coders and from the clarity of the content categories. The most commonly used measure of inter-coder reliability is simply the average percent of agreement in the content conclusions of the coders. The number of decisions on which coders agree is divided by the total number of coding decisions. Agreement on 80 percent of the coding

(1-2) ___ ___ Day

(3) ___ Network A=1, C=2, N=3

(4-5) ___ ___ Position--in order, of political stories (POSITION for Reporter + Comment stories ONLY--not anchor)

(6) ___ Anchor=1, Reporter=2, Commentary/Analysis=3

(7-9) ___ ___ ___ Reporter--write in name _____

(10-11) ___ ___ Candidate -- 00=none, 01=F&C, 02=JC, 03=FM, 04=other for Jc
05=GF as PRES, 06=GF as CAND, 07=Dole
08=other for F-D, 09=all others for PRES,
10=Senate races, 11=House Races
12=State races

(12-13) ___ ___ Issue (principally featured) write in _____

_____ CONSULT BULLETIN BOARD in coding booth

(14) ___ Mention of polls 1=mentioned else blank

(15) ___ Story totally about poll 1=mentioned else blank

(16) ___ Polls by 1=Net self, 2=candidates themselves

(17) ___ Mention of use of the media 1=mentioned else blank

(18-19) ___ ___ "style"/format -- 01=cand day, 02=other spot news related to cand
03=in depth, bandgrounder, 04=int with cand
05=debate/quasi-debate/juxtaposition,
06=IAA/FTN/MTP, 07=net survey, person in street interviews, 08=party, staff business
09=candidate tour summary, 00=all other

(20-21) ___ ___ FORD Favorable by himself (Code=1, 2, 3 . . . for EACH statement --1=one statement, 2=two statements, etc)

(22-23) ___ ___ Favorable by staff/same camp/party/family

(24-25) ___ ___ Favorable by other side

(26-27) ___ ___ Favorable by other people

(28-29) ___ ___ Favorable by reporter

(30-31) ___ ___ FORD UNFAVORABLE by himself

(32-33) ___ ___ UNFAVORABLE by staff/same camp/party/family

(34-35) ___ ___ UNFAVORABLE by other side

(36-37) ___ ___ UNFAVORABLE by other people

(38-39) ___ ___ UNFAVORABLE by reporter

(40-41) ___ ___ CARTER Favorable by himself

(42-43) ___ ___ Favorable by staff/same camp/party/family

(44-45) ___ ___ Favorable by other side

(46-47) ___ ___ Favorable by other people

(48-49) ___ ___ Favorable by reporter

(50-51) ___ ___ CARTER UNFAVORABLE by himself

(52-53) ___ ___ UNFAVORABLE by staff/same camp/party/family

(54-55) ___ ___ UNFAVORABLE by other side

(56-57) ___ ___ UNFAVORABLE by other people

(58-59) ___ ___ UNFAVORABLE by reporter

(60) ___ Evaluation of the tone of report OVERALL

(61) ___ Evaluation of the tone of the REPORTER

1 = very positive
2 = positive
3 = neutral
4 = negative
5 = very negative

(code for the candidate featured--10-11)

(62) ___ DUPLICATION -- be sure to score every story

0=THIS NETWORK ONLY, 1=AC, 2=AN, 3=CN, 4=ACN 5=SUNDAY. all other days that there are not 3 EVE NEWS

(63-66) ___ ___ : ___ ___ TIME-LENGTH in minutes:seconds
(min) (sec)

Any Issues mentioned:

(67) ___ Inflation, economy

(68) ___ Unemployment, employment

(69) ___ Crime, control of

(70) ___ Energy crisis, alternate fuels

(71) ___ Dissatisfaction with government, politicians, WDC

(72) ___ Defense spending, military

(73) ___ Abortion, right to live, birth control

(74) ___ Morality, Butz, Playboy interview, etc.

(75) ___ Foreign policy

NOTES, QUESTIONS, IDEAS:

decisions is widely used as an acceptable minimum level of inter-coder reliability.

For variables with fewer categories, chance alone would increase the proportion of identical coding. Scott (1955) devised an index which corrects for the number of categories and the relative frequency of their use in calculating reliability, although it has been rarely used in reporting CA of newscasts.

Unfortunately, most studies are unclear as to precisely how inter-coder reliability was measured; readers are seldom told how many coders tested how many items to obtain the average percent agreement scores. (Just as frequently, readers are not told who did the coding.)

Validity is usually used to refer to whether an instrument actually measures what it purports to measure. If the categories which have been devised for television CA do not successfully represent the concepts under study then analysis of the data is meaningless. Just measuring the amount of time given to reporting crime, for example, will contribute little to a study interested in the types of crimes which are reported or their judicial disposition.

A useful refinement of CA called by the awkward term "evaluative assertion analysis" involves masking the source and subject of statements to produce measurements of direction. The process is complicated and requires that all statements be rewritten with source, subject, connector, and evaluator judged separately. The method is described fully elsewhere (Osgood, 1959; North, Holsti, Zaninovich, and Zinnes, 1963, pp. 91-102); it has been used in studies by Rajski (1977) and Kim (1966). In the case of television news, working from transcripts without the names of reporters, candidates, or parties may be required. Given the audiovisual nature of the original, the loss of information may be great, but it may be possible to code both from videotapes and from disguised transcripts and then to compare the results.

Data Analysis

For accuracy and speed, analysis of even a moderate amount of data usually calls for computer tabulations using a program that provides at least frequency counts, percent, crosstabulations, correlations, and tests of statistical significance such as chi square. SPSS and

SAS are two widely available packages which can perform these statistical tasks. The use of a computer allows easy transformation of categories, as well as a variety of statistical routines by simply adding or changing a few cards in the IBM deck.

Computer uses should be considered before beginning coding to arrange for the best punching of the data or the use of automatic punching code sheets if possible, such as mark sensing. Also before starting on any large scale project have an idea of possible tables and be sure that the categories and the potential computations can offer the information needed. A small amount of data may be pre-tested and run through all of the steps including making tables from the pre-test results. (Some well-known researchers first sent to a journal for publication a large study in which minutes added to 100 seconds. Care should be taken in converting minutes and seconds to minutes with a decimal. An alternative is to code time in seconds only.)

Tables 1 and 2 show data tabulated from a study using the code sheet presented here as an example. Table 1 is from items 20-21 to 58-59 of the protocal and Table 2 from items 60 and 61. Table 1 shows that on all three networks more unfavorable statements were aired about both candidates than favorable ones; the unfavorable proportion was about the same (60-70 percent) on all three networks; more statements, both favorable and unfavorable, related to Ford than Carter on all three; and Carter received slightly less unfavorable coverage than Ford on all networks.

Table 2 indicates that the majority of the overall evaluations were neutral. Excluding neutral evaluations on all three networks, Carter was judged as receiving about two to one "favorable" treatment on all three networks, while Ford's coverage was judged "unfavorable" two to one. These ratios favor Carter even more among evaluations made by reporters only, except in the case of CBS and Carter.

These 1976 data might be interpreted to support conservative criticisms of network political coverage, but the tables are shown here only for examples and not for their conclusions. This brief treatment is no substitute for more detailed tabulations, analyses, and explanations that we will present elsewhere. (As noted earlier, content data proves neither the intent of the network news organizations, nor effects of content on the audience.)

A number of CAs of 1976 election coverage will be published and they will reject or lend support to the tentative data offered here. A

Table 1

STATEMENTS ABOUT FORD AND CARTER IN NETWORK EVENING NEWS CAMPAIGN COVERAGE

Figures show the number of favorable and unfavorable statements about Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter as presidential candidates on the three network evening news programs, Monday-Friday, October 4-31, 1976. The table reports the source of each statement: the candidate himself, someone from the candidate's staff, his opponent or opponent's staff, another individual, or the network reporter. Also shown is whether the statement was attributed to the source (Atr) or was shown "in person" on the air (Per).

	FAVORABLE						UNFAVORABLE					
	ABC		CBS		NBC		ABC		CBS		NBC	
	Per	Atr	Per	Atr	Per	Atr	Per	Atr	Per	Atr	Per	Atr
Source of Statements about FORD												
Ford	9	5	15	3	7	2	–	–	2	2	–	3
Staff	5	8	7	8	2	4	5	4	2	14	1	1
Opponent	1	–	–	1	1	1	17	18	25	20	16	18
Others	4	2	6	5	6	6	4	8	5	12	6	15
Reporter	6	–	3	–	2	–	19	–	18	1	12	1
Source of Statements about CARTER												
Carter	8	1	4	3	3	3	–	–	–	–	–	–
Staff	2	4	8	9	1	5	–	–	4	2	2	1
Opponent	–	–	–	–	–	–	16	10	20	10	8	12
Others	2	2	2	4	5	8	6	3	5	8	4	10
Reporter	9	–	4	–	4	–	13	–	10	–	5	1
Summary:												
FORD	40		48		31		75		101		73	
CARTER	28		34		29		48		59		43	
Percent UNFAVORABLE Statements												
FORD							65%		68%		70%	
CARTER							63%		63%		60%	

Source: Graduate seminar students under direction of Lichty, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Fall 1976. Procedures were those described in this chapter.

Table 2.
Evaluation of 1976 Campaign Stories About Carter and Ford

Figures show the number of stiries judged to be positive (+), neutral (0), or negative (-) toward Carter and Ford as candidates or toward both the candidates and others (their running mates and supporters).

	ABC			CBS			NBC		
	+	0	-	+	0	-	+	0	-
OVERALL									
Jimmy Carter	7	12	5	5	17	4	5	18	4
Carter & Others	13	12	6	11	22	5	7	26	4
Gerald Ford	3	14	11	8	21	12	4	15	14
Ford & Others	5	21	14	9	25	19	6	20	15
REPORTER									
Jimmy Carter	10	10	4	5	12	9	5	20	1
Carter & Others	14	13	4	11	18	10	7	29	1
Gerald Ford	1	18	9	6	21	14	2	19	12
Ford & Others	2	25	13	6	28	19	3	26	12

Source: Graduate Seminar students under direction of Lichty, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Fall 1976.

few have already been published (Patterson, 1977; Robinson, 1977; Robinson and McPherson, 1977; and Zucker, 1978a, 1978b, 1978c). Having spent time in 1976 traveling with the presidential candidates in the Midwest as well as studying television coverage of the campaign, our own understanding of this data is that the Carter candidacy was more "favorably" reported than Ford's as a reflection of the reality of the race; as the Ford campaign became better organized, however, reporting changed. CA measures content, but cannot alone show the extent to which content "direction" is an accurate reflection of the times.

As noted, many of the studies of television news have dealt with presidential campaign coverage, but others have been more general (Liroff, 1970; Lowry, 1971a, 1971b; Lower, 1970a, 1970b; Scheer and Eiler, 1972; Lemert, 1974; Cutler and Tedesco, 1974; Williams, 1975). A number have studied "international" news coverage (Almaney, 1970; Haismann, 1970; Warner, 1968; Larson and Hardy, 1977; Larson, 1978). Those covering more specialized topics include blacks (Pride and Clarke, 1973) and students (Pride and Richards, 1974). More recent studies have begun more sophisticated analysis linking news coverage and public opinion (Zucker, 1978a, 1978b, 1978c) and agenda setting (Williams and Larsen, 1975; Williams and Semlak, 1978).

Several studies that did not use rigorous CA methods offer interesting insights into the structure and form of television news and are worth consulting (e.g., Arlen, 1969, 1976, 1977; Weaver, 1972, 1974, 1975; Diamond, 1975, 1978). Like news itself the CA studies that have received the most attention are those that were the most critical and sensational; networks have responded with counter charges, and little rational discussion of television news emerged from the fray.

A stop watch cannot entirely measure matters of judgment, and counting words omits nuances. Content analysis is a tool not a conclusion. Good research on television news starts from watching it carefully, studying existing findings, framing an appropriate research question, cautious use of CA methods, and thoughtful analysis of the resulting data.

NOTES

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Historians and the Visual Analysis of Television News

David Culbert

WHAT CAN THE PROFESSIONAL HISTORIAN BRING in terms of background and training to the visual analysis of television news? The question is worth exploring since some historians have begun to consider television a subject of scholarly interest.[1] Though historians traditionally have seldom used aural and visual sources in their research, times are changing. As an historian committed to the analysis of mass media, I will discuss the approach most historians will use to analyze broadcast news, especially the visual image.[2]

Historical Analysis

The avowed purpose of social science is to create a causal model which generates predictions about the future or generalizations about human behavior or societal structure. Historians distrust models. They seek the fullest possible comprehension of some past event and are unwilling to argue that precisely the same set of circumstances and

same results will occur again. This reluctance to predict the future is the despair of social scientists and politicians, and explains why policy-makers rarely seek the counsel of historians, though if they did they might occasionally avoid errors already made in the past.[3]

Historians usually refuse to adopt any one method or special group of "variables." Such a methodology, seemingly so at odds with scientific "rigor," allows the use of literally anything as evidence. In the past this has meant using such sources as private letters, official business ledgers, pulp novels, oral interviews, newspapers and magazines, fiction in general, court transcripts, official speeches, and memoirs. Taking their cue from other disciplines, historians are now recognizing that paintings, photographs, movies, and television also contain vast amounts of information about the past. The problem for historians comes in evaluating evidence, for some sources are more reliable than others, though all are used to discover the larger meaning —the significance—of the past. That, at least, is the theory. Historians feel tempted, on occasion, to laugh with colleagues over the preposterous devices social scientists sometimes employ to get "rigor," while almost totally ignoring matters of context. They laugh because comprehending the past requires the use of incomplete and incompatible types of evidence. But social scientists also have grounds for amusement, since much historical research fails to illuminate the larger significance of past events and consists only of a chronology, in tedious detail, of something better forgotten.

What is worth remembering about the past, especially a past composed of visual images? An important example is an execution, captured by a television camera and a photographer's lens, which took place in Saigon on February 1, 1968, at the start of the Tet offensive. General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, chief of the South Vietnamese national police, executed a suspected Vietcong sympathizer by placing a gun at the man's temple and pulling the trigger. An NBC television crew filmed the execution, including blood spurting out of the victim's head. The newsfilm was shown in color on NBC's "Huntley-Brinkley Report" on February 2. An Associated Press photographer, Eddie Adams, captured the same moment in a photograph possibly more reproduced than any other single picture to come out of the war. An analysis of this photograph suggests its power as a symbol of both television coverage of the war and the callousness of the South

Vietnamese leadership; such an analysis also suggests how the historian approaches the visual analysis of television news.

The 1968 Tet offensive, which took the war into the cities of South Vietnam for the first time, was a military disaster for the North Vietnamese, though it was not perceived that way at the time. Tet helped convince Lyndon Johnson not to seek re-election.[4] Overall the Tet offensive dealt a massive psychological blow to government promises of a "light at the end of the tunnel." The visual record of General Loan's act (television newsfilm and the still photograph) contributed to disillusionment about the war aims which proved unanswerable. It became a *symbol* (something that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention; especially, a material object used to represent something invisible) for the peace movement. No government spokesman found words about "democratic progress" which could refute the visual impression of what General Loan had done.

How does one examine the symbolic meaning of such an image? Most who have studied television news have settled for the methodology of content analysis, which requires counting the frequency of selected words or phrases, or coding these words into content categories. This is a poor device for studying the atypical, the significant exception, the unique. While claiming scientific rigor, content analysts generally ignore the visual entirely. The key to reading a visual image is composition (form) and what psychological meaning it may contain. Content analysis has little to say about either.

Individual stories may also be studied from the perspective of "gatekeeping" such as George Bailey and Lawrence Lichty's exhaustive study (1972), "Rough Justice on a Saigon Street: A Gatekeeper Study of NBC's Tet Execution Film." Gatekeeper studies analyze how news content is screened by the decisions and beliefs of newspaper editors or network television producers. Bailey and Lichty explain how NBC producer Robert Northshield edited the Loan execution newsfilm and describe the mechanics of transmitting the film to Tokyo and then New York. But historians want to know what this footage means, not just how the story came to be broadcast. Retrospective analysis of the images may reveal visual content not intended by the original cameraman or the producers (for example, transitions from news to commercials).

What criteria do I use as an historian in justifying the special significance of the images of the Loan execution? First of all, it was repeat-

edly shown to millions of persons in print as well as on the air. As Peter Braestrup has shown in *Big Story* (1977, Vol. I, pp. 460-66, 487, 508), his monumental 1,446-page study of news coverage of the Tet offensive, the photograph of the Loan execution was immediately printed in virtually every American newspaper and magazine. Already it has become a standard illustration in textbooks dealing with recent American history; it was widely used by protest groups at the time as an *icon* (an image, representation, simile, or symbol having a conventional formularized style) for opposition to the war. The scene was used on t-shirts and posters for antiwar groups. Its particular significance, however, comes from its relation to historical context. As a powerful symbol of the most critical months of the war, it commands greater respect than were it, for example, the same scene set in Laos, 1978.

The student of television news should recognize that this visual *microcosm* (a diminutive, representative world; a system analogous to a much larger system in constitution and configuration) gains much of its meaning from the willingness of so many in 1968 to believe the worst about the chances for American military success in Vietnam. This overall context became the code which enabled citizens to read so much into the photograph and the newsfilm. But what stuck was the visual image, not merely the context which made it so potent.

Historians recognize the role of myth in explaining public attitudes since people generally perceive only part of objective reality. Referring to the way human beings respond to reality, "myths" may be defined as fictions or half-truths forming part of a society's ideology, which appeal to the consciousness of a people by embodying its cultural ideas or by giving expression to deep, commonly felt emotions. Exploring the relationship between myth and visual image, however subjective and imprecise the association, should be part of the task of historians concerned with the overall impact of a newscast story. Though the technique is not necessarily romantic—I think "subjective" is the word photographer Clarence John Laughlin meant to use—the following statement (1973, p. 14) suggests what the student of the visual must keep in mind as he goes about his work:

> My central position, therefore, is one of *extreme romanticism*—the concept of "reality" as being, innately, mystery and magic; the intuitive awareness of the power of the

> "unknown"—which human beings are afraid to realize, and which none of their religious and intellectual systems can really take into account. This romanticism revolves upon the feeling that the world is far stranger than we think; that the "reality" we think we know is only a small part of a "total reality"; and that the human imagination is the key to this hidden, and more inclusive, "reality."

Images of a Street Execution

With the above factors in mind, let me explain in some detail the visual significance of the Loan execution. This photograph and the newsfilm cannot be considered typical of either television news or television coverage of the Vietnam war, and this retrospective analysis may well explain more than anyone understood in 1968 about this episode. As an historian, this objection does not trouble me methodologically, for my quest is complete comprehension of a dramatic and vivid image, particularly significant because of its relation to the most critical months of the war.

Equally important, significance depends on the aesthetic component of a particular news moment. General Loan, his arm outstretched, holds his pistol a few inches from the suspect's head. The Vietcong sympathizer appears to wince, in anticipation of certain death, or (we are told but do not immediately see) the photograph shows the actual moment the bullet entered the man's brain.[5]

In a recent filmed interview, Peter Braestrup commented on the General Loan photograph and its lack of meaning:

> It is not often that a television cameraman, or a still cameraman for that matter, gets on film happening right there before your eyes one man blowing another man's brains out. . . . It was kind of the supreme melodrama. . . . a kind of super pornography. It evoked strong reactions among those who saw it apparently. . . . It was a kind of ultimate horror story that you captured in living color. But in terms of information it told you almost nothing. That's the chronic problem especially for television and for still photos, the difference between drama and information.[6]

To the extent that the Loan photograph is not remembered merely as a photograph so much as a shorthand visual microcosm of television's war coverage, Braestrup is mistaken.[7]

What then is the iconic meaning of the Loan execution? Its horror could not be comprehended without the camera's exact visual record. To see a leader of South Vietnam, for whose government America was fighting, exposed before the world as a brutal assassin, provided a compelling microcosm of America's inability to achieve stability in Vietnam. In 1963, on a Saigon street, an elderly Buddhist monk had immolated himself by pouring gasoline over his body and lighting a match. A photographer caught the moment of his death and provided a shocking example of a protest to President Diem's policies. General Loan's action was equally horrifying; in five years the chances for democratic government had not seemed to improve at all.

Originally, on the right, a teen-aged boy could be seen. He wore what is sold in men's stores these days as a "Greek hat"; he ducked to avoid a possible bullet. To Loan's immediate left was a helmeted South Vietnamese soldier facing the camera; another soldier stood in the background. Only a clear reproduction shows the background as a downtown Saigon street; a large truck is approaching the scene of the killing. Such details tend to intensify the transitory nature of the scene. It really is broad daylight in downtown Saigon where the event is taking place. Both the seriousness and improbability of the Tet offensive becomes more apparent with fighting in a city where civilians try to go about their business. Poor quality reproduction, plus cropping the figures left and right, takes the scene out of its original setting and makes it more universal—this is rough justice in any part of Vietnam.

The dress of the Vietcong sympathizer is critical to the image's impact for it makes precise the meaning of "defenseless" in a 1968 Tet setting. The plaid shirt was likely a disguise and this man had probably killed a substantial number of South Vietnamese civilians, including women and children (Braestrup, 1977, Vol. I, pp. 460-1). That context, however critical to an overall appraisal of the image, is difficult to accept given what our eyes tell us is true. We see not an ideologically committed terrorist, but a young civilian, his helplessness defined by that loose plaid shirt, its tail flapping forward in the wind. Indeed the wind enhances our perception of the transitory

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nature of the entire occasion. Notice how the wind has whipped up the hair of General Loan. The young man's head is knocked to one side by the impact of the bullet, and he falls to the ground. Blood (the television coverage shows it came from an earlier beating) dribbles out of the man's mouth and down his neck.[8] The violence of the instant seems fundamentally false to any spirit of justice. How can Loan possibly know with certainty that a death sentence must be carried out?

The formal composition of the photograph also explains its impact.[9] In the symmetry of Loan's sinewy arm and his pearl-handled revolver, the muscles in the forearm seem to approximate the bulge of the gun chamber. The gun becomes an extension of Loan's arm. The central position of that arm forces our eyes directly down the barrel of the gun. We experience the firing of the bullet kinesthetically in the straining muscles of Loan's forearm. The back of his head seems to resemble a bullet. We see his ear, but Loan lacks a human face. He appears non-human. We easily move from noticing the shape of the head to equating oddity with inhuman action. Even Loan's poorly fitting and apparently bullet-proof uniform intensifies our uneasiness. The Loan execution served as a microcosm of the Tet offensive and of

the entire war. It defined, in ways most persons could not easily articulate, the frustrating, confusing sense that the war was no longer between good guys and bad guys.[10]

Let me try to anticipate an obvious objection. In looking for a psychological interpretation, we cannot be certain of what any photograph means. This is equally true for all attempts at psychological explanation, which is why historians do not ignore such analysis but seek documentation for the context of an event to strengthen an interpretation. With a visual image, the problem is intensified. Many who see photographs do so with initial pleasure, but do not ask themselves the meaning of what they have seen; it is more fun to look at something than read about it. The same is true for television. Exposure is not the exact equivalent of comprehension.[11] But the analysis I have attempted—a colleague, Neil Hertz, calls it "nuanced formal criticism"—is necessary to understand what is there even though most viewers do not analyze what they have seen. The process is identical to that employed by the art historian, the student of documentary photography, or the critic of Shakespeare.

In 1938, Lincoln Kirstein wrote a brilliant essay to accompany a photographic exhibit by Walker Evans. Kirstein noticed that aesthetic qualities dignified but also beautified Evans' scenes of rural poverty. Kirstein thought Evans' images were the exact opposite of photojournalism (Kirstein, 1975, p. 185):

> The candid-camera with its great pretensions to accuracy, its promise of sensational truth, its visions of clipped disaster, presents an inversion of truth, a kind of accidental revelation which does far more to hide the real fact of what is going on than to explode it. . . . The candid-camera makes up in quantitative shock what it lacks in real testimony. It drugs the eye into believing it has witnessed a significant fact when it has only caught a flicker not clear enough to indicate a *psychological* image, however solid the material one.

The carefully composed images of Evans are more aesthetically pleasing than the candid-camera (a 1930s term which might be used

pejoratively to describe the General Loan photograph), but not for that reason more truthful. Kirstein failed to allow for the possibility of aesthetic excellence in the candid-camera image, by definition snapped in a moment of stress. He is wrong, as I have tried to show in the example of the General Loan photograph. Meaning in this instance depends importantly on the symmetry of the figures and overall composition.

No set of principles exists which would enable someone to predict which television stories will be visually and historically significant. The value of a particular image demands both aesthetic excellence and a critical historical context in which to be situated. Another example might be Walter Cronkite's February 27, 1968, CBS special, "Report from Vietnam."[12] In this broadcast, Cronkite moved from supporter to opponent of the war. From other textual records we now know that Lyndon Johnson watched this particular program in despair. The historian wants to understand this program, since it relates to the President's announcement on March 31, 1968, not to seek reelection (Schandler, 1977). But without visual analysis of how Cronkite looked, and without an explanation of what it meant to see Cronkite reporting from Vietnam away from his desk in New York, the historian of television news is simply not doing the job.

What I am suggesting about the General Loan photograph, or the Cronkite special of February 27, may apply to only a handful of all the stories which have appeared on television, but this handful defines the power and worth of the medium and merits the careful attention we reserve for what is strikingly original and important in any medium. It is no exaggeration to say that the General Loan photograph and newsfilm did as much to bring home the psychological victory achieved by the North Vietnamese within this country in 1968 as anything else. The Loan photograph and newsfilm became a symbol and then an important part of current myths about the war in Vietnam.[13]

Background Reading in Visual Analysis

The writings of students of documentary photography and film and of art historians are important sources for those concerned with visual

analysis. The following discussion of resource materials is highly selective and generally ignores sources relating specifically to television, since those are covered in the notes to the main part of my essay and elsewhere in this volume.

Interest in the visual led to establishment of the Center for Visual Literacy. By writing its director, Clarence M. Williams, Gallaudet College, Washington, D.C. 20002, you can get a "Bibliography on Visual Literacy" prepared by J.L. Debes (July 1975) or Richard E. Ingalls' lengthy, nonselective "Visual Literacy Bibliography." For a discussion of the concept of visual literacy (the ability to understand and create nonverbal communications), see Richard P. Adler (1978), "What is Visual Literacy?," or, for more detail, see Donis A. Dondis, *A Primer of Visual Literacy* (1973).

For the perspective of the art historian, a good beginning is E. H. Gombrich (1972), "The Visual Image," a succinct and careful analysis of how code, caption, and context define the meaning of the symbol. More flamboyant is John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1977). Svetlana Alpers ("Is Art History?," 1977) argues for the necessity of placing a painting in the context of the political and social milieu which produced it. Erwin Panofsky, in "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures" (reprinted in Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen, 1974), explains how meaning relates to the stylistic characteristics of the medium. At a more introductory level, Edmund Burke Feldman (1972) includes one chapter on "Images in Motion: Film and Television" (pp. 594-611) and another "The Social Function of Art" (pp. 59-93) describes such things as political and ideological expression, social description, and information design. Also helpful is Ken Baynes' *Art in Society* (1975, particularly pp. 9-56, and material relating to symbols and images of war, pp. 229-274).

Documentary photography has many similarities with television news. A good place to begin is A. William Bluem (1964), particularly his chapter "Photography: The Fixed Moment" (pp. 17-31), and William Stott (1973) especially "The Photographs" (pp. 267-289) which tries to explain the meaning of Walker Evans' photographs as social documents. Also concerning Walker Evans, see essays by Lincoln Kirstein (1975) and Daniel A. Lindley, Jr. (1978).

Susan Sontag's *On Photography* (1977) contains a series of essays about the photographic image and historical context. A pioneering attempt to define the historical context of documentary photography

is Walter Benjamin's "A Short History of Photography" (1977). For a fine effort to explain the connection between the photographer and the social reformer, see Alan Tractenberg (1977). One of the most important books about photography addresses itself explicitly to the symbolism of prints: William M. Ivins, Jr., *Prints and Visual Communication* (1969).

For information about the use of documentary photography to the anthropologist, see John Collier, Jr., *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method* (1967). Two other books of obvious relevance are Van Deren Coke's *The Painter and the Photograph* (1964) and Aaron Scharf's *Art and Photography* (1968). An excellent bibliographic guide is found in Marsha Peters and Bernard Mergen, " 'Doing the Rest': The Use of Photographs in American Studies" (1977).

Those needing an elementary introduction to film language should consult Ronald Gottesman and Harry M. Geduld (1975). To place film in the context of American society, refer to Robert Sklar (1976). See also my review essay (1978) of Sklar and Jowett, "Two Pioneering Histories."

Literary criticism has much to say about symbol and myth. See, for example, Kenneth Burke's *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature and Method* (1966) and Northrup Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957). An attempt to relate Frye to television is found in James W. Chesebro and Caroline D. Hamsher, "Communication, Values, and Popular Television Series" (1976). Luther S. Luedtke (1977, pp. 323-367) provides a fine survey of such topics as the relation of myth, symbol, and image to American studies. The best brief introduction and bibliography to semiology is by Terence Hawkes (1977); another important book on this subject is Ronald Barthes' *Elements of Semiology* (1967).

NOTES

1. See, for example, Erik Barnouw (1975, 1978). For those who need some background in television, the following are recommended though the authors are not historians: Christopher H. Sterling and John M. Kitross (1978); Les Brown (1971); Raymond Williams (1975); Martin Mayer (1972); and Robert Metz (1976). Still fascinating is Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* (1964). A helpful selection of articles is found in Horace Newcomb's *Television* (1976); Peter Braestrup's "Vietnam as History"

(1978) is a superb guide to materials relating to Vietnam. The best criticism of television's coverage of Vietnam is Michael J. Arlen's *Living-Room War* (1969) and his *The View from Highway 1* (1976). For a discussion of documentary photography and television news, see my "The Vanderbilt Television News Archive: Classroom and Research Possibilities" (1974).

2. I would like to thank the National Humanities Institute at Yale for support in preparing this essay as a Fellow in 1977-78. I have benefitted immensely from the suggestions of Peter Rollins, as well as from ideas in his unpublished paper, "Television's Vietnam: The Battle of Khe Sanh."

Numerous historians have written books explaining the nature of historical method. Two of the best, and most entertaining, are J. H. Hexter *The History Primer* (1971) and his *Doing History* (1971). For the perils of historical methodology, see David Hackett Fischer's *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (1970).

3. This is not the same as saying that history repeats itself. No event replicates itself exactly though there are often striking similarities, known as historical parallels.

4. See Herbert Y. Schandler (1977, pp. 266-289) and Doris Kearns (1977, pp. 283-284). For poll data on the war, see John F. Mueller (1973).

5. Robert Northshield, executive producer for NBC's "Huntley-Brinkley Report" in 1968, is slightly bitter about what followed. (Filmed interview with Northshield, February 21, 1978, during a symposium, "The Tet Offensive and Escalation of the Vietnam War, 1965-68," organized by Townsend Ludington.) The Adams photograph won the Pulitzer Prize in 1969, but nobody gave NBC a single award for its film coverage. For instance, the caption generally accepted for the Adams photograph, "Rough Justice on a Saigon Street," came not from a newspaper editor, but NBC's John Chancellor, who introduced it when NBC ran the Adams photograph on the "Huntley-Brinkley Report" the evening of February 1 (Bailey and Lichty, 1972). Thanks to the support of the National Humanities Institute, Peter Rollins and I were able to film interviews with most of the conference participants. Ludington, Rollins and I are making a film about the Tet offensive, tentatively entitled *Television's Vietnam: The Battle of Khe Sanh.*

6. Filmed interview with Braestrup, February 22, 1978, Chapel Hill, N.C.

7. The NBC camera crew, the ABC camera crew, and Adams were all standing in the same place—Adams even went to the scene in the same car as the NBC crew. All captured the same story. But largely for simple reasons of technology—in 1968 it was impossible to reproduce on paper a decent quality still from a television set—the Adams photograph, not stills from the NBC footage, was used again and again. Different channels of dissemination explains in part why newspapers relied on photo-journalism, but this does not obscure a certain irony: what was new about coverage of the war had to do with television, not photography.

8. In newspaper reproductions or in the still photograph broadcast by NBC on the evening of February 1 (and by ABC on February 2), the blood was not immediately apparent.

9. The form depends on later cropping by various editors. Adams took the photograph hastily, claiming, he later said, that he snapped by instinct. His original image was not perfectly focused.

10. According to Don Oberdorfer (1971 p. 170-71) Dean Rusk was "teed off" at coverage of the execution, while Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy "felt it cost the government an 'unnecessary roughing' penalty at a time when it could least afford it." Oberdorfer, it should be noted, includes (plates 25-26) three frames from the NBC footage as well as the Adams photograph.

11. This suggests that reports of "vidkid" virus for today's television viewers may have much in common with prevalent fears in the 1930s that adolescent behavior was related to movie attendance. For the shortcomings of studies by social scientists who tried to prove such a connection see Jowett (1976), Sklar (1976), and Adler (1937).

12. A videotaped copy of this broadcast was shown in February 1978 at the Tet Symposium, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, courtesy of Samuel Suratt, Archivist, CBS News.

13. The Loan newsfilm (in more detail than as broadcast by NBC on February 2, 1968) is one of the most compelling parts of Peter Davis' documentary film, *Hearts and Minds*.

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Visual Analysis of Newscasts: Issues in Social Science Research

William C. Adams

ONE IRONY OF THE BEHAVIORAL MOVEMENT in the social sciences, it has been noted, is that, instead of producing research into actual behavior, it prompted research on attitudes and reported behavior. Similarly, one irony of television news research in the social sciences is that, instead of producing studies of the audiovisual content of newscasts, it has largely resulted in research on verbal content alone. Of the three dozen content analyses of television news cited in the introductory essay, only six dealt with any visual aspects of content. Most studies have not only ignored visual images, but have been based on typed, transcribed accounts of words spoken during the newscasts.

Are the visual images on television news worth analysis? If so, how can they be measured and studied? Researchers interested in television news cannot avoid either question.

Many earlier scholars of television news and most broadcast professionals have believed that much of television's power and importance as a news source stemmed from its pictorial advantages. Lang and Lang (1953) maintained that a large part of television's potency, credibility, and persuasiveness derived from the viewers' sense that

they were there and their eyes would not deceive them. Many news critics have believed the camera to be a prime source of the shortcomings of network news.[1] Investigations into the determinants of news content concur that good pictures are a high priority in the production of a nightly news show. As one newscaster explained the conventional view among broadcast professionals, films, "tell a story better than we can with words alone. The basic credo of television news is that television is a visual medium: therefore everything must be visual" (Wax, 1970). Schuneman's nationwide survey of news directors confirms the high priority placed on effective visual communications in newscasts (1966). Paletz and Pearson's essay recounts similar findings of Epstein, Altheide, Batscha, and Patterson and McClure on the importance news producers place in lively, dramatic, entertaining newsfilm. Yet, as Paletz and Pearson go on to comment, little has been done in the way of a systematic analysis of news images and news form. Scholars who bring a print media mentality to television research, McLuhan long ago argued (1964, p. 33), miss much of the medium's message.

In the preceding essay, David Culbert considers visual image from the perspective of a historian studying a single significant historical event. The discussion which follows addresses the topic in light of social science objectives of analyzing patterns in a succession of newscast images. The paucity of systematic visual analysis may be partially attributable to uncertainty among many researchers as to whether analysis of visual content adds insights to the findings of traditional content analysis.

Is there any evidence which suggests that researchers should examine the patterns of visual images on television news? If visual image is important, the most vivid parts of newscasts—filmed reports—might be expected to enhance the perceived status of a story and to increase recall. On this score, the evidence is mixed. Edwardson, Grooms, and Pringle (1976) conducted an experiment in which subjects were shown eight news stories. Half of the subjects were shown a closeup of a local newscaster reading eight news stories, the other half were shown the same newscaster reading the same scripts and also using newsfilm of all eight stories. Newsfilm did not appear significantly to impede or aid in the recall of factual information about the eight news stories. Hazard (1962-63), with a similar methodology, also found little association between the mode

of presentation (still-picture, newsfilm, or man-on-camera) and information gain.

An intensive debriefing of one-day news recollections of 63 subjects was reported by Booth (1970-71). Although sometimes erroneously cited to the contrary, Booth did conclude that pictorial content (film clips or still pictures) increased the chances of recall of a television story. Only 8 percent of the television news stories without pictures were remembered, compared to 44 percent of those with pictures. The frequency with which a story was repeated on television during the day, the length of time devoted to it, and a favorable location near the beginning of a newscast were also linked to recall, however, so disentangling the independent effects of pictorial content is impossible using Booth's tables. On the other hand, Katz, Adoni, and Parness (1977) did not find as much impact from visual impact as Booth. Israelis who saw and heard television news recalled just slightly more than those who only listened.

The problem with this research into the relationship between film stories in newscasts and audience recall is not so much small test sample sizes or the focus on short-term memory or unusually attentive experimental subjects. Rather, concern has been limited to whether film enhances the impact of verbal factual messages about a story and such research has failed to ask more pertinent questions. In particular, what information (factual or evaluative) is conveyed by visual images beyond that stated in the audio segment? And, what is the interaction between the video and audio messages of the newscast?

Psychologists have known for some time that some individuals tend to process information using visual cues while others relied more on verbal cues (Bartlett, 1932). Recent research on cerebral-hemisphere specialization and eye-movement patterns (Richardson, 1977) has confirmed this verbalizer-visualizer dimension in information processing. This pattern means that the visual element in newscasts may be much more significant for some viewers than for others. It also reinforces the importance of asking what information is conveyed visually beyond that in audio messages.

The remainder of this essay examines the potential importance of visual image in newscasts from three perspectives: first, visual images as determined by event factors; second, visual image as a function of production factors; and third, the interaction between visual images and audio messages in newscasts.

Event Factors in News Images

Visual image in television news may be thought of as involving two types of elements—production factors and event factors. Production refers to all of those aspects of visual image which are usually under direct technical control of news personnel themselves, especially camera crews and editors. The use of tightshots or longshots, alternative camera angles, frequency of switching cameras or switching scenes, juxtaposition of camera shots, the news studio, and all news graphics, maps, and illustrations represent components of newscast images that must be manipulated by network news processors. (See Epstein, 1973, pp. 154-164, 174-180.) They exert much less overt control over the part of the visual image emerging from the news happening itself (event factors).

Many events are now carefully staged to accommodate television news, so that networks have increased control even over the initial display of news events. Even in situations when there is no network control over the staging or occurrence of the event, considerable discretion remains in network hands. Far more is filmed than is eventually broadcast; Bailey and Lichty (1972, p. 225) reported the ratio often runs about 15:1. Consequently, selection of images from that large pool leaves much room for judgment and opinion in shaping the final visual presentation.

Despite substantial network power over the pictures which are put over the air, event factors are those that are outside of direct network control. To illustrate the difference between production and event factors, recall any of Gerald Ford's campaign pronouncements in the White House Rose Garden in the early fall of 1976. That setting, along with such things as Ford's appearance, clothes, manner, and remarks, comprised event factors of the visual account and were not ostensibly under media control. However, closeups, longshots, camera angles, cutaways, reaction shots, and editing and juxtaposition were production components of the final visual image which required technical and aesthetic decisions by network news personnel; in addition, the news priorities of producers and correspondents determined which parts of the event, if any, to televise.

Surprisingly little attention has been devoted to studying event

aspects of visual images in newscasts. Patterson and McClure, Frank, Hofstetter, and Paletz and Elson are among the few researchers to incorporate the visual with content analysis. Patterson and McClure found that the vivid television images of the 1972 campaign were what viewers retained from newscasts rather than any occasional issue-related information mentioned by the reporters (1976, pp. 77-90). They state (p. 87):

> An analysis of the television audience's recall of the 1972 campaign stories indicates that, fully half the time, their memory was primarily about something their eyes had seen. Only twenty percent of the time was viewers' recall clearly dominated by what their ears had heard.

Those visual recollections focused on the crowds, rallies, and campaign hoopla which dominated television coverage.

A small part of Frank's extensive study of network coverage of the 1972 campaign involved an analysis of whether candidates were shown mingling with voters or making a speech (1973, pp. 44-47; 1974, p. 249). Frank uncovered some marked differences in the way candidates were pictured and suggested that these pictures offered strong reinforcement for certain images of the candidates. For example, images were consistently generated of "Shriver, the man of the people, who is loved by, and loves the crowds; and Agnew, the man of authority, who takes a political stand" and propounds those beliefs in forceful speeches (1973, pp. 45-47). These insights complemented the complex set of findings which emerged from Frank's content analysis.

Hofstetter also gives some attention to the nature of 1972 campaign events shown on the evening news. In particular, Hofstetter examined whether candidates were shown with unambiguously supportive crowds or with indifferent or hostile crowds (1976 , pp. 126-127). (Overall, Democrats were more frequently pictured in favorable crowd contexts than were Republicans.) The size of the crowds was also estimated, and little difference was found between the average size of crowds on Republican and on Democratic stories (p. 124). Another study which briefly considers the nature of crowd shots is Paletz and Elson's examination of 1972 party convention coverage

which notes the extent to which black, female, or young delegates were shown on the convention floor (1976).

More extensive explorations of the event factors portrayed on newscast video have not been published. In fact, most studies lack any consideration of visual image. The thoroughness of many of these studies would have been substantially enhanced by introducing the visual dimension. It is not difficult to image a number of relatively straightforward (although admittedly ad hoc) approaches which would have supplemented traditional content analysis in many of these studies. For example, Einsiedel (1975) describes how networks handled the revelations of Senator Thomas Eagleton's prior psychiatric treatments and the ensuing debate over his continuing on the 1972 Democratic ticket. Given the tenor of that debate, Eagleton's and McGovern's images as excerpted for newscasts during that crucial week would be a particularly useful component of coverage to analyze. Pride and Clarke (1973) looked at newscast reporting of U.S. race relations. The types of images used to depict blacks and whites would have been interesting to compare with the morality and strength of race-related symbols which Pride and Clarke coded from the spoken words.

On the other hand, information conveyed through video images may not be indispensable to the purposes of a specific content analysis. Pride and Wamsley (1972) were interested in the strength and morality evaluations attached to governmental symbols during coverage of the Laos incursion. Coders using only audio did not differ significantly in their coding from those using both audio and video. This result is not equivalent to an assertion that news pictures convey only that which is expressed verbally. Rather, in this instance, adding the visual component did not appear to change overall interpretations of verbal content.

Production Factors in News Images

Sociologist Gaye Tuchman has stressed the importance of the technical production of news images. "Television newsmen," she maintains (1973, p. 3) "can manipulate the sociocultural and role definitions of vision and space because film organizes visual perception, and visual perception is affected by social definitions." On the other hand, many news cameramen argue that all of their film is

inherently objective, because it captures an actual event. Tuchman found that they "claimed that 'film speaks for itself,' much as newsmen in general support the everyday and mistaken assumption that 'the facts speak for themselves' " (p. 5).

After over two years of participant observation at a television station, Tuchman outlined a number of norms which constituted unwritten "rules for claiming objectivity." Despite their insistence on the intrinsic verity of film and their inability to articulate their everyday practices, the cameramen were observed to follow a number of conventions aimed at enhancing the perceived objectivity of newsfilm. Patterns which were identified included the time-convention, placement-convention, motion-convention, and camera-range-convention.

The time-convention precludes using slow or fast motion in newsfilm because such film would invoke, in American culture, reactions of humor or tenderness. Fidelity to the original time-space relationship and using a constant number of frames each second is required. The motion-convention refers to the use of a "fixed-plane perspective" which avoids simultaneous horizontal and vertical movement of the camera.

Also conforming to certain cultural definitions of "representational" motion photography are what Tuchman termed the placement- and the camera-range-conventions. Cameras can record an event from many angles. While towns and tornado paths may be shot from a helicopter, conventions of film objectivity indicate people should be filmed as though seen by another person of average height. Similarly, the camera-range-convention directs the camera crew to aim for the "talking distance" of the head and upper torso, and to avoid shots which are too intimate and close or too distant and impersonal. Under particular circumstances, other camera ranges are believed appropriate to employ.

Tuchman speculated that a large part of the credibility of television news derives from its capacity to show visual images in motion (which all other news media lack) in ways consistent with cultural expectations of objectivity, and effectively masking the "extent to which newsmen may and must manipulate film" (p. 24). The issues of camera angle and camera range have received attention by other researchers as well, and their findings should now be reviewed.

Camera angle does appear to influence the viewer's perception of television speakers. Skillful use of various camera angles was one of

the earliest cinemagraphic techniques (Arnheim, 1957; Eisenstein, 1949). Directors shot upward toward a subject to install a sense of power, dominance, and strength. They angled the camera downward to imply weakness. This inference made through the camera angle is, in Bretz's terms, the "principle of dominance" (1962, p. 32).

Empirical research lends support for the operation of this camera angle principle in broadcast news. Tiemens (1970) found that camera angles looking upward toward a commentator successfully conveyed the most authoritative appearance, except when the commentator addressed a topic on which the subject already had strong views in which case camera angle made little difference. Similarly, Mandell and Shaw (1973) showed a film interview with a fictitious office-holder from various angles and the subject was viewed as more powerful and active when filmed so that the audience looked up to him.

McCain, Chilberg, and Wakshlag (1977) indicate that the relationship, however, is more complex than simply that high camera vantage points connote weakness and low ones project strength. Since television almost never immobilizes a camera in a static perspective, a test of the effects of various juxtapositions of shots was conducted. The researchers interpret their data to mean that eye-level camera angles which infrequently cut to a high camera angle looking down on the speaker succeeds in projecting the most appealing and attractive image. Rather than making them appear more appealing, looking upward to those already in power may transmit a sense of their having too much dominance.

Camera angle alone changes the perceptions and meaning acquired from the visual image. Its effects do not appear to be confined to cinema drama; they extend to television news. These studies suggest that variations away from what Tuchman found as the norm of eye-level camera shots may be especially significant.

Just as Hollywood lore has, apparently accurately, claimed camera angles make inferences about power, so too does it theorize about the impact of longshots and tightshots. Longshots are believed to convey a colder, more distant and aloof mood, while tightshots convey more warmth, intimacy, and closeness (Spottiswoode, 1950, pp. 131-153). If so, then the effect may apply for television as well as for Truffaut.

Lang and Lang (1953), in their account of the 1951 Chicago parade honoring General MacArthur, stress the importance of television's power to use closeups. While spectators along the parade route had to

be content with seeing their hero fleetingly and from afar, viewers at home saw frequent, intimate closeups suggesting a more "personal relationship to the general" (p. 8).

In another of the few applications of visual analysis to television news coverage, Robert Frank (1974) shows that McGovern had the benefit of more tightshots, while throughout the campaign on all three networks Nixon received more longshots. The tactics of the candidates themselves, such as McGovern's greater accessibility for interviews, probably accounts for the strong pattern, although telephoto lens could have been used more often for Nixon. If visual image is important, however, then such variations are interesting regardless of whether they resulted from subtle network practices or from candidate strategies. Frank notes that opportunities for the audience to "search the face" accrue advantages only to the more telegenic public figures.[2] Hofstetter (1976, p. 60) also found that McGovern obtained more closeups (as well as more action settings and more film coverage).

Many other aspects of visual cues await research. Only exploratory research has considered such questions as the impact of lighting angles (Tannenbaum and Fosdick, 1960), film movement (Miller, 1969), and distracting, irrelevant visual cues (Schlater, 1969-70). Much of the conventional wisdom among producers has received little empirical testing. For example, the popular notion that images on the right side of the screen get more attention than those on the left is termed by Zettl "the asymmetry of the screen" (1973). However, an experiment by Metallinos and Tiemens (1977) failed to demonstrate that visual aids to a newscast impressed viewers more when on the right side of of the screen than on the left. Dondis (1973, pp. 28-30), among others, argues instead that the lower left side of any visual field is scanned first and closest. (Eye movements, as they wander and linger across screen images, can now be traced by an oculometer. Use of oculometers is spreading from production of television advertisements to television programs and film. Beller, 1978).

Color television news may sustain an impact quite different from that of black-and-white coverage. One highly tentative study (Scanlon, 1967) suggested that the realism of color television news carried a more emotional impact; the vividness of color images may also have distracted attention away from the voice-over commentary. Other research on video color has indicated it promoted the recall of detail in television commercials (Schaps and Guest, 1968). Katzman

(1972) also found color increased recollections of peripheral visual images, but had little impact on perceptions of violence. Donohue (1976) stresses that the impact of violent newsfilm is much more a function of the sex of the viewer than whether the presentation is in color or black-and-white. (See also Meyer, 1971.)

Another series of production (and event) factors relates to program complexity and the degree to which viewers are bombarded with a succession of varied and unpredictable stimuli. These factors are discussed in the section which follows.

Interaction of Audio and Visual News Information

For the viewer, the relationship between the audio and video portions of a television newscast should not be presumed to be a simple one. Psychological theory indicates the interactions may be quite complex.[3] Broadbent (1958), postulating a theory of selective attention, argued that, while several "channels" of stimuli can be received and superficially recognized simultaneously, only one channel at a time can be interpreted and given meaning. Just as people cannot follow two individuals continuously talking at the same time, neither can they actively attend to both sounds and visual stimuli at precisely the same time. Rather, active attention moves, usually rapidly, back and forth between sight and sound.

Subsequent development of selective attention theory led to two important amendments. Unattended channels are not totally ignored. Extremely low level "monitoring" of extraneous stimuli continues and some data (e.g., one's own name) can penetrate through (Treisman, 1969). Nonetheless, switching attention between channels is not instantaneous. Though probably less than a second, it still takes time (Moray, 1960; Davis, Moray, and Treisman, 1961; Broadbent, 1971).

Warshaw has summarized the implications of selective attention theory for any audiovisual medium (1978, p. 367):

> At any given time, only one among the audio and visual channels is fully analyzed. Moreover, it takes time to switch channels, and the amount of this interchannel switching is limited. . . . between-channel interferences are likely to be

> greater as presentation speed quickens. When information arrives slowly, all recognized stimuli may enter. . . . because the multiple sources together provide less information than the system can handle. However, as the information load increases, the . . . system will eventually become overtaxed. It will then accept a message from one source only, thus functioning as a single-channel system.

The ability of television producers to consciously and effectively employ distractions to minimize the impact of certain messages was recognized by a recent Federal Trade Commission ruling. One mouthwash company's corrective advertising was ordered to simultaneously show a printed statement of the correction on the screen while it was read by the announcer and to omit any background music or scenes ("Listerine Ad," 1977, p. 1).

Visual images do not appear to be just another series of messages which are absorbed precisely along with verbal transmissions. Activities shown on film, or videotape, or at the anchor desk may distract from as well as reinforce information conveyed orally, depending on the pacing, density, and compatibility of audio and video messages. Thus not only may visual image be important in itself, it may be particularly crucial in its interactions with the audio it accompanies.

Selective attention theory suggests that (holding interest and attention constant) the relative impact of the juxtapositions of audio and video messages on viewer learning will depend on the density and compatibility of such messages. The studies cited earlier on the recall of filmed news stories ignored these two factors, however. McDaniel (1973) was more sensitive to enormous variation in effects which can emerge from combining film and verbal reporting and came to the (apparently not obvious) conclusion that the nature and content of a news story influences whether or not a particular visual treatment contributes to learning more factual information.

The complex interaction between audio and visual news messages becomes especially important in light of divergences between the two channels. Frank (1973, p. 47) discovered, in an analysis of network Vietnam stories, that film coverage did not entirely parallel the content spoken by correspondents. Film themes sometimes departed from the primary emphasis of the voiced story. As an example, Frank

cites a report which verbally focused on South Vietnamese ground efforts to dislodge Viet Cong, but which was depicted by film of fighter bombers, helicopter strikes, and other features of the air war.

Similarly, Katz, Adoni, and Parness (1977, p. 232) recount a news story of Arab terrorists' occupation of the Israeli Embassy in Thailand described over film of the boats of Bangkok's floating market. Also, Hofstetter (1976, pp. 92-93) observed that during reports about specific campaign issues, the visuals frequently consisted of large crowds. Analyzing coverage of the 1965 Dominican Republic crisis, Harney and Stone (1969) distinguished between film which did and film which did not contribute substantively to reporting the crisis; their "non-contributory film" category included repititions of gun emplacements and street fighting and constituted well over half of all film coverage.

All of this evidence indicates that newscasts' images are not necessarily redundant with the verbal portrayals of stories. Images may transmit information drawn from event factors beyond that in the spoken messages: This candidate has large, frenzied crowds of young supporters; many people in Bangkok are poor and live in little boats; Vietnam is not all jungle. The images may also suggest impressions by virtue of production factors: A rapid succession of varied shots enhances the sense of enthusiasm and excitement of the campaign rally; slowly panning the Bangkok view as the boat on which the camera is positioned drifts down the river may infer tranquility. Moreover, selective attention theory suggests that, in addition to conveying factual and evaluative information, visual images may operate in competition with the audio messages. The degree of competition depends on their comparative appeal, congruence, and informational density.

This discussion of the theory and findings of visual and audio patterns in newscasts suggests two areas of special research: the congruity between verbal and visual presentations of a news story and the simultaneity of verbal and visual messages. The latter area especially poses serious methodological questions. A researcher might approach the measurement of newscast complexity and density in a variety of ways. Recent work by Watt and Krull (1974, 1977) and Krull, Watt, and Lichty (1977) offers an instructive perspective in this area.[4]

Watt and Krull (1974) found that program form alone, as measured by series of structural variables independent of program subject content, successfully predicted prime-time viewing habits. Watt and Krull ground their research in the information-theory concept of entropy (information as the extent of reduction in uncertainty) and built some elaborate constructs with which to measure program form. Employed in this approach are several concepts for examining program form which are applicable to network newscasts. Each differentiates according to the predictability or randomness of a type of stimuli.

"Set time entropy" is Watt and Krull's term for the length of time each setting stays on the screen (1977). A show which stays with one setting provides the viewer a large amount of certainty and predictability, offers plenty of time for the viewer to become acquainted with the visual image, and receives a high entropy score. "Set incidence entropy" refers to the number of different settings which appear, regardless of the length of their appearance. Even if one setting dominates, as in television news, showing a large number of alternative settings increases the complexity of the program.

"Verbal time entropy" indicates the randomness of the identity of the speaker at any point during the program. To the extent many people will share time equally the entropy score will be lower than when one person dominates airtime. "Verbal incidence entropy" is analogous to "set incidence entropy."

Watt and Krull have developed further program concepts such as "nonverbal dependence entropy" (or "modal complexity") to indicate the extent to which a show is consistently verbal or consistently nonverbal using visuals alone to construct the narrative. "Set constraint entropy" is a measure of the frequency of switching between indoor or outdoor settings. This approach could be extended to take into account simply the number of times the screen shifts from one shot to another, regardless of the locale.

The point of departure for the utility of these concepts dealt with information-processing for viewers' attempting to comprehend a television newscast. Concern for the nature of their complexity derives from the extremely fast-paced format all of the networks have adopted. An average television news story is only slightly over a minute in length. As Av Westin, former Executive Producer of ABC News, once wrote (quoted in Patterson and McClure, 1976, p. 85):

> Pacing can be achieved in a number of ways. The length of time on the air for [the anchorman] is one way. The length of time for the film and videotape reports is another. The frequency of switches from one man to another or from one film to another creates the sense of forward movement or pace. In my view, the audience has a very short attention span and it welcomes the change. . . . The result is that the audience never gets bored or finds its attention span taxed.

Practices which derive from this type of viewpoint merit attention in terms of the resulting complexity of video and audio stimuli as well as for the inevitable substantive distortions that abbreviation imposes on story content.

While there are other aspects of the interaction of audio and video which could be examined,[5] one additional area deserves mention here—whether newsfilm is allowed to "speak for itself" or is interpreted by the voice of a correspondent over the film. Frank (1973) compared coverage of Republicans, Democrats, and Vietnam in terms of the use of voice-over and non-voice-over film by the three networks. Non-voice-over film is thought to be more realistic, immediate, and vivid than voice-over film. Distinct patterns of coverage were encountered, with the Democrats enjoying more non-voice-over film (pp. 46-47).

Conclusion

A wide range of evidence has been brought to bear on the subject of visual analysis of newscasts. The weight of that evidence suggests that while visual analysis may not be useful for the purposes of certain research designs, such as agenda-related ones, it seems egregious for most designs to continue to ignore it entirely. At this stage in newscast research, dropping the video element is premature in view of the findings discussed above.

In the near future, any research using visual analysis is likely to proceed on a highly exploratory, ad hoc, and issue-specific basis, but then so does much current content analysis. This review indicates that the perspectives of event factors, production factors, and the interaction between video and audio should be considered, and has cited examples

of various approaches to measuring each of these types of factors. The implications of these factors for information-processing were also discussed.

If a study focuses on verbal statements in the newscast, it may well be, as Pride and Wamsley (1972) found with one topic, that adding the video will seldom actually change the interpretation which is given to the audio. Although existing findings are mixed, it may even be that film does little to boost viewers' recall of verbal messages. If accurate, however, neither of these arguments refutes the potential importance of the newscast video image which lies in conveying information (factual and evaluative) beyond that asserted orally and in sending competing and perhaps discrepant stimuli. In practice that potential as an independent channel of information appears to be realized because newscast images were not found to be entirely redundant with audio messages.

NOTES

1. Irving Kristol asserted (1972, p. 51):

> All the qualities that would make for an authentic profession of journalism have no place in a universe seen through the myopic eye of the camera. The camera cannot unravel complex intellectual issues, it cannot distinguish important from trivial detail, it cannot follow an argument to a reasoned conclusion. As my first editor, Elliott E. Cohen, used to say: in these respects, one word is worth a thousand pictures. What television *can* do, however—and do with extraordinary power—is to mobilize the audience's emotions around a vivid, simplified, essentially melodramatic vision of the political world, in which praise and blame are the magnetic poles. What television can do, in other words, is what demagogic rhetoric used to do less efficaciously. And it is the discovery of this power by television journalism, in the course of the 1960s, that has given the entire journalistic community its new sense of purpose.

2. While basically a useful distinction, the longshot-tightshot factor may not extend to extreme closeups, which zero in on the eyes and mouth, and cut off the top of the head, to produce a kind of distorted, uncomfortably close scrutiny of the subject.

3. This discussion relies heavily on both Broadbent (1958) and Warshaw (1978) on selective attention theory.

4. Another approach to measuring program structure is outlined by Lichty and Ripley (1970) and summarized in Krull, Watt, and Lichty (1977, pp. 63-64).

5. An area related to the interation of visual image and sound involves the impact of newscasters. As Paletz and Pearson note, a large part of the visual context and rituals of television news appear designed to enhance the status and credibility of the anchors and correspondents. Factors in the speaking voice (Hadwiger, 1970; Smith and McEwen, 1973-74), appeal, attractiveness, perceived neutrality and competence of newsmen (Cathcart, 1969-70; Lynch and Sassenrath, 1965-66; Sanders and Pritchett, 1971; Shosteck, 1973-74; Tankard and associates, 1977) and newswomen (Stone, 1973-74; Whittaker and Whittaker, 1976) pose interesting research questions and probably relate directly to the believability of network news. An experiment by Andreoli and Worchel (1978) demonstrated the effectiveness of the medium of television for newscasters in far outdistancing the persuasive impact of other combinations of a medium (television, radio, written statements) with a type of communicator (newscaster, political candidate, representative, former representative). With local television weathermen becoming Congressmen and Cronkite a demigod, pursuing the subject of the appeal of newscasters seems warranted.

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III
Future Directions

Assessing Television Newscasts: Future Directions in Content Analysis

Thomas E. Patterson

AT LEAST ONE RESEARCHER thinks content analysis will not be particularly helpful in the effort to better understand television news. Edwin Diamond, Director of the News Study Group at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, claims that television news cannot be understood "by putting a stopwatch to the network news." He asserts: "To understand the forms of the news, academics have to go out in the streets with newspeople when they are harvesting the daily news crop and be in the newsrooms when 'product' is being processed" (Diamond, 1977).

Diamond's view of news research falls under Abraham Kaplan's "law of the instrument," which describes the tendency of scholars to think that topics are best studied with those methods in which they are skilled (Kaplan, 1964, p. 28). The tendency is a common one, but it must be avoided regardless of one's preferred methodology. Any method is only a tool, highly useful when correctly applied to problems for which it is suited, but hardly the answer to every question about television news.

For any researcher wanting to use content analysis, two questions must be answered affirmatively: Is content analysis appropriate to my research question? Am I using content analysis scientifically? These questions are the key to content analysis's future contribution to the most pressing goal in the study of television news: the building of a systematic body of knowledge about the medium.

In many instances content analysis has been made to do what it cannot do. Certainly the most obvious cases are those of researchers drawing audience-effect conclusions on the basis of content data. Documentation that news programming plays up crime or contains liberal bias is never proof that television news causes violence or produces left-leaning voters. Such conclusions are either ignorant or self-serving; they are not scientific. Content analysis can guide audience studies by suggesting possible effects from exposure to television, but content analysis cannot substitute for audience research.

In other areas the inappropriateness of content analysis is less apparent and, for this reason, improper conclusions are more likely to be accepted by the scholarly community. Content findings are sometimes taken as a direct reflection of the values and priorities of those who produce and report the nightly news. For example, content analysis has been used to assert that newscast personnel have a liberal bias. But such inferences cannot be strictly drawn from the data compiled using content analysis. Content analysis may document the contention that liberal themes are heavily played, but it cannot demonstrate that the personal political leanings of broadcast journalists are responsible. Other factors, such as the obtrusiveness of vocal liberal spokesmen or groups, may account for the news content. Other methods, such as participant observation, are required to determine the role that values and motives play in formulating television newscasts.[1]

News content thus suggests relationships about its antecedents and consequences which it cannot confirm. Findings of a liberal slant to the news or of a heavy emphasis on violent crime suggest hypotheses that could be examined through participant observation and audience research. Moreover, should theoretical notions about television news become better developed, content analysis could be used in deciding between competing explanations. If, for example, one theory were to predict that television news would emphasize that the substantive

aspects of policy deliberations and another predict that it would emphasize the procedural aspects, content analysis would be helpful in choosing between them.

To appreciate the limits of content analysis in no way minimizes the need for more and better television news research. Many important tasks await content analysis; but it is clearly not everyjob's tool, and this seemingly obvious fact must be recognized fully.

A Need for Cumulative Research

Most content research on television news is ad hoc. Frequently, content analysis is confined to providing simple descriptions of the more easily observable dimensions of news coverage—for instance, estimating the amount of airtime given to certain issues, interests, or institutions. At the same time, research has often been a direct response to public debate on an issue, such as the series of studies that followed Spiro Agnew's charge of liberal bias in network news coverage. When timely and accurate, such work performs a valuable service by informing public debate; but much of this research is innocent of any theoretical notions and has little relevance beyond television's handling of a particular topic at a particular time. Frequently, such work neither builds upon, nor contributes to, other research on television news. Future research could be more cumulative if content analyses becomes more theoretically-oriented and more closely linked both to prior studies and to research using other methodologies.

To take one example, Edward Jay Epstein's *News From Nowhere* contains many conclusions about the impact of organizational imperatives on news content. After interviewing and observing television news personnel, Epstein observes (1973, pp. 258-259):

> To maintain themselves in a competitive world, the networks impose a set of prior restraints, rules and conditions on the operations of their news divisions. Budgets are set for the production of news, time is scheduled for its presentation, and general policies are laid down concerning its content. To satisfy these requirements—and keep their jobs—news executives and producers formulate procedures, systems and policies intended to reduce the uncertainties of news to manageable proportions. The timing, length, content and cost of

> news thereby becomes predictable. Since all the networks are in essentially the same business . . . the news product at each network is shaped by very similar requisites. The basic contours of network news can thus be at least partly explained in terms of the demands which the news organizations must meet in order to continue operating without crises or intervention from network executives.

Epstein ma es a number of claims about the impact of organizational imperatives on news content. For example: Networks' concern with the cost of transmitting news stories from the field leads them to take a disproportionate number of stories from locations where transmission costs can be kept to a minimum—namely, those cities with network owned-and-operated stations because they are wired to the networks on a permanent basis; networks have few original stories or investigative reports because "it is not presumed that scoops, exclusives or original reporting significantly increase the audience" (p. 260); networks focus attention on a relatively small group of political leaders because they are readily identifiable and can be relied upon "to produce usable happenings" (p. 261).

Epstein's claims could be tested by content analysis. A comparison of network news stories with national news stories in the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* would indicate, for example, whether transmission costs have substantial influence on news selection or affect only the visual content of minor news stories, whether the networks have substantially fewer original or investigative reports, and whether network news employs substantially fewer characters in its major news stories. Such research would develop and clarify Epstein's conclusions and likely would provide ideas for further research. It would be a step in cumulative theory building.

Validity and Reliability

In the quest for systematic knowledge about television news, the validity and reliability of content categories are of utmost significance. Clearly, if measures are not valid, if they do not measure what they purport to measure, then content analysis will only mislead or misinform subsequent work. Although this problem usually is most

severe in subject areas where abstract concepts predominate, it is relevant to the study of television news. For example, what is a political "issue"? Numerous content studies have used "issues" as a category, but the meaning of the term is hardly unequivocal. A conference on the adequacy of television's issue coverage in the 1976 campaign resulted mostly in quarrels among the participants over the meaning of the term "issue." Unable to agree about what was an issue and what was not, the participants were unable to address the conference's major topic. (See Chisman, 1977.)

Whenever feasible, researchers are obliged to use multiple measures as a way of assessing validity. Although this procedure cannot resolve basic disputes over the meaning of terms, it is highly useful in other ways. Richard Hofstetter's careful study (1976) of network bias in the 1972 presidential campaign illustrates the advantages of this approach. He used three different measures in his study of bias: a straightforward classification of news stories, rating scales of stories, and a thematic breakdown. In most of Hofstetter's tests, the three measures produced the same conclusions, thus giving these conclusions more credence than if he had reached them using only a single measure. Where results diverged using the three methods, he was careful to qualify his conclusions. Assessing the usefulness of his multi-method approach, Hofstetter concluded that it was "clearly good scientific procedure" (p. 146).

Reliability is equally important if content studies are to be used as building blocks for a better understanding of television news. Although not obvious to the casual observer, television news reports are complex in form and their messages often difficult to classify, particularly on certain dimensions.

Research concerning bias in television news coverage illustrates the classification problems that can arise. Edith Efron's *The News Twisters* (1971) was a response to Agnew's charge of liberal bias in network news coverage, and her findings seemed to support his claim. Efron's analysis of network coverage of the 1968 presidential campaign revealed what she labeled pro-liberal, pro-Democratic, pro-Humphrey coverage; but she apparently made no effort to assess the reliability of her content measures. The method normally used to assess reliability is inter-coder agreement, that is, whether two people coding the same material get the same results in a high proportion of cases. Efron gives no indication this procedure was used.[2]

Efron's book sold well and probably convinced a number of people that left-liberal views dominated network news. However, not only were her reliability checks weak or non-existent, but the conclusions drawn from her data were criticized (Weaver, 1972) and a replication of her study failed to produce similar findings (Stevenson, Eisinger, Feinberg, and Kotok, 1973).

Hofstetter's campaign analysis (1976) is a marked contrast to Efron's. He tested coder reliability by comparing the agreement between the coders and coding supervisor on a large sample of the items. His objective of 80 percent agreement on the classifications was exceeded for most of the categories used. Other controls were also employed. For example, to eliminate spurious "trends" in campaign coverage, no single coder exclusively coded material from any time period in the campaign.

Hofstetter's data did not support Efron's contention. The vast majority of news stories were not found to be favorable to any candidate or party ideology; instead, most were neutral in content and mode of presentation. The rest were about evenly split between those favoring McGovern, the Democrats, or the left and those favoring Nixon, the Republicans, or the right. Hofstetter found nothing to suggest that the networks systematically favored one political side over the other.

Difference in Hofstetter's and Efron's conclusions about network bias could be attributed simply to actual differences in coverage of the 1968 and 1972 campaigns. Perhaps the networks were biased in 1968 but not in 1972 (maybe even because of the Agnew and Efron attacks). Although that possibility exists, it cannot be assessed, because Efron's study did not use content analysis scientifically.

Comparative Strategies

In the effort to develop systematic knowledge about television news, content analysts could make more use of comparative research designs, especially those involving comparisons across time and comparisons across mediums. Such comparative designs are valuable in providing a baseline for assessing results. The absence of such baselines is perhaps the greatest problem facing the content analyst; and though comparisons across time or mediums do not provide an absolute standard of assessment, they do provide a relative one.

The value of such designs is illustrated by the ongoing examination of violence in prime-time television programming that has been directed by George Gerbner, Dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania. No exact criteria exist which allow a researcher to conclude that television programming is or is not too violent, but Gerbner's studies provide a relative standard for determining whether television violence has increased or decreased from year to year.

Some research questions naturally invite longitudinal comparisons. For example, television has been said to contribute to the dominance of the presidency by giving the President so much attention relative to that given Congress. More research similar to that of Elmer Cornwell (1959) and Alan Balutis (1977) on newspaper coverage could be done for television. A rising curve for presidential news is revealed by Cornwell's research for the period from 1885 to 1957 and by Balutis' for the period from 1958 to 1977. Balutis found that presidential news, as a total of national government news, rose from 62 percent in the 1958-63 period to 73 percent in the 1970-74 period, while congressional news fell from 33 percent to 18 percent during the same time period.

Many content studies of television news could benefit by incorporating a time dimension into the research design. A case in point is the investigation of coverage given New Hampshire's presidential primary by Michael Robinson and Karen McPherson (1977). They suspected the press placed an overwhelming emphasis on New Hampshire in early campaign coverage and that this tendency was more pronounced for television than for newspapers. Their theses were strongly confirmed. In the three months before New Hampshire's primary, 54 percent of the campaign news on television and 34 percent in the newspaper was entirely or mostly about New Hampshire's primary. Significantly, Robinson and McPherson discovered that the networks increased their 1976 New Hampshire coverage 39 percent over 1972 coverage. Indeed, 91 percent of the increase in early campaign coverage from 1972 to 1976 was accounted for by New Hampshire stories. These time comparisons were the basis of their major conclusion: a "trend toward the New Hampshirization of the Presidency."

Longitudinal measures of television news content have so many applications that a great variety of research and policy needs would be

served by a detailed set of standard content indicators. Perhaps some institution will assume responsibility for providing such indicators, as the Annenberg School at Pennsylvania has done for entertainment programming. By itself, Vanderbilt's *Television News Index and Abstracts* at the current time has few applications in this regard.

In addition to time series comparison, more attention should also be directed to comparison of television and newspaper content. For a number of reasons, most television content studies ignore newspaper coverage of the same events. This practice easily leads to an *overestimation* of the importance of factors unique to television, such as the extent to which the need for pictures affects television's news content.

An example from my research will illustrate the point. Network coverage of the 1976 presidential campaign was studied for the period beginning six weeks before the first primary and ending general election day. The following categories were used in the analysis and percentages were calculated as a proportion of total election coverage given to each subject during the period analyzed (Patterson, 1977, p. 75):

Horserace topics		
Winning and losing	21%	
Strategy, logistics, support	23	
Campaign appearances & hoopla	16	
		60%
Substance topics		
Candidates' policies	11%	
Candidates' character, backgrounds	7	
Issue-related material	10	
		28%
Miscellaneous topics		12%
Total		100%

Looking only at these data, one might assert that the networks' heavy emphasis on the horserace (60% of the total coverage) in comparison with the substance (28%) could be attributed to special values of television journalism. The logic would be that the horserace stories

had more of the action, color, and excitement that the networks seem to prize in their news reports. Democratic theory hardly justifies the great emphasis given the horserace; presumably, elections are a time for voters to find out where candidates stand on issues—an area given little coverage by the networks.

One would have found apparent support for this conclusion about television news in studies of the 1940 and 1948 elections by Paul Lazarsfeld (1944) and Bernard Berelson (1954). Their data indicate that newspapers in the 1940's gave about 50 percent of their coverage to substance and about 35 percent to the horserace. This is nearly the inverse of television's emphasis in 1976. A comparison of 1976 newspaper coverage with 1976 television coverage, however, sharply alters the initial conclusion. Newspaper reporting of the 1976 campaign was divided roughly 50 percent horserace and 35 percent substance. Thus, newspapers in 1976 gave much more emphasis to the horserace than newspapers of the 1940's had given, although they gave somewhat less emphasis to the horserace than did television in 1976.

The heavy emphasis that television news placed on the horserace in the 1976 campaign thus reflected, mostly, *a tendency in election journalism generally* and, somewhat less, a tendency in television journalism specifically. The networks gave only somewhat more coverage to the horserace than the newspapers. In other words, the newspaper content comparison provided a safeguard against overestimating the impact of television-specific variables on television news content.

To some degree, all television research designs that ignore other media risk inflating the impact of television-specific factors. For example, a combined newspaper and television content analysis would probably show that Edward Jay Epstein exaggerated the impact of network organizational arrangements on television news content.

One final consideration should be mentioned regarding the careful and judicious use of content data. As television researchers rely increasingly on archive data and become further removed from events behind the news, researchers need to keep the "real world" in mind. For example, among the many studies of the 1972 presidential campaign coverage was one that offered a rather curious interpretation of the fact that the networks gave more news minutes to George McGovern's campaign than to Richard Nixon's. The

researcher concluded that the distribution reflected a pro-McGovern and anti-Nixon bias on the part of the networks and seemed unaware of the fact that Nixon spent only a few days on the campaign trail while McGovern campaigned daily. Nixon was covered less because he chose to be covered less.

This discussion of future directions in television news content analysis has not included a shopping list of topics that need to be studied. The key to the future is not a shopping list, but a commitment to doing content research in the right way: applying the technique only to the problems for which it is suited, following the standards of reliability and validity, and developing the comparisons that lend perspective to the findings. Following these guides, future research will help lead us to a better understanding of television news.

NOTES

1. Assessing the impact of newsmen's motives is one of the most vexing topics facing researchers. Newsmen themselves are often honestly unable to articulate the reasons why they do what they do, frequently being forced to beg the question with the familiar, "it was news judgment."

2. There is also no indication in Efron's book that she systematically employed intra-coder reliability procedures to assess reliability. Intra-coder reliability is the extent to which the same coder gets the same results when content analyzing the same material a second time. Seldom used by iteslf, intra-coder reliabilitity has obvious shortcomings. For one thing, the coder may retain some memory of coding decisions made the first time. Secondly, and particularly important in bias studies, intra-coder reliability will not reveal a coder's persistent idiosyncrasies.

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The World of Television News

George Gerbner
Nancy Signorielli

UNDERLYING MOST TELEVISION NEWS RESEARCH are the assumptions that television is similar to other media; that television news is a major source of factual and public affairs information; and that the television news viewer receives the majority of such information from television news. These popular assumptions are not totally false, but they are sufficiently wrong to be misleading. In this essay, we shall challenge these basic assumptions and then present a new, realistic, and more appropriate framework for such research.[1]

Television is unlike any other medium in several important respects (Gerbner and Gross, 1976). For purposes of this discussion, the most salient differences are that television is viewed non-selectively and that many (if not the majority) of the most ardent news viewers are also heavy viewers of television drama. Non-selective viewing means that people watch television not by the program, but by the clock. Their lifestyle rather than their specific interests determines when they watch. Time, in turn, determines what they watch, because program schedules are stable and similar across networks.

Television is a regular ritual of which news is a minor part. Therefore, while the news reader is a social type, there is no such significant social type as the television news viewer. Heavy viewers of television watch three, four, or more hours per day, with the weekly

series of prime-time drama providing the main staple of their television fare. This fare dominates the acquisition of images and information about the entire spectrum of facts and values in life and society, including that of public affairs. At any rate, the non-selective viewing of television makes the unit of analysis "television fare" and, in effect, that chunk of time which most viewers watch, cutting across program types during that time period.

The methodological approach that conceives of and analyzes such program types as "information" or "entertainment" is rooted in the print era. We are now in the television age, where these types and styles are interrelated. As a result, news is embedded as a relatively minor element in a larger image and message system that includes drama, commercials, and other types of programs. Therefore, news analyzed in isolation, as a discrete element, leads to results that contain misleading implications—namely, that news content was the viewer's main source of information.

Regular television news viewers are also heavy television viewers. For example, our secondary analysis of the 1976 American National Election Study (conducted by the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan) shows that 30 percent of light viewers of police and crime shows watch television news and that 73 percent of them are regular (daily) readers of newspapers; on the other hand, 58 percent of heavy viewers of these programs watch television news and 66 percent are regular readers of newspapers.[2] One must suspect that heavy television viewers derive most of their information from the material to which they are the most exposed: television drama. And news that fits the world basically shaped by drama would probably find a more receptive framework and be assimilated by most viewers. Such news may provide some confirmation of the fantasies (some true, some false, all highly selective and synthetic) cultivated by drama. Television news is increasingly conceived and presented in the marketing and ratings terms of drama and is increasingly produced to fit that framework.[3] Television news that does not fit that context gets lower ratings and viewers may not be as receptive to information presented in this way. In either case, the viewers' main source of information from television is drama, with television news playing an interactive and subsidiary role that is different from that of news reading.

Our study of television viewers provides some support for these suppositions. While news reading makes a difference in the responses of both heavy and light viewers to a series of factual questions, television news viewing does not—especially for the heavy viewer. This suggests that the heavy viewer of television watches news in relation to a total perspective of fact and value cultivated by viewing as a whole. All programs regularly viewed during the habitual viewing period play interrelated and inseparable roles. That is the hypothesis. The investigation of that hypothesis, namely that news must be analyzed in terms of a total viewing period (e.g. prime time) in which it is embedded and in relation to which it is absorbed and understood, is the necessary and realistic task of research on television news.

In order to investigate that hypothesis, we recommend adoption of the conceptual framework and methodological tools of a research project already underway, Cultural Indicators. (See Gerbner, 1973.) This project is a long-range, comprehensive, and cumulative study examining trends in television content and viewers' conceptions of social reality. The most significant feature of Cultural Indicators is the joining of two methodologies, that is, Cultivation Analysis (the study of viewers' conceptions of social reality) is linked to Message System Analysis (the study of mass media content). Thus far, Message System Analysis has been limited to network dramatic programming aired during prime time (8 to 11 p.m.) and weekend daytime programming. To understand the symbolic world of television more completely and to evaluate its cultivating effects more thoroughly, Message System Analysis should be expanded to include news and commercials.

Cultural Indicators Research and Message System Analysis

Culture is the system of messages that regulates the social relationships and cultivates the prevailing outlooks of a community. Production of that message system has become increasing centralized and industrialized. The process has shifted from handicraft to mass production and from religion and formal education to the media communications, particularly television.

Television is the chief creator of such synthetic cultural patterns as entertainment and information for the most heterogeneous mass publics in history, including large groups that have never before

shared in any common public message systems. The repetitive pattern of television's mass-produced messages and images is the mainstream of the common symbolic environment that cultivates the most widely shared conceptions of reality. The basic assumption of Cultural Indicators research is that we live in terms of the stories we tell—stories about what things are, stories about how things work, and stories about value and worth. Television tells them all through news, drama, and advertising to almost everybody.

Message System Analysis is designed to investigate the aggregate and collective premises defining life and its issues through representative samples of mass-produced symbolic material. Such analysis rests on the reliable determination of unambiguously perceived elements of communications. Its data base is not what any individual would select, but what an entire national community absorbs. It does not attempt to interpret single or selected units of material, nor to draw conclusions about the material's artistic merit or its ability to inform or to "sell" products. Rather, the analysis is limited to functions implicit in the prevalence, rate, symbolic structures, and distribution of clear and common terms.

Message System Analysis rests upon a theoretical framework designed to define and describe mass-produced message systems (such as television news or dramatic programs) in terms "of what *is*, what is *important,* what is *right,* and what is *related* to what" (Gerbner, 1969, p. 127). This framework could be applied to television news just as it is already applied to dramatic programming—by focusing upon four analytic measures: attention, emphasis, tendency, and structure.

Attention is concerned with determining the presence and frequency of individual subjects in a message system. For example, how are the sexes distributed in network television news programming? Are the participants in the news stories evenly divided into men and women or does one of the sexes predominate? Emphasis isolates the things that are important in the message system. For example, what themes appear in the news stories? Which themes are significant and which themes are given minor or incidental treatment? Tendency is concerned with how things are presented. That is, are certain people, themes, or subjects presented more favorably than others? Finally, structure is concerned with determining relationships that exist among the previously described components of the message system (Gerbner, 1969, pp. 129-131).

The Methodology of Message System Analysis

The principal aspects of the methodology of Message System Analysis are the instrument of analysis, the samples of news programs, the training of analysts, the coding procedures, and the assessment of the reliability of the observations.

An important part of Cultural Indicators' Message System Analysis is the development and testing of an appropriate recording instrument. This instrument would have to consist of items that can be used to isolate the lifestyle and world view communicated by network news programs. For example, it must note the presence of such themes, actions, and aspects of life as government, business, sports, violence, family, sex, friendship, love, health, illness, nature, and science. Another important part of the instrument must focus on the demography, roles and relationships, traits, and fates of the people who populate the world of television news. The recording instrument used to analyze news should be comparable with instruments used for the study of the world of television drama. Thus we will be able to determine if the "lessons," "rules of life," and "lifestyle" portrayed in news programs are similar to those found in dramatic programming.

In Message System Analysis, coders are trained in a specialized kind of observation. They must make the reliable discriminations required by the recording instrument and record them in a specified form. Their task is to generate data that permit interpretation of the common message elements and structures available to a public of diverse viewers.[4] The degree to which the recorded data truly reflect the properties of the material being studied rather than coder bias or instrument ambiguity is ascertained through reliability measures. Theoretically, both types of contamination are correctable by refining the instrument, intensifying coder training, or, as a last resort, by eliminating the unsalvageable variable or dismissing the incorrigible coder. Measures of coding reliability thus serve two functions: as a diagnostic tool in the confirmation of the recording process and as final evaluators of the accuracy of the phenomena's representation in the actual recorded data.[5]

Reliability of the analysis is thus ascertained by multiple codings and by the measured agreement of trained analysts on each usable item. If one were to substitute the perceptions and impressions of

casual observers, no matter how sophisticated, the value of the investigation would be reduced and its purpose confounded. Only an objective analysis of unambiguous message elements, and their separation from personal impressions left by unidentified clues, can provide the basis for comparison with audience perceptions, conceptions, and behavior. That becomes the task of Cultivation Analysis.

Cultivation Analysis

The final phase of this research paradigm involves the development and implementation of Cultivation Analysis instruments to determine what notions of social reality are learned by viewers from watching network television news. Cultivation Analysis begins with patterns found in a "world" of television programming (news, drama, and commercials). The common message system composing that world presents a coherent image of life and society. How is this image reflected in the images, expectations, definitions, interpretations, and values held by its audiences?

This phase of the research would turn findings from the Message System Analysis of news into questions suitable for Cultivation Analysis. The goal would be to determine what viewers learn about the real world from the world of television news by turning findings about the news world into questions about conceptions of social reality. Then "television answers" (the way a subject is presented in the world of television) could be contrasted to other, different answers (frequently closer to reality). For example, which people (men, women, whites, blacks) are more likely to be involved in violence, or in politics, in our society? Responses of children and adults to these questions would then be related to television exposure and other media habits, as well as demographic characteristics. The responses of light, medium, and heavy television viewers—with other characteristics held constant—can be used to indicate what conceptions of social reality the viewing of television news programs tends to cultivate in what groups and to what extent. An important part of this analysis would be the comparison of responses given by heavy news viewers with those of light news viewers and nonviewers. These results can also be compared with notions of the world cultivated by the viewing of television drama.

The theory and methods of the approach that has been outlined offer a realistic, useful, and promising new direction for future research on television network news. The end product of this research would be a comprehensive description of the world of network television news programs and how it relates to the world of prime-time network dramatic programming. A comprehensive description of the world formed by combining these two types of programming would uncover the lessons about life that children and adults learn from television.

NOTES

1. The authors would like to thank Howard Fatell and Colleen Cool for their assistance.

2. Light viewers are respondents who rarely or never watch police and crime shows; heavy viewers frequently watch these programs.

3. Dominick, Wurtzel, and Lometti (1975). The authors note that in *Eyewitness News,* "The emphasis on the violent, the humorous, and the emotional represents a shift toward those elements more likely to create viewer interest rather than viewer edification; in short, they signal a shift toward the entertainment aspect of news" (p. 218).

4. To apply this type of Message System Analysis to television news and to illustrate steps involved in coding and training in a large-scale television research project, procedures such as the following may be envisioned: A staff of between ten and twelve coders would be recruited. The training period would require two to three weeks of instruction and testing, with an introductory session devoted to item-by-item discussion of the recording instrument. The trainee group would then be split into randomly assigned coding teams of two each; all pairs would view and code two selected news programs that had been previously viewed and coded by the staff. Each coding-pair would work independently of all other pairs and would return a joint coding for both news programs. In the next general meeting, the entire staff would discuss the difficulties encountered in the two-program exercise. When these problems had been resolved, the coder-pairs would code an additional six news programs.

Data generated by the coder-pairs on the eight training news programs would be keypunched and subjected to computerized analysis. On the basis of these results, instructions and variables could be discussed further and, if necessary, revised. Moreover, idiosyncratic coder-pairs would be identified. The coder-pairs who survived this testing process would proceed to analyze the sample of news programs.

During both the training and data-collection phases, coder-pairs would be able to monitor assigned videotaped news programs as often as necessary. All

of the programs would be coded independently by two separate coder-pairs to provide double-coded data for reliability comparisions.

The final set of data would be compiled from the double-coded data base by random selection of one of the two codings for each news program. As a last check against biased coding, and before the final data selection, reliability measures would be computed for each coder-pair. This procedure would help identify problem coder-pairs who might not have been screened out in the training and pre-test phase. In such an instance, the data recorded by the questionable pair would be excluded from the selection.

5. Five computational formulae are currently available for calculating the coefficients of agreement. The variations are distinguished by a difference function, the form of which depends upon the scale type of the particular variable being analyzed. Except for their respective scale-appropriate sensitivity to deviations from perfect agreement, the coefficients make the same basic assumptions as the prototype for nominal scales devised by Scott (1955). Thus, in the case of the binary variable, all formulae yield identical results. For the derivation of the formulae and discussion of their properties, see Krippendorff (1973). For a more extended discussion by the same author of part of this family of coefficients, see Krippendorff (1970).

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Future Television News Research: Beyond Edward Jay Epstein

Michael J. Robinson

OVER TEN YEARS AGO, in the summer of 1968, serious academic research about television news came of age. Two "events" marked the arrival. The first event came in August when Vanderbilt University established the Television News Archive in Nashville, Tennessee. The second occurred in September when Edward Jay Epstein began the field research for his dissertation, and what was to become his contemporary classic, *News From Nowhere* (1973).

Since then, virtually all academic research concerning television news has shown the influence of both of these contemporary "institutions"—the Vanderbilt Archive, from which most of us get our data about television news, and Edward Jay Epstein, from whom most of us have borrowed a theory of television news.

Our problem in 1978 is that one of those institutions—Edward Jay Epstein—has so thoroughly dominated professional thinking about television that social scientists have "overlearned" the thesis in *News From Nowhere.* Too many of us have ignored other interpretations of network news, and have grown insensitive to the idea that network news may be more than, or even less than, Epstein once argued. Much

current research not only dismisses other interpretations of the determinants of television news, it also provides little room for the notion that even if Epstein were right in 1968, he may be "less right" today.

Given the importance of network journalism and the extent to which social scientists have adopted Epstein's analysis of it, this tenth anniversary of his field research seems an especially propitious time to take a second look and to suggest strategies for reconsidering Epstein's basic model of network news. That reconsideration will lead us, in turn, to a consideration of some new approaches to using the Vanderbilt Television News Archive, the other major institution of television research which began ten years ago.

Theories of News

For those who may somehow have missed it, Epstein's theory of television news is one based on organizational behavior or, more specifically, "organizational process." News, to Epstein, is the by-product of economic, legal, and social imperatives—which are, themselves, by-products of the needs of the larger corporate organization, the networks. In introducing *News From Nowhere*, Epstein writes (p. xviii):

> [This] book does not hold that network news is entirely determined by organizational factors. . . . It does argue that certain consistent directions in selecting, covering and reformulating events over long-term periods are clearly related to organizational needs.

He concludes that (p. 258):

> The main finding of this study is that the pictures of society that are shown on television as national news are largely—though not entirely—performed and shaped by organizational considerations.

From our perspective today, the most interesting aspects of both of these quotations are the disclaimers and the qualifying phrases which Epstein used to express the limitations of his organizational theory.

The problem with Epstein is not so much with Epstein, but those who serve as his epigones. For despite those disclaimers, scholarly research about television journalism which has made Epstein its base tends to argue that, to paraphrase Freud, "organization is destiny" in television news.

I believe strongly that future research about the network news process should look at alternate interpretations. The four most important alternatives are: the "newsworthy" interpretation (Buckalew, 1969-1970; Epstein, pp. 144-146), the "reality" interpretation (Cronkite, 1973; Small, 1970), the "collage" interpretation (Robinson and McPherson, 1977), and the "attitudinal-political" interpretation (Cirino, 1971; Efron, 1971; Lefever, 1974).

The newsworthy model suggests that networks include stories that journalists perceive as, quite simply, newsworthy. As simple-minded as that premise may appear, journalists are committed to believing that newsworthiness is the most important criterion for deciding what gets included as news and what does not, regardless of the medium in question.

Closely related is the reality interpretation which holds that network news is merely a mirror reflection of the most important events of the day. Not surprisingly, this interpretation enjoys wide popularity among news executives, producers, and correspondents who employ it as a defense against the growing multitude of television news critics. Indeed, in direct support of this interpretation, CBS News President Richard Salant once unabashedly remarked: "Our reporters do not cover stories from their point of view. They are presenting them from nobody's point of view" (Altheide, 1976, p. 17; Epstein, 1973, p. ix).

The collage interpretation regards news as a melange, comprised of a little politics, a little disaster, a little hoopla, and a dash of human interest. News is viewed as little more than a patterned series of anecdotes tied together only by what journalists might call "news tradition."

All three of these models of news—newsworthiness, reality, and collage—are, in some respects, reconcilable with Epstein's organizational interpretation. In some ways, distinguishing one from the other is difficult. But the fourth model, the attitudinal-political interpretation, contradicts, to a considerable degree, the other three.

The attitudinal-political model holds that news is collected and shaped to fit with the socio-political perspectives and opinions of

those who provide it. But, at least among social scientists, the political model has fallen into disrepute, especially when applied to television. Polemical books, like Efron's *The News Twisters* or Cirino's *Don't Blame The People,* have saddled this interpretation with a bad press. The political model, however, deserves a more serious consideration, especially given the long-established finding that print journalism is substantially influenced by editorial bias (Klein and Maccoby, 1954; Batlin, 1954; Lee, 1972; Evarts and Stempel, 1974; Starck and Soloski, 1977).

So, despite what has been a comparatively polemical tradition in this type of television research, we should go back and further investigate the controversial premise that network news is influenced by the political values of those who produce it. And, despite our debt to Edward Jay Epstein for showing us the importance of organization, in the future, social scientists ought to reexamine the extent to which (and the circumstances during which) political, demographic, or attitudinal variables of the newspeople influence the content of network news. But since this is, essentially, a "reactionary" proposal, I feel compelled to provide some further rationale for it.

Studying the Political Interpretation of News Content

Additional reasons for studying the political-attitudinal view of television news content cannot be easily derived from recent major published works. For example, C. Richard Hofstetter (1976) found little politically-biased network news in the 1972 presidential campaign. Hofstetter's data indicated that the overwhelming majority of network news coverage during the campaign was neutral. In another study of the 1972 campaign, Robert Frank (1973) also found only slight traces of partisan bias. David Altheide (1976) concluded that partisan bias was hardly a major factor even in local television news. Most of the empirical research conducted by political scientists finds little or no evidence for a political interpretation of television news content.

What justifications then can be advanced for further consideration of the impact of the politics and values of broadcast news personnel? I see several reasons for moving "backward" to this topic.

The first reason for returning to examine the simple hypothesis that social background or political ideology influences news is the most obvious one: the hypothesis may be true, and in our culture truth is its own defense. If one could find, for example, that Jewish network correspondents, as contrasted with gentile correspondents, offered reports more sympathetic to Israel, it would be worth knowing, in part, because it is true.

But "truth" is more often a necessary, not sufficient, condition for scientific investigation, especially in social science. It is a fact that the first filmed news item on ABC's *Evening News* in 1978 was Sam Donaldson reporting from New Delhi on the Carter trip to India (*Television News Index and Abstracts,* January, 1978, p. 1), but none of us would care to do "first story of the year" analysis for several consecutive years.

On the other hand, discovering a relationship between news decisions and social background or political ideology—as in the hypothetical case of Jewish reporters and "slanted" Middle East news coverage—is a different matter. Such knowledge would be useful in that we would regard such a relationship as both unfair and wrong. Besides, demonstrating such a relationship as fact would make a "correction" easier to achieve.

Indeed, one of the greatest advantages in subscribing to the attitudinal model of news—as opposed to the organizational process model—is that it militates in favor of improving the objectivity and quality of news. The organizational process model implies that inadequacies can only be corrected by changing the entire infrastructure of the news organization, rendering correction an almost impossible dream. The attitudinal model is self-evidently more personal. When one discovers a political basis of news, reform seems less difficult to achieve and more worthy of the effort. Thus, the second justification for analyzing the politics of television news is that of social utility.

A third reason to reopen the question of political influence in news judgments is that orthodoxy of "organizational process" inhibits intellectual flexibility. When other interpretations receive little attention, organizational process theory wins by default and that, in turn, reduces the intellectual competition among varying perspectives on the media.

A final factor which spurs me to believe that we need to rethink the issue of political influence in news is a set of preliminary data being collected by David Paletz of Duke University. Paletz and his associates have recently demonstrated that Common Cause, the "public interest" interest group, established by John Gardner in 1970, has received unusually positive news coverage since its inception. Although Paletz and his colleagues (1977) focused not on television, but on print coverage, specifically the *New York Times,* their findings indicate that the political values of the correspondents did have direct implications for the news coverage of Common Cause. Indeed, the "public-interest orientation" of the reporters and editors at the *Times* led to an almost direct channeling of Common Cause press releases into the pages of the *Times*, that most prestigious of newspapers (pp. 5-6). Paletz's findings clearly imply that the liberal *Times* promoted the interest of the liberal Common Cause. But Paletz's study suggests even more than that. It suggests that under special circumstances—in this case the circumstance was the "newness" of the topic being covered—political and attitudinal values of newspeople became not only important, but decisive.

This instructive case with Common Cause helps us understand why so much of the content analysis research has uncovered so little political-attitudinal influence in television news reporting. It suggests, in fact, a rather serious methodological flaw in most of the work that has been done with television news content. That flaw has been a near-exclusive focus on blatantly partisan topics or blatantly partisan objects, such as Democrats vs. Republicans, liberals vs. conservatives, McGovern vs. Nixon, and election campaigns.

In these head-on contests between very obvious and very long-standing political adversaries, network journalists and producers will be most likely to have their "guard up." When covering such traditional political opponents as Democrats and Republicans, journalists and producers will anticipate that their news reports might be monitored by social scientists, or candidates, or the local affiliates. This is neither conspiratorial nor cynical; it makes basic sense. Broadcast journalists would be (and should be) most sensitive to political bias in topics involving salient and unambiguous political rivalries. Social scientists are also most eager to study attitudinal or political bias on precisely those same obviously political topics. But, having studied the Democrat vs. Republican dimension, social

scientists should not conclude either that news is devoid of partisanship or that the attitudes and opinions of broadcast journalists do not significantly affect newscast content. Unfortunately, that has been the most popular strategy for research during the last decade. And, therefore, this research has not constituted a comprehensive test of political influence in news.

This discussion has offered several reaons for pursuing again research that looks at television news "bias," especially in areas less likely to be perceived by news personnel as explicitly partisan. At the very least, future research should establish if there exists a significant amount of political bias in network news. Ultimately, future research should try to establish the extent to which the political values of network journalists influence news coverage and the conditions and circumstances under which political variables are most likely to explain news content.

Three general strategies could be used to test the notion of political or attitudinal influences in network news, expecially in less partisan contexts: (1) participant observation; (2) content analysis combined with background analysis of news personnel; and (3) content analysis using new approaches. These strategies are set forth in the remainder of this essay.

Participant Observation and Background Analysis

My first suggestion is a replication of Epstein in order to observe once again the people and the process of network news. One reason I have come to see more validity in an attitudinal-political interpretation is that I have recently spent some time with people who write, produce, and transmit the news. And in those encounters, partisanship raised its not too lovely head.

The problem here is that if one brings to participant observation a political model of news, one will surely find something to support that model. While at Harvard and before starting his television research, Epstein had studied political organization with James Q. Wilson, guru of modern political organization. Epstein traveled to the networks with theoretical baggage that Wilson had given him—baggage that was plainly marked "organization." For this reason, participant

observation, while useful, is probably not the best method for exploring the controversial topic offered here.

A second general approach to studying the political basis in news involves an indirect, correlational methodology: linking the demographic and social characteristics of network newspeople with the stories they individually present. This involves nothing more than examining relationships between the background of the journalists and producers, and the types or slants of stories they report.

Returning to an earlier example, one might consider the relationship between news coverage of the Middle East and the religion or heritage of the correspondents. In this instance, the potential connection between background and story is so apparent that journalists would almost certainly be quite sensitive to potential bias. In a Middle East analysis, Jewish correspondents, recognizing the circumstance, would probably work hard to counteract any attitudinal influences on their stories. In fact, my suspicion is that in a number of issues, broadcast journalists will bring with them some understanding of the potential impact of their backgrounds on their reportage. But, in other instances, their understanding will be lacking and a relationship between "background" and story slant will appear.

Surprisingly, this type of "background" analysis has received almost no attention. The only political scientist I know who has even touched on this area is Hofstetter in his comprehensive study, *Bias in the News.* Even Hofstetter (1976, chap. 7) limited his analysis to which specific network correspondents said what about whom in the 1972 campaign. Hofstetter never linked the journalist's individual style or slant to personal background or demographic characteristics.

This particular methodology does pose some problems. First, it is potentially explosive since linking names, with background characteristics, with news bias could get the researcher into personal, if not legal, battles. (One could minimize this problem by presenting findings without names.) Second, the relationship between attitude and news coverage would be tested only indirectly in this methodology. Religious background, as used in our example, is *not* an attitude, per se, and our original hypothesis was defined in terms of attitudes.

Despite these problems, it seems worthwhile to check the relationship between personal characteristics and news because Hofstetter did, in fact, find measurable differences among the

network news corps in terms of story slant (pp. 165-184) and because few major obstacles stand in the way of collecting either the necessary content data or the personal data. To investigate the relationship between demography and news coverage, one might test a number of simple and specific hypotheses such as the following: journalists from various regions of the country express varying degrees of support for extension of federal power into areas such as energy policy, environmental policy, welfare policy, etc.; journalists of varying ages express varying degrees of support for social security, mandatory retirement, etc.; and male and female journalists express varying degrees of support for abortion legislation, the Equal Rights Amendment, affirmative action.

New Questions for Content Analysis

Despite its limitations, perhaps the best approach for testing the influence of attitudes on the decisions which shape network news content is traditional, straightforward content analysis. I have five somewhat novel suggestions for this type of research, each designed to reduce, but not to obliterate the blatancy of, the political implications that underlie the story.

Department Analysis. Network journalism may be especially susceptible to partisanship, broadly defined, in its treatment of various government functions, some functions being perceived by newspeople as good, some as bad, some necessary, others unnecessary. Because functions are, to a considerable degree, associated with particular executive departments, it would be relatively simple to evaluate the quantity and quality of coverage given the major departments of the federal government. Lefever (1974) did this, in an abbreviated way, for CBS coverage of the Defense Department. And Hofstetter looked at treatment of governmental functions in his research (1976, chap. 7), but not as directly as I am suggesting.

A comparison of coverage of the Defense Department with HEW and the Justice Department with HUD would be useful. In fact, a thorough analysis of the portrayals of all the departments, each one contrasted with the others, would produce an interesting study, especially when comparing coverage among networks.

If the general presumption that networks tend toward the liberal end of the political continuum is correct, we should find a pattern of more positive, or at least less negative, coverage of the departments which implement social welfare programs, such as HEW, HUD, and DOT, in contrast to that given other departments. Because television news is invariably geared toward the negative (Lowry, 1971), we might also find less attention devoted to those departments with which there is an attitudinal affinity. If political attitudes do influence network news, we should find clear quantitative and qualitative differences in the way the executive departments are covered.

Interest Group Analysis. One could also focus on network treatment of interest groups and associations. Paletz and his associates (1977) conducted this type of analysis most effectively when they traced the coverage of Common Cause through the pages of the *New York Times.* A similar approach could be applied to network news. Specifically, my suggestion is to evaluate the quantity and quality of coverage given to interest groups and organizations that appear in network news. My supposition is that some groups, such as the Sierra Club, receive little attention, with much of it positive. Others, such as the National Rifle Association, get relatively more coverage, with much of it negative. (The calculus here is similar to that offered above in the discussion of the executive departments.) Groups, such as the AFL-CIO, which are more transparently associated with partisan politics would tend to get more neutral coverage, because journalists define them as partisan.

Foreign Countries Analysis. Only limited attention has been given to the way networks cover foreign nations (Almaney, 1970; Warner, 1968). Because the FCC's Fairness Doctrine, which obligates newscasters to balance reporting of American political issues, does not apply to coverage abroad, analysis of foreign news would provide an opportunity to study an area where political values would be likely to influence news judgment directly.

American journalists and government officials also have a tendency to evaluate the politics of other nations through shifting, contradictory, and sometimes hypocritical criteria. Under these conditions, network journalists have only a limited sense of what objectivity is. Hence, journalists covering foreign news will have their guard down to some degree. In that environment, we can expect clearer instances of "political" news bias.

My recommendation would be to evaluate the quantity and quality of coverage given each foreign nation on the network news. While much of this sort of analysis would probably support Epstein's contention that foreign news is collected by the organization to fit audience stereotypes (e.g., pp. 246-247), much would also support my contention that political criteria count when network news covers foreign countries. One worthwhile study would be to compare the treatment given various African nations now that African news coverage has begun to increase substantially.

New Issues Analysis. One of the most widely accepted conclusions in communications research is that the media, including television, are most likely to influence opinions when the audience has no predispositions toward the subject (Klapper, 1960; Alper and Leidy, 1969-1970; Fitzsimmons and Osburn, 1968). Thus, the potential for influence is especially strong with new topics and new issues. Turning this premise around, I suggest that on new issues, news personnel themselves are more likely to be influenced by their own predispositions. With new topics, broadcast journalists should be more vulnerable to covering the story as their political attitudes dictate, until such time as the correspondents and producers have become familiar enough with the topic to return to what might best be called journalistic objectivity. Essentially, this was the case with the *Times* coverage given Common Cause, the *Times* taking about three years to evolve to a position of more "balanced" coverage (Paletz, Henry, Gardner, 1977, p. 12). The research I propose in this area would thus evaluate the quantity and quality of coverage given a new issue or new movement as it begins to gain visibility, but before it has become part of the traditional left vs. right political debate.

The environmental movement as it was depicted on network television in the late sixties offers a case similar to that of Common Cause. The new issue of environmentalism provided newspeople an opportunity "to express themselves" before they knew exactly what they were doing, and before enough opposition had materialized to make the other side of the case seem legitimate. Following the highly successful Earth Day in 1970, political values may have played as great a role in network news coverage of environmentalism as any other factor. For several months, neither journalistic canons, nor events, nor the "other side" could catch up to the environmental movement as it rode a crest of network good-feeling in 1970 and 1971. (These

assertions are testable, of course, since the Vanderbilt Archive was begun in 1968; for print media coverage see Bowman and Hanaford, 1977). In 1978, the solar energy movement staged, somewhat inauspiciously, an event called Sun Day. Because journalists could so readily identify Sun Day as little more than "Son of Earth Day," they were able to respond to Sun Day and the solar movement more as traditional journalists than as crypto-environmentalists.

Heroes and Villains Analysis. A fifth proposal that might be useful, which I term "heroes and villains analysis," would be to identify the objects (people, places, things) which receive the most favorable and least favorable overall coverage in network news. Instead of focusing on the treatment given pairs of objects (Ford vs. Carter, HEW vs. DOD), one would compare each object receiving news attention with all other objects. One would work backward and inductively, assigning a score to each object given news coverage during a finite period of time. The score would calibrate the extent to which coverage was supportive or denigrative of each object. The lowest score would designate the most villainous object, the highest score the most heroic object.

Heroes and villains analysis is less a new strategy for analyzing stories than it is a strategy for deciding what is to be analyzed and for tabulating results. The technique provides for a neatly gauged ruler with all news objects arranged along its edge. The ruler allows us to visualize graphically what gets good press, what gets bad press, and what gets in between.

The strengths here are in not having to assume at the outset what topics will be relevant and in being able to compare all objects at once in a unidimensional scale. Nobody has tried this technique before—at least not with network news. But, as with almost all strategies that nobody has found time or money enough to employ, there are some problems here. First, unlike the earlier proposals, this one is enormous in its potential scope. Virtually everything would have to be coded. While content analysis projects derived from my first four suggestions discussed above could be conducted by a highly motivated undergraduate, this last idea would almost certainly require considerable institutional staff and financial support. Second, this highly inductive approach would produce results that would not fit directly with our hypothesis. Should "Son of Sam" turn up as greatest villain, that would lend little support to our principal hypothesis,

because he is not a political object even under our broad definition. Finally, one would eventually confront a unidimensional scale on which everything has a unique position. Analysis of such a scale will require considerable sensitivity and not a little bit of courage. On balance, however, heroes and villains research would offer a novel approach to the problem of how political ideology influences news. It is not hard to anticipate which sorts of configurations on our graph would support any number of hypotheses based on a political model of news.

Conclusions

This essay can be distilled into the following major conclusions:

1. Edward Jay Epstein's organizational theory of television news has been too indiscriminately applied.
2. Political attitudes and values should be reconsidered as an important element in network news coverage and news decisions.
3. Much of the research done with content analysis of network news has defined political bias too narrowly, has focused too closely on parties and candidates, and has ignored more subtle definitions of politics.
4. Future research dealing with the television news process should utilize participant observation, the backgrounds and personal characteristics of the individual journalists as predictors of news bias, and new approaches to news content analysis.
5. Five proposals for future content analysis are department analysis, interest group analysis, foreign countries analysis, new issues analysis, and heroes and villains analysis.

Although not directly addressed so far in this essay, certain caveats merit attention. One is that I have a bias in favor of content research and, to a lesser degree, a bias against "effects research" (research about the impact of network news on the public). My predilection for studying news content, rather than its effects, is based on utilitarianism.

The added utility one enjoys in studying content instead of effects stems from two truths about communications research. First, effects research is terribly vulnerable to the criticism of spuriousness—or, as skeptics say, "those studies don't prove television caused X, Y, or Z." Effects research never does prove causation and indeed rarely makes a tight case for it. The inability to prove causation combined with a little network self-interest leads to a second truth about effects research. Network news organizations tend to ignore statements and studies about effects, almost as if it were a matter of policy to do so. Walter Cronkite (1970) makes the point with abundant clarity (p. 53):

> I don't think it is any of our business what the moral, political, social, or economic effect of our reporting is. I say let's get on with the job of reporting the news—and let the chips fall where they may.

So, given attitudes like Cronkite's, those who wish to influence the networks (because they presume the networks have a major impact on politics) do better to focus their research on the product (content) and not the outcome (effects).

A final caveat is that none of the suggestions that are offered here can solve the most important questions of all: How much of the news is organizationally determined? How much is attitudinally determined? How much is reality? And how much is "other factors"? All of the preceding suggestions for content analysis were designed to test instances and circumstances which will be likely to reveal examples of political bias. However, even if these proposals are implemented and those circumstances which foster political bias are identified, we will still have no strategy for determining the exact mixture of political, organizational, or other factors which influence television news content. Besides, this mixture of organizational, political, and other influences on television news may change with time as well as with issues. Reality is also part of the mixture and it must be incorporated into any theory of news.

Despite difficulties in discovering "ratios" of the components of news, we should continue to look at the news sytematically and to look at several different models of news. We ought not to accept one model of news and neglect the rest. Above all, research in the future

should seek to determine the nature of the mixture of news, and let us know if and when that mixture of reality, organization, and political bias begins to change.

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