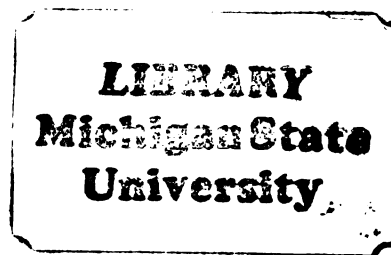




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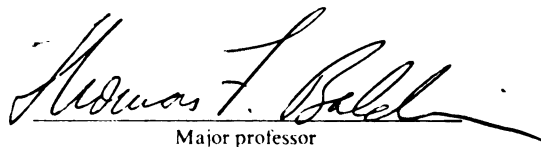
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IN LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS**

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A MARKET ANALYSIS OF CONTENT DIVERSITY  
IN LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS

By

Tony Atwater

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

College of Communication Arts and Sciences

Mass Media

1983



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## ABSTRACT

### A MARKET ANALYSIS OF CONTENT DIVERSITY IN LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS

By

Tony Atwater

The Federal Communications Commission has historically supported a regulatory objective promoting diversity of program sources and viewpoints. This objective has included a policy interest in broadcast news and public affairs programming. Few systematic studies have analyzed diversity of television news content aired within the local community. The purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which local television stations exhibited diversity in newscast content within three midwest broadcast markets. The study also investigated what each additional station within a market adds to a community's information pool, with respect to unique news stories. These stories, as defined in this study, are local news items broadcast by only one station within a market on a given news day.

Two secondary missions of the study were (1) to explore content patterns in the broadcast of unique news stories, and (2) to examine editors' perceived newsroom philosophies in the coverage of unique news stories. A two-staged research design was utilized to accomplish research objectives. A content analysis of 45 local television newscasts was followed by the administration of in-depth personal interviews with television news editors.

Tony Atwater

Findings indicated that approximately half of all local news items in each of the three markets were unique news stories. The majority of unique news stories in each market involved hard news as opposed to soft news. Further, these news stories most frequently involved the topic Human Interest/Feature in two of the markets studied. Interview data revealed that the most common source of unique news stories was the "reporter contact." The data suggested that each additional station within a market contributes a substantial number of unique news stories to a community's information pool.

Dedicated to my lovely wife, Beverly, whose love and support sustain my ambitions, strength and happiness in this earthly existence.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Upon completing the Mass Media Ph.D. program, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Thomas Baldwin for directing this dissertation. His encouragement and advise have played an invaluable role in the production of this thesis and in my accomplishments as a Ph.D. student at Michigan State University.

Thanks are also offered to Dr. John Abel, whose thoughtful comments have helped to improve the presentation of study results. His support has also been instrumental in my progress as a graduate student at MSU. Dr. Robert V. Hudson and Dr. Maurice Cullen, who served on my dissertation committee, are to be commended for their valuable contributions to the writing of this thesis and for their thoughtful support. Thanks are also expressed to Professor John Murray, whose insightful suggestions and comments have been a source of enlightenment and encouragement in writing this dissertation.

My sincere thanks are expressed to Ann Alchin whose thoughtfulness and generosity in helping to type this thesis will always be appreciated. Her gracious assistance was a valuable source of inspiration in finishing this project.

And last, but certainly not least, I offer my warm thanks to my lovely wife Beverly, whose personal sacrifice and understanding have contributed to my productivity in completing this research project. Her encouragement and support have been a constant source of strength and confidence along the way.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	iv
LIST OF FIGURES . . . . .	v
LIST OF LEGAL CASES . . . . .	vi
LIST OF APPENDICES . . . . .	viii
 CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Statement of Problem . . . . .	1
Purpose and Significance of Study . . . . .	5
Theoretical and Policy Issues . . . . .	8
Definition of Terms . . . . .	17
Research Questions . . . . .	19
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE . . . . .	21
Studies in Television Newscast Content Diversity . . . . .	21
Research on Broadcast Program Diversity . . . . .	26
Studies in Electronic News Gatekeeping . . . . .	31
The Agenda-Setting Influence of Television News . . . . .	37
III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES . . . . .	43
Design of Study . . . . .	43
Description of Variables Studied . . . . .	46
Description of Markets . . . . .	49
Collection of Data . . . . .	61
The Data Gathering Process . . . . .	61
Coding Procedures . . . . .	66
Analysis of Data . . . . .	69
IV. RESULTS . . . . .	71
Unique Story Output of Sample Stations . . . . .	71
Time Devoted to Unique News Stories . . . . .	75
Unique Story Output in Individual Markets . . . . .	85
Unique Story Output in Detroit . . . . .	86
Unique Story Output in Toledo . . . . .	90
Unique Story Output in Lansing . . . . .	94
Story Duplication in Detroit, Toledo, and Lansing . . . . .	97
Perceived Newsroom Philosophies and Unique Stories , . . . .	99

CHAPTER	Page
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	104
Summary . . . . .	104
Conclusions . . . . .	107
Selected Newsroom Attributes and News Content Diversity.	110
Limitations of Study . . . . .	113
Future Research . . . . .	116
APPENDICES . . . . .	124

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Numerical Example of Steiner Model . . . . .	13
2. Understanding of Local Issues as Related to TV News Viewing . . . . .	15
3. Frequency Distribution of Local News Stories by Station. .	71
4. Frequency Distribution of Local News Stories by Day. . . .	72
5. Percent of Unique News Stories by Station . . . . .	74
6. Percentage of Unique News Stories by Market . . . . .	74
7. Newscast Length Versus Unique Story Time by Station . . .	77
8. Unique Story Time Versus All Story Time by Market . . . .	78
9. Average Unique Story Time Versus Average All Story Time by Station . . . . .	79
10. Newscast Length Versus Percent of Unique Stories . . . . .	81
11. Station Unique Story Time by Story Type . . . . .	82
12. Market Unique Story Time by Story Type . . . . .	83
13. Market/Station Distribution of Unique News Stories . . . .	85
14. Unique Stories by Story Type--Detroit Market . . . . .	88
15. Unique Stories by Story Type--Toledo Market . . . . .	94
16. Unique Stories by Story Type--Lansing Market . . . . .	95
17. Percentage of Stories Duplicated by Market . . . . .	100
18. Selected Newsroom Attributes Versus Percent Unique Stories	111



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Double-Action Internal Newsflow . . . . .	36
2. Crucial Variables in the Agenda-Setting Process . . . . .	40
3. Unique Stories by Story Topic--Detroit Market . . . . .	87
4. Overall Percent of Each Topic Which is Unique--Detroit Market . . . . .	89
5. Unique Stories by Story Topic--Toledo Market . . . . .	92
6. Overall Percent of Each Topic Which is Unique--Toledo Market . . . . .	93
7. Unique Stories by Story Topic--Lansing Market . . . . .	96
8. Overall Percent of Each Topic Which is Unique--Lansing Market . . . . .	98

## LIST OF LEGAL CASES

Associated Press v. United States, 326 U.S. 1,20 (1945).

Carroll Broadcasting Co. v. FCC, 258 F. 2d 440 (D.C. Cir. July 10, 1958).

Citizens Committee to Save WEFM v. FCC, 506 F. 2d 246 (D.C. Cir. October 4, 1974).

Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc. v. Democratic National Committee, 412 U.S. 94 (1973).

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In the Matter of the Commission's Rules Relating to Multiple Ownership of Standard, FM, and Television Broadcast Stations, 50 FCC 2d 1050 (1975).

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pp. 3905-4100.

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## LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Page
A. Coding Guidelines and Category Definitions (Story Topic/Story Type) . . . . .	124
B. Unique News Story Cards Used with In-Depth Personal Interviews . . . . .	128
C. News Story Code Sheet . . . . .	148
D. Television News Editor Questionnaire Used in In-Depth Personal Interviews . . . . .	154
E. Letter Soliciting Participation of Editors in Research Study . . . . .	154
F. Letter of Assignment and Newscast Recording Instructions Mailed to Assistants . . . . .	155
G. Self-administered Television News Editor Questionnaire .	157

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

Dramatic advances in communication technology during the 1970's and 1980's pose important implications for Americans with respect to public policy and the mass media. One such implication involves the goal of local news media in serving the growing information needs of the community, while helping to maintain a "marketplace of ideas." The Federal Communications Commission has recognized this role as a significant one for commercial broadcast media in their function of serving the public interest (Nestvold, 1973). Consequently, the Commission continues to be a strong advocate of "diversity" in broadcast news and public affairs programming as evidenced by the agency's rulings in comparative hearings and by the administration of its "localism doctrine."

Few systematic studies have investigated the extent to which local television stations exhibit diversity in news programming within the community. One possible explanation for the scarcity of research on this issue is that the FCC has been vague in establishing what constitutes "diversity" in the context of program content. Such vagueness on the Commission's part may be due to the FCC's strict interpretation of Section 326 of The Communications Act of 1934, which prohibits the Commission from serving as a censor of broadcast communications. In

an age of information and of "new technologies," however, diversity in news programming is a policy interest which deserves to be empirically examined and better understood to determine its utility in future years.

Consequently, this dissertation involves three major policy issues, two of which are FCC policy goals, and a third policy issue which is a goal of First Amendment Theory. The three issues include the "localism" issue, the issue of "diversity" of program sources and viewpoints, and the issue of "the market place of ideas."

The localism issue is relevant to this study because it attempted to ascertain what additional stations bring to a given community with respect to unique news stories, which have the potential of meeting the unique needs and interests of viewers. By establishing a table of assignments as specified in the Sixth Annual Report and Order, Federal Register, Vol. 17 (May 2, 1952), pp. 3905-4100, the FCC determined that a system of broadcast outlets based on local service was preferable to a system of powerful regional stations providing broad public access. The localism issue has been applied often by the Commission in deciding comparative hearings and in other rulings, a practice which has lead to the Commission's adoption of a doctrine of localism. This policy interest involves the notion that the unique needs of a local community are best served by stations located within the community which provide local service.

The issue of diversity of program sources and viewpoints is epitomized by the Commission's position as stated in, In the Matter of the Commission's Rules Relating to Multiple Ownership of Standard, FM, and Television Broadcast Stations, 22 FCC 2d 310 (March 25, 1970). The FCC has consistently endorsed the view that stations which are

independently owned and managed within the market afford a level of competition that facilitates the broadcast of a broad diversity of issues and viewpoints. The "diversity" issue is relevant to this dissertation in that unique news stories may be observed as a by-product of diversity in local television programming.

Steiner (1952) and others have examined diversity of program types within a market based on selected market variables. A review of the literature on this subject is included in Chapter II, Review of Literature. This study differs from the Steiner investigation due to the dissertation's focus on diversity of content within an individual program type, i.e. local television news.

The third policy issue, "the market place of ideas," is an outgrowth of First Amendment Theory and involves the notion that democracy is best served in an environment where issues and ideas are allowed to compete for public acceptance. This issue is relevant to the study in that the contribution of unique news stories by additional stations in different sized markets may influence the realization of this goal of democracy. The dissertation attempted to ascertain the extent to which local stations are contributing to news content diversity within their respective markets.

Scholarly research on the nature of local television news content has been relatively scarce (Wulfemeyer, 1982). Consequently, the scarcity poses a void which should be the target of contemporary mass communication studies. The study of local television news diversity provides an interesting and novel approach to analyzing the nature of the news content aired daily by local stations.

Roper (1983) found that a substantial majority of Americans surveyed nationally regarded television to be their main source of news. Local television newscasts make an important contribution to the total information pool of a community. They do so by presenting both common and diverse news items. Previous studies on local television news have focused heavily on "similarity" or "commonality" of news values and news content. Often this perspective has been applied in studies which have attempted to explain and/or predict electronic news judgment (Buckalew, 1969; Buckalew, 1974; Lowry, 1971a).

While there appears to be merit in studying editors' perceived preferences for similar news content, a research approach based on analysis of "content diversity" might yield additional insight into electronic news judgment and into the "gatekeeping" process. Few studies have analyzed news content and news judgment based on the unique or non-duplicated stories aired by competing television stations within a broadcast market (a unique story being a local news story broadcast by only one station within a market on a given news day). This approach potentially introduces scholarly inquiry into perceived news philosophies and news values which local TV news editors apply in the coverage of unique stories. The approach may also contain investigative potential for exploring possible relationships between market size and diversity of local TV news content.

In summary, this study (1) explored the extent to which local television stations exhibit diversity in newscast content; (2) examined the nature of newscast content aired by only one station within a broadcast market on a given news day; (3) explored a relationship between size of broadcast market and the variety of information broadcast by stations in



the community; and (4) investigated perceived news philosophies which local TV news editors attribute to the coverage of non-duplicated or unique stories.

### Purpose and Significance of Study

The purpose of this thesis was to serve as a pilot study, exploring diversity of local newscast content within three different sized television markets. Specifically, the study attempted to describe the nature of news items which were unique to one station within a market on a given newsday. Secondly, the study sought to explore the extent to which local television stations exhibited diversity in newscast content within three midwest broadcast markets. In so doing, the study investigated what each additional station within a market adds to the market's budget of unique news stories and to the market's information pool. A secondary objective of the study was to explore a potential relationship or non-relationship between diversity of local television newscast content and size of broadcast market, as demonstrated in the three sample markets investigated. Additionally, the study attempted to describe specific newsroom philosophies which are influential in the coverage of unique local stories.

A regulatory goal of the Federal Communication Commission in the licensing of broadcast media has historically been diversification of station ownership. This policy commitment has been demonstrated over the past several decades by the Commission's rulings in comparative hearings and in license renewal cases, and by other of the Commission's judgments. Through the licensing of multiple broadcast outlets within a market, the Commission sought to establish a group of voices which

would afford broadcast consumers a variety of program content from which to choose. A list of related legal cases which demonstrate the Commission's and the U.S. Supreme Court's commitment to the concepts of diversity of viewpoints, local broadcast service, and a marketplace of ideas follows the List of Figures at the beginning of this thesis.

Multiplicity of voices in the broadcast market has been viewed by the Commission as an essential condition which enables the broadcast industry to serve the "public interest" through exposing consumers to a diversity of viewpoints and ideas. The Commission's diversification policy was partly derived from First Amendment theory, as recognized by the Supreme Court in the landmark case Red Lion Broadcasting Co. v. FCC, 395 U.S. 367,390 (1969). In its ruling the Court noted:

It is the purpose of the First Amendment to preserve an uninhibited market place of ideas in which truth will ultimately prevail, rather than to countenance monopolization of that market, whether it be by the Government itself or a private licensee. Red Lion Broadcasting Co. v. FCC, 395 U.S. 367,390 (1969).

News and public affairs programming represent two major kinds of program content which the FCC views to be vital to the dissemination of ideas in a democratic society. Multiple broadcast outlets of news and information within the community have been licensed by the FCC with the intent of affording local citizens a wide variety of news and public affairs programming. However, Bagdikian (1971) reported that regardless of the number of stations within the community, the stations tend to substantially duplicate one another's news reports over the air. He observed, "With few exceptions, the initial intent (the Commission's) of translating maximum local stations into maximum choice of content and timing has largely failed" (p. 138).

This study explores systematically the issue of whether or not local television stations are serving as separate news voices in the community of license, with respect to newscast content. The importance of addressing the above issues has been recognized by scholars of public policy, the U.S. Supreme Court, and the FCC.

The Commission has assigned a high priority to the role stations play in providing diversity of information and of viewpoints. In concluding remarks rendered for In the Matter of the Commission's Rules Relating to Multiple Ownership of Standard, FM, and Television Broadcast Stations, 50 FCC 2d 1074 (1975), the FCC noted that its regulatory goal of economic competition will sometimes yield to the even higher goal of diversity.

This is a vitally important matter, for it is essential to a democracy that its electorate be informed and have access to divergent viewpoints on controversial issues. Needless to say, thought had to be given to how much diversity to seek in terms of providing the best practicable service to the American public. In the Matter of the Commission's Rules Relating to Multiple Ownership of Standard, FM, and Television Broadcast Stations, 50 FCC 2d 1074 (1975).

This study takes a novel approach to examining the unique contribution of the local TV news organization to its community's total information pool. Further, the study attempts to extend scholarly inquiry into the role of the mass media in upholding a First Amendment tradition, "the marketplace of ideas." Diversity of information in the marketplace of ideas remains an important mission of the news media in their role of helping to maintain an informed electorate.

Contemporary studies of network and local television news content have helped us understand the potential influence which the media agenda

may exert on the public agenda (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). One type of content research less frequently undertaken has been "form research." Adams (1978, p. 21) described form research as that type of content research which is non-issue specific and which looks into general types of news, i.e. bad news (Lowry, 1971a). This thesis adds to the growing body of form research studies which have investigated the nature of mass communications by attempting to locate and describe the pool of unique local news items telecast by local stations in a community.

Finally, the study takes a novel approach to investigating news decisionmaking or "gatekeeping." The study applied in-depth personal interviews and content analysis in investigating newsroom philosophies perceived by editors as influential in the coverage of unique stories as opposed to the commonality of content. The overall significance of the work may be further grasped by an explanation of the theoretical and policy issues which mold the study's theoretical framework.

### Theoretical and Policy Issues

Two policy objectives of the FCC which are applicable to the purpose and significance of the study are (1) diversity of information and of viewpoints and (2) the Commission's localism doctrine. The Commission has recognized an important relationship which potentially exists between diversification of station ownership and diversity of ideas and of viewpoints. In the Matter of the Commission's Rules Relating to Multiple Ownership of Standard, FM, and Television Broadcast Stations, 50 FCC 2d 1050 (1975).

The significance of ownership...lies in the fact that ownership carries with it the power to select, to edit, and to choose the methods, manner and emphasis of presentation, all of which are a critical aspect of

the Commission's concern with the public interest.  
In the Matter of the Commission's Rules Relating  
 to Multiple Ownership of Standard, FM, and Tele-  
 vision Broadcast Stations, 50 FCC 2d 1050 (1975).

Additionally, the U.S. Supreme Court in Associated Press v. United States, 326 U.S. 1,20 (1945), upheld the Commission's practice of following a policy of promoting "the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources..." Further, the Commission's long-standing policy of favoring and promoting diversity of program sources has been endorsed by the U.S. Supreme Court and by lower courts in FCC v. National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, 436 U.S. 775 (1978), Mt. Mansfield TV, Inc. v. FCC, 442 F.2d 470 (2nd Cir. 1971), and in Carroll Broadcasting Co. v. FCC, 258 F.2d 440 (D.C. Cir. July 10, 1958), among other cases.

In some instances the Commission's concerns for "widest possible dissemination of information" and "diversity of viewpoints and ideas" have been wedded to an underlying concern that stations discern and attend to the unique informational needs and interests of the community of license. This underlying concern is most evidently reflected in the Commission's "localism doctrine." In Citizens Committee to Save WEFM v. FCC, 506 F.2d 246 (D.C. Cir. October 4, 1974), an appellate court found that indeed the Commission has an obligation under its public interest mandate to promote diversity of program formats in accord with the divergent interests and tastes of broadcast consumers in a given market.

In commenting on In the Matter of Deregulation of Radio, 84 FCC 2d 977 (February 24, 1981), the FCC observed:

Our review convinces us that the history of governmental involvement in non-entertainment programming

has been driven by one overriding concern--the concern that the citizens of the United States be well informed on issues affecting themselves and their communities. It is with such information that the citizenry can make the intelligent, informed decisions essential for the proper functioning of a democracy. In the Matter of Deregulation of Radio, 84 FCC 2d 977 (February 24, 1981).

The Commission has explicitly stated that local television stations possess an ongoing obligation to serve the local needs and interests of their communities through the broadcast of local news and public affairs programming. In addressing concerns of comparative renewal applicants in 1971, the Commission reminded television stations of the importance of local and informational service. In the Matter of Formulation of Policies Relating to the Broadcast Renewal Applicants Stemming From the Comparative Hearing Process, 27 FCC 2d 581 (February 23, 1971).

The Congressional scheme of TV allocations is based on local outlets... If a television station does not serve in a substantial manner as a local outlet--if it is, in effect, a network spigot or mere purveyor of nonlocal film programming, it is clearly not meeting its crucial role. Similarly we have stated that the reason we have allotted so much spectrum space to broadcasting is because of the contribution which it can make to an informed electorate... If a broadcaster does not make such a contribution in a substantial fashion, he is again undermining the basic allocations scheme. In the Matter of Formulation of Policies Relating to the Broadcast Renewal Applicant, Stemming From the Comparative Hearing Process, 27 FCC 2d 581 (February 23, 1971).

The Commission's localism doctrine continues to be a regulatory goal, sustained chiefly by the agency's licensing and renewal policies. In its 1965 policy statement on comparative hearings (1 FCC 2d 393), the Commission noted that one criterion to be considered, in cases where there exists competing applications for a single frequency allocation, is the extent to which an applicant's proposed programming promises to

serve the local interests of the community to be served. The spirit of the Commission's commitment to the criterion has been reflected in Suburban Broadcasters, 30 FCC 1021 (1961), FCC v. Pottsville Broadcasting Co., 309 U.S. 134, 137 (1940), and Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc. v. Democratic National Committee, 412 U.S. 94 (1973), among other cases.

Other examples of the Commission's commitment to the regulatory goal of localism and local information programming are the FCC's 1960 Programming Policy Statement. Report and Statement of Policy Res: Commission en banc Programming Inquiry, 44 FCC 2303 (July 29, 1960). This statement notes the public interest value of news and public affairs programs. Another example is the Commission's 1973 Primer on Ascertainment of Community Problems by Broadcast Applicants, 27 FCC 2d 650 (February 23, 1971). Although commercial radio stations have been relieved to a large extent of ascertaining local community needs (as a result of the FCC's radio deregulation activities), commercial television stations still (at this writing) hold an obligation in this regard and must demonstrate, procedurally, how they have devoted programming toward serving the needs and interests of their local communities.

The relevance of the study to the twin policy interests of localism and diversity is inherent in the study's objective of ascertaining the extent to which local television stations exhibit diversity of local news content within the community. In an age of increasing program sources, the issue of local TV news diversity is one which might elicit policy goals to further protect the public interest of broadcast consumers of tomorrow's technologically advanced society. Levin (1980, p. 11) has observed, "...the FCC's current commitments to localism, diversity,

information, and competition (whatever their origins and changing character over time) are an appropriate yardstick for assessment and reform today."

Most often the issue of diversity in programming has been addressed with respect to entertainment programs and from a perspective of economic competition. Some approaches and suggested approaches for ascertaining program diversity offered in previous studies are noted in Chapter II, Review of Literature. One early theoretical model on program diversity appeared relevant to a secondary objective of the study, i.e. to explore a potential relationship between diversity of local television newscast content and size of broadcast market. That model, reported by Steiner (1952), attempted to predict content diversity in the program patterns of competing radio stations based on several economic assumptions about audience and broadcast market characteristics. Steiner posited that the advertiser-support nature of commercial broadcasting contributes to a conflict between a station's goals of maximizing its audience and of providing diversity of program content.

Ultimately, Steiner's theoretical perspective endorses the view that competing stations in a market will tend to duplicate program types, because of the stations' underlying tendency to divide larger audience groups until reaching a point where it is profitable to serve the next smaller audience segment. Consequently, the model provides that the fewer the number of stations in a given market, the greater will be duplication of program types, as broadcast by competing stations. And, maximal public satisfaction (accommodated by diversity of programming) is, as a result, left unfulfilled. A numerical example shown in Table 1



and offered by Owen (1977) serves to illustrate the theory and assumptions upon which the Steiner model is based.

TABLE 1  
Numerical Example of Steiner Model

Listener group	1	2	3
Number of people in group	60	25	15
Preferred format type	A	B	C
Equilibrium Program Pattern if the stations are:			
<u>Number of stations</u>	<u>Competitive</u>	<u>Monopoly</u>	
1	A	A	
2	AA	AB	
3	AAB	ABC	

Source: Bruce M. Owen, *Regulating Diversity: The Case of Radio Formats*, Journal of Broadcasting, 1977, 21, 310.

By studying the content diversity of three different sized broadcast markets, this thesis attempted, at least superficially, to examine the potential applicability of Steiner's theoretical perspective with respect to patterns in the broadcast of unique or non-duplicated news stories. It, however, must be acknowledged that the model was originally applied to entertainment programming, specifically radio program formats. The study attempted to at least consider applicability of the model to the context of local television news.

Two additional theoretical issues which bear upon the purpose and significance of the study are the First Amendment Theory of "a market-

place of ideas" and the theoretical perspective reported in mass communication literature called "gatekeeping."

In Red Lion Broadcasting Co. v. FCC, 395 U.S. 367, 390 (1969), the U.S. Supreme Court observed that a fundamental purpose of the First Amendment was to preserve an "uninhibited marketplace of ideas" in which truth would be the ultimate result. This theoretical rationale is congruent with the FCC's commitment to localism and diversity. In the Matter of the Commission's Rules Relating to Multiple Ownership of Standard, FM, and Television Broadcast Stations, 22 FCC 2d 310 (March 25, 1970).

Basic to our form of government is the belief that...  
 "right conclusions are more likely to be gathered  
 out of a multitude of tongues than through any kind  
 of authoritative selection." Thus, our Constitution  
 rests upon the ground that "the ultimate good de-  
 sired is better reached by free trade in ideas--that  
 the best test of truth is the power of the thought to  
 get itself accepted in the competition of the market."  
In the Matter of the Commission's Rules Relating to  
 Multiple Ownership of Standard, FM, and Television  
 Broadcast Stations, 22 FCC 2d 310 (March 25, 1970).

Local television news represents one communication channel through which citizens may become aware of local issues, and as a result of such awareness, become more active in civic responsibilities within the community. Lucas and Possner (1975) found a significantly positive relationship between daily television news viewing and awareness of local community issues among lower and middle-status consumers in the top 50 broadcast markets. Table 2 describes the nature of results reported by the researchers.

Whereas Steiner's theoretical framework focuses upon diversity of program types, this study considered diversity of content within an individual program type. It was expected that given the impact of

common market forces that Steiner's theory would similarly apply to levels of diversity in the content of local television newscasts, as this theory has been related to various entertainment program types. Local broadcast news, as aired on commercial broadcast stations, is subject to the same advertiser support system as entertainment programming. Both kinds of programming are dependent upon audience ratings as a major source of financial support via advertising. As the major form of locally produced programming for most commercial broadcast stations, local television news generates the most revenue among locally produced broadcasts.

TABLE 2  
Understanding of Local Issues as Related to TV News Viewing  
(Percent)

Understanding of Local Issues <sup>a</sup>	Frequency of Television News Viewing		
	Once a week or less	A few times a week	Every day
Not at all	14.7	10.7	6.6
Not so well	35.1	37.0	26.8
Moderately or very well	50.2	52.3	66.6

<sup>a</sup> $\chi^2$  significant at .0001. The weighted number of respondents is 3036.

Source: William A. Lucas and Karen B. Possner, Television News and Local Awareness: A Retrospective Look (Santa Monica, 1975).

The results in Table 2 provide evidence that viewers who watched television news more frequently felt they had a progressively better understanding of local issues. The data categorize viewers' perceptions about their understandings of community events into three categories in the far left hand column. Frequency of news viewing was categorized in terms of the number of times viewers watched local television news during

a given week. Over 66 percent of viewers who watched local TV news daily felt they understood local issues moderately or very well.

Because television and other news media influence consumers' awareness of local and community issues, what the media do not report may be as important as what they do report (Roberts, 1971). Consequently, news decision making, or the "gatekeeping" process, may have a potentially significant impact on what the public perceives to be salient local and national issues of interest and concern. Further, news media gatekeeping practices may potentially influence public perceptions about the order of importance each of these issues commands (the agenda-setting function of mass media).

In an age of new communication technologies, the rate and volume of information flow continue to escalate. Correspondingly, editorial decisions about what information to include and exclude from the daily news budget have increased in complexity. Burgoon and Ruffner (1978) observed that news editors have been forced into selecting certain information for public dissemination to the exclusion of other information because there is "...too much information available for the existing pages and air waves of the media" (p. 351).

The contribution which local television news makes to consumers' awareness and understanding of community issues remains vital in a world which is rapidly becoming a "global village." This study explored news selection and editors' perceived gatekeeping philosophies with respect to the coverage of unique local TV news stories. The objective is an important one, because it provided an opportunity to examine the potential existence of perceived product differentiation in local TV news. Additionally, the study provided an opportunity to examine editor

perceptions relative to "enterprise reporting," or original reporting in local television news. MacNiel (1968, p. 30) has noted, "For the most part, television news is reactive: it goes out to cover stories which others have developed through original reporting." The issue of enterprise reporting in local TV news seems to be a relevant one in analyzing television's diversity and localism objectives, and an issue which previous research has not substantively investigated.

### Definition of Terms

For purposes of this study the unit of analysis was the news story... defined as "any topic introduced by the anchorman coupled with any report or reports by other correspondents on the same topic and any concluding remarks by the anchorman" (Fowler & Showalter, 1974, p. 713). The focus of the study involved the nature and frequency of the unique or non-duplicated news story. A unique news story was defined as a locally originated story broadcast within a market by one station within the market on a given news day.

The term news content diversity referred to the percentage of unique news items broadcast by stations studied in a given sample market over the sample period, based on the number of all local news stories aired in the market. A duplicated story, or duplication, was defined as a condition in which two news stories, broadcast in the same market on a given sample day, shared the same news peg, including discussion of the same event, the same principal characters, and the same geographic location. News peg referred to "the aspect of a news event... that makes it newsworthy; the angle of the story on which the lead will be based" (Broussard & Holgate, 1982, 183).

The term market size as used in the study was defined as the number of U.S. broadcast commercial television stations which originate a substantive and regular local news broadcast on a daily basis to a common geographic region. A substantive local news broadcast was arbitrarily defined as a daily news budget of 10 or more minutes of locally originated news. The terms story topic (i.e. crime, economics, etc.) and story type (i.e. hard news) were defined in terms of two sets of mutually exclusive content categories which are specifically defined in Appendix A.

The study attempted to explore amounts of time associated with unique stories involving particular news story types. For purposes of this study, usable data was limited to news stories, exclusive of commercials, sports reports, weathercasts, stock reports, and editorials. Consequently, the news hole was defined as newscast air time devoted to the broadcast of locally originated stories, exclusive of sports, weathercasts, stock reports, commercials, and editorials.

Perceived newsroom philosophy (of local TV news editors) referred to statements made by editors in personal interviews relating to unwritten criteria which editors perceived to be influential in the coverage of a unique news story. And, enterprise, as used in the study, was defined as original reporting or the generation and development of news stories solely or primarily as a consequence of reporter industriousness and intellect...for examples see Fishman (1980, p. 142, 143, 151).

For purposes of this study, enterprise reporting or enterprise journalism was not equated with the broadcast of unique news stories,

since such stories could have been enterprised by a newspaper and picked up by only one television station in a given market.

### Research Questions

Central research questions investigated in the study were discussed in general terms earlier in the chapter. Other questions which this thesis explored are listed below.

1. Is there a relationship between length of newscast and percentage of time devoted to non-duplicated stories?
2. Is there a relationship between length of newscast and percentage of non-duplicated stories broadcast?
3. Is there a relationship between length of newscast and percentage (amount) of time devoted to non-duplicated stories which are soft news?
4. Is there a relationship between length of newscast and percentage (amount) of time devoted to non-duplicated stories which are hard news?
5. Is there a relationship between market size and the number (percentage) of non-duplicated news stories likely to be broadcast by a station?
6. Is there a relationship between market size and the number (percentage) of duplicated news stories broadcast in a market?
7. What is the percentage of non-duplicated stories related to each story topic?
8. Is there a relationship between time devoted to non-duplicated stories and news story types?

In addition to the research questions outlined above, the study attempted to explore several qualitative questions relating to editors' perceived newsroom philosophies and editors' perceptions with regard to product differentiation of newscast content. These additional questions are listed below.

1. What perceived newsroom philosophy (or philosophies) are regarded as influential in editors' decisions to cover unique or non-duplicated stories?

2. Do editors perceive that they differentiate their stations' news product (content-wise) from other competing stations in the broadcast market?
3. If editors do hold this perception (as noted above in question 2), how specifically do they attempt to differentiate their stations' newscast content?



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature relating to diversity of television newscast content has been rather limited. Scholarly research directed at this problem has embodied differing approaches aimed at investigating varied aspects of the issue. This chapter provides an overview of systematic studies which have examined television newscast content diversity. In addition, scholarly studies pertaining to three broader areas, relating to theoretical issues and objectives of the thesis, are reviewed and summarized. Those related areas include (1) research approaches in the study of broadcast program diversity; (2) studies in electronic news gatekeeping; and (3) research on the agenda-setting influence of television news.

#### Studies in Television Newscast Content Diversity

Duplication of television news content has been the focus of some early studies which have generated, indirectly or otherwise, a heightened interest in TV news diversity in later years. Bagdikian (1971) investigated levels of duplication in newscast content broadcast by three television stations and 21 radio stations serving the Grand Rapids--Kalamazoo, Michigan area. A full day's news broadcasts aired by all 24 stations was recorded, transcribed, and subjected to analysis. Results of the analysis confirmed Bagdikian's theory that broadcast news exhibits a significant proportion of duplication and repetition,

with news from a few stations providing most of the information, while the remainder is contributed by the majority of local stations.

While Bagdikian (1971) presents a limited and insightful analysis of television news duplication and repetition, little attention was devoted to the description of news stories aired by only one of the 24 stations during the sample news day. This thesis contrasts with the above study by focusing analysis away from levels of duplication and the treatment of duplicated news stories and specifically toward levels of newscast content diversity exhibited by local television stations. Further, the dissertation attempted to provide descriptive data on unique or non-duplicated news stories by analyzing those stories with respect to story topic and story type.

Lemert (1974) also sought to verify the extent to which television manifests duplication of newscast content, however, his study examined content duplication by the three commercial networks. Lemert content-analyzed the early and late evening newscasts of ABC, CBS, and NBC over a 14-day period. Newscasts were videotaped and monitored at least twice by a team of three coders. Findings revealed that nearly 70% of the stories carried by one network during week days were covered by at least one of the other two networks. ABC carried the most duplicated stories (72.8%) compared to CBS with 72.5% and NBC with 64.8%. Slightly under 58% of all stories broadcast on weekdays were carried by all three television networks.

Another interesting finding reported by Lemert (1974) suggested that the proportion of content duplication among networks falls sharply on weekends. Approximately 39% of all stories broadcast by the networks on weekends were carried by all three networks, as opposed to nearly 58%



of stories broadcast on weekdays. The study is also significant here for its secondary focus on the proportion of non-duplicated stories aired by the three networks over the 14-day period. Approximately 42% of all stories aired by the networks on weekdays were not duplicated, compared with 61% of all stories aired on weekends.

This dissertation differs from Lemert's (1974) analysis in that the thesis focused on news content "diversity" only, and in the context of local television news. Like the Lemert study, the thesis analyzes news story type in terms of hard news stories and feature or soft news stories. The thesis, however, attempted to present a more detailed description of non-duplicated news items, in addition to describing their frequency over a five-day sample period. Additionally, the thesis attempted to provide perceptual data obtained from local television news editors to afford insight into their interests in covering unique or non-duplicated stories.

Fowler and Showalter (1974) analyzed the news content of the three commercial networks in an attempt to determine if they exhibit similarity in the selection and treatment of stories broadcast. The newscasts aired over a five-day period were audio taped and monitored by a team of coders. News items were classified into three categories: (1) those shared by all three networks; (2) those shared by any two networks; and (3) exclusive news items. The researchers found that more than three-fifths of the time on each network newscast involved topics covered by at least one other network. Conversely, about one-third of network newscast time was devoted to exclusive stories. Further, the researchers reported that each of the networks devoted at least 41% of its newscasts time to news items carried by both of the other networks. Similarity

in the ordering and treatment of stories was also noted among the three networks.

Sasser and Russell (1972) attempted to ascertain the legitimacy of the concept of "news judgment" by investigating shared stories disseminated by a newspaper, two television stations, and two radio stations in a metropolitan city. Story topics carried by both print and broadcast media were recorded over a ten-day period. The researchers found that approximately 43% of all local stories which appeared in the five media had been carried by at least two of the media. The percentage of local story topics shared by the two television stations investigated was 16%. Whereas the study investigated "shared stories" as a percent of total local stories carried, this thesis analyzed "unique stories" in a similar manner in each of three markets.

Lyle and Wilcox (1963) also studied similarity of media content exhibited by local television stations and newspapers. Six television stations and four metropolitan newspapers were monitored over a two-day period. In addition, the study focused attention on differences between television and newspapers with respect to the number and nature of news stories. Findings indicated that there existed a pronounced lack of agreement both between media and among media of the same type with respect to selection of individual news stories and story topics. Such evidence suggests that unique news stories are reported by broadcast media and that diverse newsroom philosophies may be influential in the dissemination of such stories.

Other studies of television news content have investigated differences in local newscast content in terms of source diversity, as

opposed to news item diversity. Nestvold (1973) examined diversity in local television news with respect to amounts of time devoted to local/area news by network affiliates, independent VHF stations, and independent UHF stations. The newscasts of 20 sample stations were monitored during a single selected weekday. Significant differences were reported in the amounts of time devoted to local/area news by network affiliates and independent VHF's as compared with the amount of local news time contributed by independent UHF stations. Nestvold described the local news coverage of independent UHF's as "an extremely minimal news effort" and he concluded that "as far as diversity of local news and public affairs is concerned, it would appear that the FCC's strong backing...for utilization of the UHF spectrum in the public interest has not yet borne fruit" (p. 351).

In another study of source diversity in local television news, Adams (1980) examined how ten Pennsylvania stations allocated newscast time in providing coverage of important developments in the cities of license, as well as in other cities and towns in the viewing area. Newscast data from both large and small market UHF and VHF stations were analyzed. Results showed that central cities obtained significantly more news coverage than other jurisdictions within the broadcast market. On most of the stations, approximately 50% of the total amount of newstime devoted to cover cities within the broadcast market was spent on the city of license or the central city. Adams (1980) also found that, generally, newstime devoted to cities and towns within the broadcast market, but outside the central city, was minimal.

The thrust of this thesis does not relate specifically to source diversity in local television news. Instead, the area of concentration

involves diversity of newscast content, as reflected by percentages of individual news items aired by only one station within a broadcast market on a given news day. This thesis, however, did attempt to investigate, to a limited degree, the sources of unique or non-duplicated stories. A major contribution of this thesis to the literature relates to the study's approach in exploring the localism issue from a perspective of information or content diversity, as exhibited in local television newscasts.

Numerous other studies of newscast content have investigated how local television stations (and the television networks as well) compare in the broadcast and treatment of particular types or categories of news content. Dominick, Wurtzel, and Lometti (1975) analyzed the newscast content of network affiliate stations in New York to ascertain the amount of time each devoted to hard and soft news. The researchers found that the stations were comparatively similar in the amount of time which each station devoted to hard news. The stations differed significantly, however, in the time which each station devoted to feature, human interest, and humor news content. Additional studies which have examined content differences and similarities among local television stations and among the three commercial networks include Anderson (1971), Lowry (1971b); Pride and Clarke (1973); Adams (1978b); Smith (1979); Ryu (1982); and Wulfemeyer (1982) among others.

#### Research on Broadcast Program Diversity

Diversity of broadcast programming, as this expression is used in the academic literature, refers to the number of different kinds of programs available to consumers (Owen, 1978). The concept is of relevance to this study in so far as it relates to the number of different

individual news stories and types of new stories aired by local television stations within a broadcast market. Also, as noted earlier, the theoretical perspective originated by Steiner (1952) served as a referent in considering potential relationships between market size and diversity of newscast content.

The rationale for Steiner's (1952) model was described in Chapter I. Generally, the model supports the view that the advertiser-support nature of commercial broadcasting has nurtured a conflict between a station's goals of maximizing its audience share and of contributing to program diversity, in an attempt to satisfy minority tastes and interests. Consequently, Steiner (1952) posits that competing broadcasters within a market will tend to duplicate the kinds of programs available to consumers. Monopoly broadcasters, in contrast, will tend to avoid program duplication by airing more diverse programming (according to the model) in an attempt to attract more viewers/listeners from smaller audience groups.

The Steiner model represented the seminal theoretical approach to interpreting relationships between audience preferences, market forces, and diversity of broadcast programming. This theoretical approach has been criticized and refined by economic scholars over the past three decades. Much of the criticism and refinement has been targeted at several of the key assumptions underlying the model. Those assumptions have been described by Owen (1977).

- (a) All broadcasts belonging to a given program type are assumed to be perfect substitutes.
- (b) The number of competing broadcasters is small, and broadcasting is supported entirely by advertising.



- (c) The distribution of tastes in the listening population is skewed, so that there are a large number of consumers who prefer some particular program type, and smaller "minority taste" groups preferring other types.
- (d) Listeners have no second choice programs; if their preferred program type is not available, they will not listen at all.
- (e) All programs have identical production costs and all listeners are worth equal amounts of advertising revenue to stations.

Owen (1977, p. 309)

In addition to questioning the underlying assumptions of the Steiner model, contemporary changes in the traditional advertiser-support nature of commercial broadcasting have prompted economists to formulate extensions of and alternatives to this early model of program diversity. What follows is a summarization of the literature which has characterized a changing and multifaceted contemporary conceptualization of broadcast program diversity and its determinants.

Early models of broadcast program diversity utilized assumptions relating to program costs, viewer preferences, and broadcast institutions to "predict program patterns and compare the extent to which viewers receive preferred programs" (Owen, Beebe, & Manning, 1974). Owen (1977), Owen (1978), and Owen, Beebe, & Manning (1974) have criticized several key assumptions of the Steiner model, characterizing them as stylized and unrealistic. These critics and others have argued that the model's assumptions over-emphasize distortions caused by the advertising support structure of commercial broadcasting, in addition to placing an inflexible structure on viewer preferences. The critics have also found fault with Steiner's (1952) assumptions about the "skewed" distribution of the listening audience's program tastes and about identical production costs of programs. The model's assumption that listeners have no

second choice programs or that they do not value other alternatives within a given format (or program type) has been strongly rebuked.

The growth and development of cable television and pay television has invalidated Steiner's assumption that the number of competing broadcasters within a market is small. The literature on broadcast program diversity following Steiner (1952) have liberalized, modified and/or eliminated one or more of the model's assumptions in an effort to better predict how monopolistic and competitive economic conditions in a broadcast market will influence program diversity, and ultimately listener/viewer satisfaction.

Rothenberg (1962) proposed a model partly comparable to that of Steiner but with at least two critical deviations from the earlier model's assumptions. Rothenberg suggested that if audience groups are willing to view programs other than their first choices, then competitive broadcasters are likely to widely duplicate these alternate types of programs before providing preferred program types. Rothenberg also posed the possibility that channel capacity in a market, being unlimited, would serve to balance potential negative effects on viewer satisfaction which could result from such program duplication by competitive broadcasters. However, he did not substantively address how monopoly broadcasters would influence program diversity under the above conditions.

Wiles (1963) proposed a more comprehensive and complex model which attempted to predict program diversity under various conditions relating to ownership structure, channel capacity, and support structure. He observed that television program diversity is strongly influenced in terms of the extent to which each condition manifests itself in a

given market. Under alternate properties of the above dimensions, Wiles (1963) demonstrated that both competitive and monopolist broadcasters are capable of producing a maximum degree of program diversity within a market.

Owen, Beebe, and Manning (1974) proposed a model which assumed that viewer choice was not exclusive, and which attempted to measure viewer satisfaction by assigning dollar values to program choices. While retaining some of the institutional detail of the Steiner model, the model offered by these researchers presents a more liberal framework with respect to viewer preferences, channel capacities, program cost, and allocation of television resources. Under an advertiser support structure, Owen, Beebe, and Manning (1974) maintain, under a given set of assumptions, that competitive broadcasters will generate a level of program diversity at least equivalent to that of monopolist broadcasters. Further, the model predicts that under an advertiser support structure with unlimited channels, a competitive system will generally provide more program diversity than would likely result under a monopolized system.

Owen, Beebe, and Manning (1974) also posited that for both pay television and cable television systems, where channel capacity is ample, a competitive market (for broadcasters) is likely to result in higher levels of program diversity than would a monopolistic market. Additional models and theoretical perspectives relating to broadcast program diversity have been offered by McGowan (1967), Greenberg and Barnett (1971), Levin (1971), Litman (1979), Long (1979), Spence and Owen (1977), Owen (1977) and Noll, Peck, and McGowan (1973) among others.

### Studies in Electronic News Gatekeeping

A secondary objective of this thesis was to examine local television news editors' perceived newsroom philosophies as they might relate to the coverage of unique or non-duplicated news stories. This aspect of the gatekeeping process has at least been hinted at in earlier studies of print and broadcast news gatekeeping (White, 1950; Breed, 1955; Epstein 1973). Of the pool of systematic broadcast news gatekeeping studies reported previously, none have investigated, in specific fashion, editor perceptions about unwritten newsroom philosophies which influenced the coverage of exclusive news items.

The term "gatekeeping," as used in the mass communication literature, refers to the behavior and/or practices of individuals or of forces within a communication channel which control the fate of a news item at certain points along the channel (Buckalew, 1974). Gatekeeping theory suggests that there are gates in the news channel which operate to accept some news items and to reject others. The "gatekeepers" are typically editors employed by a news organization. Burgoon and Ruffner (1978) have observed that gatekeeping involves more than simply deciding which information gets disseminated to the public.

It (gatekeeping) may involve timing, repetition, prominence, withholding, display, and emphasis of certain communication messages. By exercising these types of decisions, gatekeepers wield a great deal of power and responsibility (p. 350).

The origin of gatekeeping theory has often been identified with the work of Lewin (1947) during World War II. Lewin, a social psychologist, studied food purchasing habits of housewives and the channels by which food items traveled from the supermarket to the consumer. Lewin (1947) posited that the channel along which a food

item traveled from store to housewife was composed of gate sections. He observed that impartial rules or gatekeepers govern which food units flow into and out of each gate section. The passage of a food unit through the entire channel, Lewin theorized, depended largely upon the actions of the gatekeepers within each gate region. In passing, Lewin (1947) wrote that the same operational framework applied to the traveling of a news item through certain communication channels in a group.

White (1950) applied the gatekeeping perspective to mass communications in his seminal study which analyzed the editing decisions of a single wire editor employed by a midwest daily newspaper. Over a seven-day period, the subject (Mr. Gates) rejected almost nine-tenths of the wire copy he received from three wire services. After analyzing Mr. Gate's written comments for rejecting news items, White concluded that the editor's decisions were highly subjective and a consequence of newspaper space limitations.

The gatekeeping perspective has been further developed and refined largely through the work of Merton (1957), Schramm (1960), Ward (1967), and Westley and MacLean (1957) among others. A number of the earliest gatekeeping studies focused on the editing activities of wire editors and their perceived criteria for rejecting news items (Gieber, 1956; Casey and Copeland, 1958; Jones, Trolldahl, and Hvistendahl, 1961, and Liebes, 1966). In one such print media study of the gatekeeping process, Breed (1955) analyzed the potential relationship between social forces in the newsroom and news decisionmaking. He interviewed approximately 120 newsmen employed by a group of middle-sized daily newspapers. One of his findings was of key relevance to this thesis...

that the publisher's policy, in addition to role expectations of peers and superiors, may exert a significant influence on news decisionmaking.

Extending the gatekeeping theoretical perspective to the broadcast newsroom, Buckalew (1969) investigated potential factors which influence the decisions made by television news editors in selecting from their input. Using the Q-Sort method, he observed the retention and rejection of news items from a pool of input available to twelve television news editors. All of the news items were coded in terms of the news facets which each story contained, e.g. conflict, proximity, timeliness. Buckalew (1969) found that of the combinations of news facets with high frequencies of occurrence, the most highly favored involved known principal, proximate, timely, and video facet elements. The combination was used in the editors' newscasts in 62 percent of the cases where it was selected for the input pool. Buckalew (1974) used a similar research approach with a sample of radio news editors and obtained generally similar results.

Use of Q-analysis has been made in several studies of broadcast news gatekeeping including Clyde and Buckalew (1969), and Keirstead (1966). Q-methodology, a research technique which permits subjects to express preferences logically in varied settings, was applied to mass communications by Stephenson (1967). MacLean (1967) noted that the utility of the technique lies in its sorting procedures which closely resemble the gatekeeper decision process.

In addition to the work of Breed (1955) other research into the electronic news gatekeeping process has focused attention on organizational and social forces in the broadcast newsroom. Bailey and Lichty (1972) turned their attention to the news organization itself,

as the genuine gatekeeper. To demonstrate the utility of this perspective, the researchers employed a cybernetic gatekeeping model in examining the communication-decision network at NBC news. The study examined the organization's decisionmaking activities in the coverage and presentation of the infamous Loan execution during the Vietnam era. Personal interviews with many of the news personnel who helped package the film report supported the authors' conclusion that formal and informal communications-decisions networks at NBC served to reduce the individuality of decision. Bailey and Lichty (1972) also reported that such networks influenced staff members' conceptualization of what kinds of film stories were acceptable to superiors and to the NBC audience.

Epstein (1973) observed news operations at NBC, CBS, and ABC to investigate organizational levels of control and their potential influence on the news decisionmaking process. He found that network broadcast news gatekeepers held disparate news values and that these differences were largely moderated by organizational requirements. Epstein (1973) observed that on a given day all three networks' versions of the news will be similar as a result of common organizational requirements. Some of the organizational requirements which he has cited include FCC regulations, budgetary constraints, and audience maintenance considerations.

The studies of Bailey and Lichty (1972) and Epstein (1973) suggest like Breed (1955) that some social forces inside the newsroom serve to promote conformity among staffers with respect to organizational objectives. One aspect or element of those social forces which influence news decisionmaking could be the perceived newsroom philosophy of

editors. This thesis attempted to explore this potential relationship in the context of the local television newsroom.

Additional studies have also pointed to the role of unseen forces in the newsroom which have potential for influencing the television news product disseminated to the public. Drew (1972) examined the role behaviors of three television beat reporters. Interview questions and semantic differential type scales were used to determine role expectations which a reporter perceived as directing his newsgathering behavior. Drew found that reporters' perceived expectations of their organizations and audiences were important forces in reportorial decisionmaking.

Warner (1968) investigated the influence of organizational variables upon the network television gatekeeping process. Using participant observation and interview techniques, he found that organizational factors function as agents of socialization in the newsroom and in news decisionmaking. Warner's findings suggested that many gatekeepers are involved at many different levels in the news selection process. Other researchers who have investigated electronic news gatekeeping by means of the participant observation approach include Altheide (1976), Tuchman (1978), Gans (1979), Epstein (1973), and Efron (1971) among others.

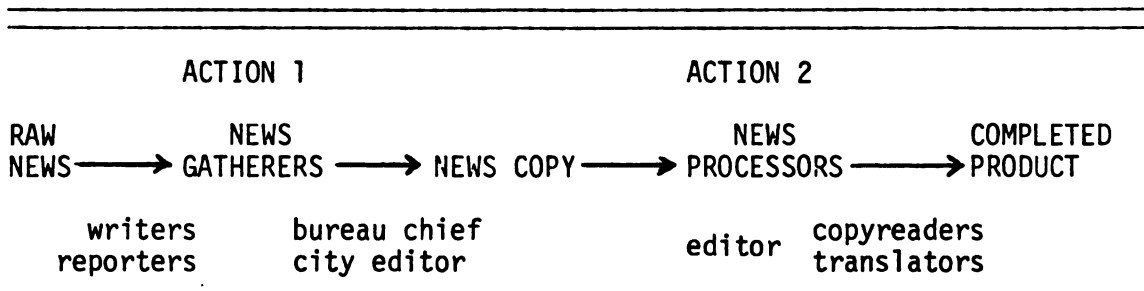
Contemporary studies of mass media gatekeeping have generally acknowledged the complexity of the news decisionmaking process. Early gatekeeping studies focused primarily on individual gatekeepers and their "private" decisions for rejecting wire stories. Bass (1969) has suggested that the focus of such studies may have been misplaced. In his Double-Action Internal Newsflow model (shown in Figure 1), Bass attempted to demonstrate the validity of dividing the news decision



making process into two functionally separate parts, which he labeled "news gathering" and "news processing." He proposed that future gatekeeping research devote greater attention to the news gatherer level of the gatekeeping process. An implication of this approach might be for future gatekeeping research to examine news decisionmaking from the perspectives of news reporters and writers than from the perspective of copy editors.

Figure 1

## Double-Action Internal Newsflow



Source: Abraham Z. Bass, Refining the "Gatekeeper" Concept: a UN Radio Case Study, Journalism Quarterly, 1969, 46, 72.

Frank (1973) examined several message dimensions of network television news and identified several stages of gatekeeping which may occur prior to the broadcast of newscasts. These stages include selection by the news organization of where reporters will be assigned; selection by the newsmaker of what he/she wishes to reveal to the newsman; and the selection by the reporter of those aspects of a story which he feels should be reported. Frank (1973) observed that bureaucratic gatekeeping practices and influences also affect network news selection. Perceived newsroom philosophy of the local television news editor was one such potential influence examined in this thesis.

Other studies of the broadcast news gatekeeping process have included the works of Waxman (1973), Harless (1974), and Marks (1968).

### The Agenda-Setting Influence of Television News

The study of local television news diversity poses implications relative to the medium's contribution to an informed electorate. The creation of public awareness of local issues is one way in which local television news makes such a contribution (Lucas and Possner, 1975). But the influence of local television news (and network television news as well) on public perceptions may not be limited to mere awareness of issues. Because television is a primary source of news for most Americans, mass communications researchers have investigated the potential of television news to influence the order of importance which citizens attribute to issues of the day. Further, researchers have investigated the potential influence of television news on the "salience" which citizens attribute to particular issues, especially political issues.

McCombs and Shaw (1976) observed "Audiences not only learn about public issues and other matters from the media, they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis the media places upon it" (p. 18). This ability of the mass media has often been termed "the agenda-setting function." The rationale for the corresponding hypothesis has been well stated by McLeod, Becker, and Byrne (1974, p. 137):

The central proposition of the agenda-setting hypothesis is that an audience member exposed to a given medium agenda will adjust his or her perceptions of the importance of issues in the direction corresponding to the amount of attention devoted to those issues in the medium used.

In the context of political campaigns, the agenda-setting function of mass media assumes a new level of civic importance. By influencing the "priorities" which voters associate with particular issues, the mass media can exert an impact on voter evaluations of candidates and the electoral outcome as well (Iyengar, 1979). Previous studies on the agenda-setting influence of television news have differed in their conclusions on the degree of impact which the news medium exerts on personal and public agendas. What follows is a summary of the literature relating to the role of television news in the agenda-setting process.

Numerous agenda-setting studies have compared the relative efficacy of television news and newspapers as agenda-setters, most often in the context of political campaigns and/or related issues. Although research findings have been mixed, the majority of such studies have found newspapers to be a more effective (or influential) agenda-setter than television news (Tipton, Haney, and Baseheart, 1975; Benton and Frazier, 1976; McClure and Patterson, 1976; Mullins, 1977; McCombs, 1972; and Williams and Larsen, 1977).

Some studies, however, which have examined television content alone have reported significant agenda-setting effects (Shaw and Bowers, 1973; Frank, 1973; Zucker, 1978). Although television news has been frequently found to be less effective than newspapers in setting personal and public agendas, the literature generally supports the claim that television, in addition to other media, "influences the degree of attention the public gives to topics, persons, and symbols, thereby affecting the conduct and outcome of political activity."

Palmgreen and Clarke (1977) interviewed 400 Toledo, Ohio residents and analyzed the city's newspaper and television coverage of selected

problems to study each medium's agenda-setting influence on both local and national levels. Contrary to earlier findings, the researchers found that network television exercised a stronger agenda-setting influence than newspapers at the national level. On the local level, however, newspapers were found to be the more effective agenda-setter.

In a study of voters' issue perceptions during the 1972 presidential campaign, Shaw and Clemmer (1977) found generally that voters who claimed to have watched television more frequently tended to better reflect network television issue emphasis than did voters who watched less frequently. The researchers observed that in analyzing the agenda-setting influence of network news at two different points of the presidential campaign, that evidence demonstrated that television has greater potential for shaping voter perceptions at the conclusion of a campaign.

McClure and Patterson (1974) explored how voters' belief changes (during the 1972 presidential campaign) related to voters' exposure to both television network news and political commercials. The researchers found that televised campaign commercials provide voters significantly more issue information than network news. McClure and Patterson also reported a direct and dramatic association between belief change and voter exposure to television news.

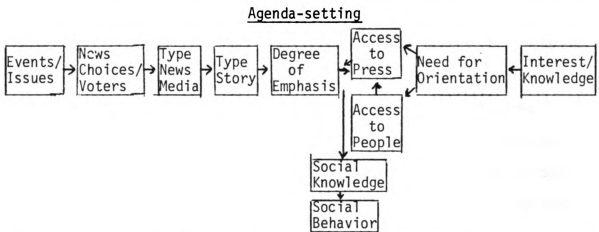
Additional studies of television news agenda-setting have reported both mixed and inconclusive findings with respect to the news medium's influence on public perceptions of issue salience. McClure and Patterson (1976) and Tipton, Haley, and Baseheart (1975) have reported findings which suggest little or no relationship between degree of television coverage of political issues and voter perceptions of issue

salience. Iyengar (1979) conducted a longitudinal study to explore the relationship between network news coverage and viewer perceptions of issue salience. A modest relationship was reported between the above two variables, however, the causal direction of that relationship was not clearly established.

Inconsistent findings with respect to the extent to which television news influences personal and public agendas appears to have contributed to the view, shared by many mass communication researchers, that newspapers, network television, and local television perform distinct agenda-setting roles for a variety of reasons. In turn, the extent of each medium's role may be influenced by numerous internal and external factors. Figure 2 shows a model of agenda-setting constructed by Shaw (1977).

Figure 2

### Crucial Variables in the Agenda-Setting Process



Source: Donald L. Shaw, "The Press Agenda in a Community Setting," in Donald L. Shaw and Maxwell E. McCombs (eds.) The Emergence of American Political Issues: The Agenda-Setting Function of the Press, (St. Paul 1977), p. 21.

The model demonstrates the potential complexity of the gatekeeping process for mass media generally. As may be observed, about half of the agenda-setting variables (those on the left) relate to the news media, while the other half of variables shown in the model (those on the right) relate to audience members. Shaw (1977) observed that agenda-setting is the end product of a process of institutional and personal decisions, which has relevance for public perceptions about both political and non-political issues.

McCombs (1976) has identified several "contingent conditions" which influence agenda-setting, based on previous research. Some of these conditions include need for orientation, frequency of interpersonal discussion, media exposure, and the individual's voting decision state. A noteworthy example of television's ability to contribute to the public agenda was Watergate. Numerous studies have found that television's live coverage of the Watergate hearings was an important force on public awareness and perceptions about related issues (Robinson, 1974; Kraus and Chaffee, 1974).

The agenda-setting influence of local television news is a relevant concept with respect to the interests of this thesis in studying a particular form of news content and a potential aspect of the news selection process as related to this form of content (unique stories). This influence is also one which has relevance to the gatekeeping process. Shaw (1977) observed "...there likely are institutional agenda-setting processes (by information sharing among reporters and news editors, for example) which are nested within the larger societal process" (p. 28).

By investigating editors' perceived newsroom philosophies in covering unique stories, this thesis extended inquiry into a potentially significant aspect of how the agenda is shaped for local television news inside the institution of the TV newsroom. Agenda-setting also relates potentially to stories and types of stories which receive little or no coverage in the media and about which public awareness is limited. Relatively few studies have approached the agenda-setting function from the perspective that the media's sparse coverage of certain stories or types of stories might hold consequences for public perceptions and social knowledge. This thesis, while not dealing directly with the above issue, hopes to set the stage, from a theoretical and policy standpoint, for the conduct of such studies in the future.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

#### Design of Study

The case study method was the primary research approach applied in this analysis. Because the thesis represented a descriptive study of local television news content diversity in three individual markets, the method appeared to be appropriate for the objectives of this pilot study. A two-stage research design was employed for the dual purpose of analyzing local television news content diversity and for describing editors' perceived newsroom philosophies in the coverage of unique local news stories. The study design consisted of a quantitative content analysis of local television news stories broadcast in the three markets, followed by in-depth personal interviews with news editors of the television stations.

The three markets analyzed in this case study included Detroit, Michigan; Toledo, Ohio; and Lansing, Michigan. A total of nine commercial broadcast television stations from the above three markets comprised the group of broadcast outlets investigated in the study. Stations selected for this investigation all met the criteria for market size, as defined in Chapter I, that is... commercial broadcast television stations which originated a substantive and regular (daily) news broadcast to a common geographic region within one of the three markets. A substantive local news broadcast was defined (in terms of time) as a



daily newscast containing at least 10 or more minutes of locally originated news. Public television stations in the three markets, in addition to commercial stations imported from outside either market via cable, were excluded from analysis in this thesis.

Based on the selection criteria outlined above, the three markets were considered to represent different market sizes based on the number of commercial broadcast stations airing substantive local newscasts on a daily basis. For purposes of this study, Detroit was regarded as a 4-station market, while Toledo was regarded as a 3-station market. At the time of this study, Lansing was regarded as a 2-station market. All but two of the nine stations included in the analysis were VHF network affiliates. The lone independent station investigated, WGPR (Detroit), was a black owned, UHF broadcast facility. The other UHF property, WDHO (Toledo), was a network affiliated station. A description of stations and markets is provided in the section "Description of Markets," which follows later in this chapter.

Because this thesis is primarily a content study aiming to describe a particular form of local television news content, the scope of the study was limited to analyzing unique local television news stories aired by the nine stations over a five-day period. The unit of analysis was the news story, defined as "any topic introduced by the anchorman coupled with any report or reports by other correspondents on the same topic and any concluding remarks by the anchorman" (Fowler and Showalter, 1974, p. 713). The early evening local newscasts of sample stations were audiotaped and a pool of unique news stories examined in this analysis.

The data which this study sought to obtain were descriptive and designed to illustrate (primarily by percentages) the extent to which

individual markets exhibited content diversity in local television news. In addition, the data were expected to describe local television news diversity in the three markets as it related to various story topics and story types. It was expected that data obtained from a content analysis of newscast output would permit comparisons to be made between markets with regard to local television news diversity. Finally, transcribed data obtained from in-depth personal interviews with news editors of the stations were expected to help provide insight into the qualitative issues examined in the study relating to "editors' perceived newsroom philosophies" in the coverage of unique news stories.

Because this thesis represented an exploratory pilot study, utilizing the case study approach, maximum generalizability of findings was not an overriding concern. An underlying mission of the study from its inception was to serve as a model and preliminary investigation by which future studies, incorporating a representative and comprehensive sample of both stations and markets, might be guided. Consequently, the markets and sample period included in this analysis were purposively selected. The three markets studied were chosen because they exemplified different sized broadcast markets within traveling distance of the author. This latter condition facilitated the administration of in-depth personal interviews to station news editors by the author within approximately one month following the sample period. This deadline was considered to be a significant one because the interviews were centered around specific news items broadcast by the stations, and memory loss on the part of editors could have limited the value of these exchanges. (See Appendix B.) Ultimately, memory loss with respect to sample news stories was not a problem among editors.

### Description of Variables Studied

This dissertation investigated the universe of all local television news stories, by analyzing a limited sample of that population. Local news stories were defined as news items originated by a television station and which made reference to people, places, events, and issues within the station's coverage area. State, national, and international news stories which did not contain a local news peg were not considered local news for purposes of this analysis. A unique news story was defined as a locally originated story broadcast within a broadcast market and aired by only one station within the market on a given news day.

Because of the descriptive and narrative nature of the thesis, no individual hypotheses tests were attempted...rather, the patterns and findings which emerged from the data were used to answer a series of specific research questions related to the objectives of the study as noted in Chapter I. However, one broad hypothesis adapted from Steiner's (1952) theoretical framework on program diversity was used as a general guide in exploring the relationship between size of broadcast market and local television news diversity. That hypothesis, simply stated, was the larger the broadcast market the greater the number of unique stories likely to be broadcast. The independent variable, market size, was described earlier in regard to the selection of the three markets. For purposes of this thesis, market size referred to the number of stations within a market, which originated a substantive and regular (daily) local newscast (those stations being commercial broadcast operations).

A central variable investigated in the study (which may be regarded as the dependent variable) was local TV news content diversity. In this

thesis, news content diversity referred to the percentage of unique or non-duplicated news items broadcast by stations studied in a given market over a five-day sample period, based on the number of all local news stories aired in the market. Consequently, the news content diversity of each of the three markets was ascertained by obtaining a ratio of unique news stories to all local news stories broadcast within the market over the sample period. An average of these ratios for all three markets was used to describe (in terms of percentage) the news content diversity exhibited by all three markets collectively.

Other variables examined in the study included story topic, story type, duplicated story, story time, and story originality. Each of the above variables were operationally defined in terms of the coding criteria and objectives illustrated in Appendix C. The variable story topic referred to one of ten topic categories into which each local television news story was placed by an independent panel of coders. This group of topic categories was developed by the author, and definitions used in assigning each category are included in Appendix A.

Duplicated story (or story duplication) was defined as a condition in which two local news stories, broadcast in the same market on a given sample day, shared the same news peg, including discussion of the same event, the same principal characters, and the same geographic location. Duplicated stories did not have to include the same details. If the basic stories were the same, they were considered duplicates, even though the reporting may have taken different directions and provided unique information. Duplicated stories were coded in such a way as to describe the number of stations sharing a particular story within a broadcast market on a given sample day.

The variable story time was defined as the number of seconds a station devoted to an individual local news story. Each member of the panel of coders timed local news stories (recorded on audio tape) to the nearest second and wrote the time (in seconds) on each story's individual code sheet. In describing quantities of time associated with unique news stories, the time recorded for each news story and group of news stories was transformed from seconds to minutes and fractions of minutes and reported thusly to aid interpretability of the data.

The variable story type referred to one of two content categories into which local news items were coded. These two categories were hard news and soft news. Again, this variable (like story topic) was operationally defined in terms of coding procedures used in the study's content analysis. Local news items specifically relating to any one of the ten story topic categories, with the exception of Human Interest/Feature, were coded as hard news. All local news items specifically relating to the topic category Human Interest/Feature were coded as soft news.

Story originality, as mentioned in this study, referred to whether a local news story had been repeated in a station's newscast on a given sample day. An independent panel of coders listened to audio recordings of the sample newscasts and coded each local news story as either a non-repeat or a repeat depending on how often an individual story was reported in a station's newscast on a given sample day. The story originality variable was included in the study to draw a distinction between individual local news stories and repetition of the same story or stories within a newscast. This distinction was a necessary one in ascertaining the total number of individual local news stories within a given newscast.

Only one newscast (the early evening newscast) was considered for each station on a given news day. While repetition of a story was generally infrequent, this practice occurred most often in the Detroit market where newscast length generally exceeded the traditional 30-minute program format. These longer Detroit newscasts accounted for 63 or the total 69 repeat stories aired across all markets.

Additional variables examined in the study related to editor perceptions and were defined in terms of perceptual data obtained from in-depth personal interviews with news editors of local stations. "Perceived newsroom philosophy," for example, referred to statements made by editors in the interviews relating to unwritten criteria which editors perceived to be influential in the coverage of certain unique stories. Product differentiation, as mentioned in the study, referred to ways which news editors perceived that they purposefully varied their selection of local news items in a given newscast within a market on a given sample day. Specific questions and probes contained in the interview questionnaire (see Appendix D) solicited comments from editors with regard to product differentiation approaches which they (the editors) perceived they may or may not have applied to the text or content of local news stories carried on each of the five sample days.

### Description of Markets

The following section provides a description of each of the three local television markets included in this study. The markets selected for study represented a relatively broad distribution with respect to market ranking. The 1982 edition of Broadcasting Cablecasting Yearbook ranks broadcast markets in terms of ADI's, an audience measurement

parameter. This source ranked the Detroit market number 7, the Toledo market number 59, and the Lansing market number 96. The information reported on each market includes identification and description of commercial television stations studied in the thesis, in addition to selected demographic data on each of the three localities at or about the time that the study took place (June 1982).

It should be emphasized that the study sought to address the proposition that more unique news items are broadcast in markets in which there are more stations. Consequently, the study sought to describe what each additional station in a market adds to the community's budget of unique news stories and to its information pool, generally. Three different-sized broadcast news markets were investigated to accomplish the above goal and to provide an analysis based upon several different types of broadcast markets.

The station and selected demographic information reported in this section was based on data and figures reported in Broadcasting Cable-casting Yearbook 1982, Sales and Marketing Management: 1982 Survey of Buying Power, Television and Cable Factbook (1982-83 Edition), and State and Metropolitan Area Data Book 1982. These sources are cited fully in the References section of this thesis.

### The Detroit Market

Located in the southeastern portion of the state of Michigan, Detroit ranks among the ten largest metropolitan cities in the United States. Recognized as the leading automobile manufacturing city in the nation, automotive sales accounted for over \$4,000,000,000 of the city's total retail sales in 1981. The central city and surrounding area cover

a region of approximately 3,339 square miles. The total population for Detroit and its suburbs at the time of the study was approximately 4,329,000 residents. The Census Bureau's 1980 Census of Population and Housing indicated that the largest proportion of Detroit residents (approximately 72 percent) live outside the central city.

Detroit's population, including surrounding suburbs, in 1980 was composed of approximately 78 percent whites, 20 percent blacks, and 2 percent Hispanics. The median age of Detroiters during the period of the study was approximately 30 years old, however a relatively large proportion of Detroit residents (25 percent) were age 50 and older. Approximately 20 percent of the Detroit population was school aged (between 6 and 17 years old). And, the city and environs was occupied by approximately 1.5 million households.

Census data on Detroit's employment and economic condition during 1980 indicated the following. The city's civilian labor force totaled slightly over 2,000,000 employees, while the greater city faced an unemployment rate of 13.1 percent. Inside the central city, the jobless rate was 16.6 percent. During the period of the study, the effective buying income of Detroit residents (or personal income minus personal tax payments) was estimated to total \$44.8 billion, while retail sales totaled \$22.4 billion. Food and automotive retail establishments, respectively, accounted for the highest dollar amounts in retail sales.

Approximately 71 percent of Detroit's 1.6 million housing units were owner-occupied during the period of the study. As for the incidence of crime, 1980 census data showed that of the 327,418 serious crimes committed in the city and its suburbs, robberies constituted the most frequent serious crime, or nearly 26 percent of such crimes. The



rate of crime in Detroit was reported to be 7,552 serious crimes per 100,000 residents.

### Detroit Television Stations

Of the six local television stations serving greater Detroit, only four met the selection criteria for this study, i.e. qualifying as U.S. commercial broadcast stations originating substantive local newscasts on a daily basis. Those four stations were WXYZ, WDIV, WJBK, and WGPR. Three of the stations in this broadcast market, WXYZ, WDIV, and WJBK were VHF network affiliates. One of the three, WXYZ, was a network owned broadcast property, under the control of the American Broadcasting Company (ABC). One Detroit station which was distinct from the other stations in some respects was WGPR. This UHF independent station was one of a relatively small number of commercial television stations nationally which operate under minority (black) ownership. What follows is a more detailed description of each sample station studied in the Detroit broadcast market.

WXYZ, Channel 7, was a VHF television station affiliated with ABC Network at the time this study was undertaken. As noted above, WXYZ is owned by the American Broadcasting Company, and as such, represented the only network owned station in the 9-station case. Located on West Ten Mile Road in Southfield, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit, WXYZ began broadcast operation on October 9, 1948. The station's average daily circulation (the average number of different television households reached by the station daily) was approximately 1,098,900 households. The counties in WXYZ's coverage area in which net weekly circulation (the approximate number of different television households viewing the

station at least once a week) is 50 percent or greater include Jackson, Lapeer, Lenawee, Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne.

In addition to the above counties, the following Michigan counties are also within WXYZ's coverage area: Genesee, Hillsdale, Sanilac, Branch, Ingham, Shiawassee, and Tuscola. WXYZ's signal is also received in the Ohio counties of Fulton, Lucas, and Wood. Television penetration (or the percent of total homes having one or more TV sets) within the Michigan and Ohio counties which received WXYZ (as listed above) was 98 percent for a total of 3,219,900 households. WXYZ's broadcast signal is also received in some Canadian markets.

WDIV, Channel 4, was a VHF station affiliated with NBC network during the period of the study and was owned by Post-Newsweek Stations. The Detroit station began broadcast operation June 3rd, 1947 and its studios were located at 622 Lafayette Boulevard in Detroit. WDIV's average daily circulation totaled 967,000 households during the period of the study. Those counties receiving WDIV in which net weekly circulation was 50 percent or greater included Lapeer, Lenawee, Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Sanilac, Washtenaw, and Wayne.

Additional Michigan counties receiving WDIV's broadcast signal included Genesee, Jackson, Hillsdale, Ingham, Shiawassee, and Tuscola. Ohio counties which receive WDIV's signal were Fulton, Henry, Lucas, Ottawa, Sandusky, and Wood. Television penetration within the Michigan and Ohio counties which received WDIV (as listed above) was 98 percent, representing a total of 2,855,400 households. The station's broadcast signal was also received in some Canadian markets.

WJBK, Channel 2, was a VHF station affiliated with CBS network at the time of the study and the station was owned by Storer Broadcasting Company. The station's studios were located at 1948 Storer Place in Southfield, Michigan. WJBK began broadcast operation on October 24, 1948. The station's average daily circulation during the period of the study was approximately 992,400 households. Those counties receiving WJBK in which net weekly circulation was 50 percent or more included Lapeer, Lenawee, Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne.

Other Michigan counties receiving WJBK's broadcast signal were Genessee, Jackson, Sanilac, Arenac, Hillsdale, Shiawassee, and Tuscola. Ohio counties which received WJBK included Fulton, Lucas, Ottawa, Seneca, and Wood. Television penetration within all counties receiving WJBK (as listed above) was 98 percent, representing a total of 2,687,300 households. The station is also received in Canadian markets.

WGPR, Channel 62, was a black owned UHF independent station during the period of the study. The principal owner of the property was International Free and Accepted Modern Masons, Incorporated. The station's main studios were located at 3146 East Jefferson Avenue in Detroit, and WGPR began broadcast operation September 29, 1975. The station's average daily circulation during the study was 44,800 households. Those counties which received WGPR's broadcast signal included the Michigan counties of Oakland, St. Clair, and Wayne. Television penetration within the above counties was approximately 98 percent, representing a total of 2,045,500 households.

All of the Detroit stations studied, except WGPR, subscribed to both the Associated Press and United Press International wire services.

The full-time staff size of news departments at the nine stations ranged from 9 to 117 employees.

### The Toledo Market

Located at the northern tip of the state of Ohio, just beyond the Michigan-Ohio border, Toledo (and its surrounding area) covers a region of approximately 2,177 square miles. In 1981 total retail sales for the greater city totaled an estimated \$3.6 billion. Again food and automotive retail establishments led the way, accounting for approximately \$839 million and \$608 million respectively. The total population of greater Toledo during the period of the study was approximately 797,500 residents. Approximately 56 percent of the population resided in the surrounding suburbs.

The 1980 census data showed the racial composition of the city's population to be 89 percent white, approximately 9 percent black, and 2 percent Hispanic. The median age of Toledo residents during the study was approximately 30 years old. Like Detroit, a sizable percentage of Toledo residents (25 percent) are age 50 and older. Approximately 19 percent of the Toledo population was school aged (between 6 and 17 years old). And, the greater city was occupied by an estimated 285,400 households.

In 1980 Toledo's civilian labor force totaled 367,500 employees. While greater Toledo faced an unemployment rate of 10.4 percent, the central city's jobless rate was 10.8 percent. During the period of the study, the effective buying income of Toledo residents was estimated to be \$7.5 billion. Total retail sales, as mentioned earlier, reached an estimated \$3.6 billion.

Approximately 70 percent of Toledo's 304,500 housing units were owner-occupied in 1980. The greater city experienced a crime rate of approximately 6,877 serious crimes per 100,000 residents. Of the total 50,467 serious crimes committed in Toledo in 1980, the largest percentage of them (28 percent) were burglaries.

### Toledo Television Stations

The three sample stations studied in the Toledo broadcast market included WTOL, WTVG, and WDHO. All three stations were network affiliates, however, WTOL and WTVG were VHF broadcast properties, whereas WDHO was a UHF operation. Stations WTVG (Toledo) and WJBK (Detroit) were owned by the same corporation, Storer Broadcasting Company.

WTOL, Channel 11, was a VHF station affiliated with CBS network and the property was owned by Cosmos Broadcasting Corporation. WTOL began broadcast operation December 5, 1958, and the station's main studios were located at 730 North Summit Street in Toledo. The station's average daily circulation at the time of the study was 330,700 households. Those counties receiving WTOL in which the net weekly circulation was 50 percent or greater included the Ohio counties of Allen, Crawford, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Huron, Lucas, Ottawa, Putnam, Sandusky, Seneca, Williams, Wood, and Wyandot. Michigan counties which met the above condition were Hillsdale, Lenawee, and Monroe.

Additional counties in Michigan and Ohio which received WTOL's broadcast signal included Livingston, Washtenaw, Wayne, Auglaize, Marion, and Morrow. Television penetration within the Michigan and Ohio counties which received WTOL (as listed above) was an estimated 98

percent, representing a total of 3.8 million households. The station is also received in some Canadian markets. WTOL subscribed to the United Press International wire service.

WTVG, Channel 13, was a VHF station affiliated with NBC network during the period of the study. The station was owned by Storer Broadcasting Company and operated its main studios at 4247 Door Street in Toledo. WTVG began broadcast service on July 21, 1948 and the station subscribed to the United Press International wire service.

The station's average daily circulation during the study was approximately 310,400 households. The counties receiving WTVG in which the net weekly circulation was 50 percent or more included the Ohio counties of Crawford, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Hancock, Henry, Huron, Lucas, Ottawa, Putnam, Sandusky, Seneca, Williams, Wood, and Wyandot. Michigan counties which met the above condition were Lenawee and Monroe. Other counties in Michigan and Ohio which received WTVG's broadcast signal included Hillsdale, Allen, Hardin, Marion, Jackson, Washtenaw, Auglaize, Morrow, Paulding, Richland, and Van Wert. Television penetration within Ohio and Michigan counties which received WTVG (as listed above) was 98 percent, representing a total of 3.8 million households. The station is also received in Canadian broadcast markets.

WDHO, Channel 24, was a UHF station affiliated with ABC network at the time of the study. The station was owned at this time by D.H. Overmyer, Incorporated. WDHO began broadcast operation May 3, 1966, and the station subscribed to the Associated Press wire service during the study period. WDHO's main studios were located at 300 South Byrne Road in Toledo.

The station's average daily circulation at the time of the study totaled 245,200 households. The counties receiving WDHO in which the net weekly circulation was 50 percent or more included the Michigan counties of Lenawee and Monroe, and the Ohio counties of Allen, Defiance, Fulton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Lucas, Ottawa, Putnam, Sandusky, Seneca, Williams, Wood, and Wyandot. Other counties in Michigan and Ohio which received WDHO were Hillsdale, Washtenaw, Auglaize, Crawford, Erie, Huron, Marion, Morrow, Paulding, and Van Wert. Television penetration within these Michigan and Ohio counties receiving WDHO (as listed above) was approximately 98 percent, representing approximately 3.2 million households. WDHO is also received in some Canadian broadcast markets.

#### The Lansing-East Lansing Market

Located in the center of the state of Michigan, Lansing is the capital city and lies adjacent to the university community of East Lansing, home of Michigan State University. The Lansing-East Lansing market occupied a land area of approximately 2,289 square miles in 1980. During the year 1981 the market's total retail sales reached an estimated \$2.1 billion dollars. General merchandise establishments accounted for 18.6 percent and 16.5 percent, respectively, of total retail sales.

The total population of the greater Lansing-East Lansing area at the time of the study was approximately 480,000 residents (this figure includes only citizens who resided permanently in the market). Approximately 62 percent of the Lansing-East Lansing population resides in suburban areas outside the central city. The 1980 census data showed the racial composition of the market's population to be 92 percent white, 5 percent black, and 3 percent Hispanic.

The median age of Lansing-East Lansing residents during the period of the study was approximately 27 years old. Approximately 19 percent of area residents are age 50 and older. An estimated 19 percent of the Lansing-East Lansing population was school aged (between 6 and 17 years old). The greater Lansing-East Lansing area was occupied by approximately 165,700 households.

In 1980 the market's civilian labor force totaled approximately 237,000 employees. During the same period, the Lansing-East Lansing area experienced an unemployment rate of 10.5 percent. During the period of the study, the effective buying income of area residents was estimated to be \$4.6 billion. The 1980 census data indicated that of the market's 167,000 housing units, 66.3 percent were owner-occupied.

A total of 25,191 serious crimes were committed in the Lansing-East Lansing market during 1980. The largest category of serious crime was burglary, which accounted for 22 percent of all such crimes in the area. The crime rate for the area was estimated to be 5,387 crimes per 100,000 residents.

#### Lansing-East Lansing Television Stations

The two stations studied in the Lansing-East Lansing market were WJIM and WILX. Both stations were VHF network affiliates at the time of the study. WJIM, Channel 6, was affiliated with CBS network and the station operated its main studios at 2820 East Saginaw in Lansing. The principal owner of the broadcast property was Gross Telecasting, Incorporated. WJIM began broadcast operation May 1, 1950.

WJIM's average daily circulation at the time of the study was 214,600 households. Counties receiving WJIM in which the net weekly



circulation was 50 percent or more included Clinton, Eaton, Genesee, Gratiot, Hillsdale, Ingham, Jackson, and Shiawassee. Other Michigan counties which received WJIM's broadcast signal included Branch, Calhoun, Ionia, Livingston, Montcalm, Barry, Isabella, Kalamazoo, Lapeer, Lenawee, Mecosta, Midland, Oceana, Saginaw, Tuscola and Washtenaw. Television penetration within the markets listed above was estimated to be 98 percent, representing 881,900 households. WJIM subscribed to the United Press International wire service at the time of the study.

WILX, Channel 10, was affiliated with NBC network during the period of the study. The station was owned by Figgie International, Incorporated, and the WILX's main studios were located at 100 North Pennsylvania Avenue in Lansing. The station began broadcast operation May 15, 1959. WILX's average daily circulation at the time of the study was approximately 164,500 households.

Counties receiving WILX in which the net weekly circulation was fifty percent or greater included the Michigan counties of Branch, Calhoun, Clinton, Eaton, Hillsdale, Ingham, Jackson and Shiawassee. Additional counties in Michigan and Indiana which received WILX's broadcast signal included Gratiot, Ionia, Livingston, St. Joseph, La Grange, Steuben, Allegan, Barry, Genesee, Kalamazoo, Lenawee, Montcalm, Sanilac, and Washtenaw. Television penetration within the Michigan and Indiana counties listed above was approximately 97 percent, representing a total of 786,200 households. WILX subscribed to the United Press International wire service at the time the study was undertaken.

### Collection of Data

The primary sources of raw data in this study were the recorded early evening newscasts of the television stations and verbal responses from station news editors which were transcribed by the author during in-depth personal interviews. The transcribed interview data was obtained by the administration of a written questionnaire designed to solicit information on editors' perceived newsroom philosophies in the coverage of unique local news stories (see Appendix D). Newscast data were recorded on audio tapes by personnel assigned to monitor station newscasts broadcast in each of the three television markets.

### The Data Gathering Process

Initial data gathering procedures commenced in May of 1982. The author mailed personally addressed letters to the news directors of all nine stations briefly describing the study and requesting the editors' cooperation in participating in in-depth personal interviews as described above. A copy of one such letter is included in Appendix E. Early responses by editors to the letters were generally encouraging, and tentative plans for conducting interviews were discussed by the author and the editors over the next three to five weeks.

Also during the month of May, the author sought out and obtained the services of seven people to assist in the recording of sample newscast data in the three markets studied. Most of these recording assistants were contacted by Journalism and Telecommunication Department faculty members with whom the author corresponded at Wayne State University (in the Detroit market) and at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio (for the Toledo market). Most of the assistants

were undergraduate students in journalism or telecommunication at the above universities, and each of the assistants was paid a \$50 fee for their cooperation in monitoring and recording the newscast data assigned to them. In addition, each of the recording assistants was mailed a letter outlining: his/her specific responsibilities, an instruction sheet, audio cassette tapes, and stick-on labels (to identify the station and date associated with each recorded newscast). Copies of the first two items are provided in Appendix F. Assistants were asked to use their own audio cassette recorders.

The main sample period for the study was June 14-18, 1982. In addition to recording assigned newscasts for this five-day period, assistants were also required to record newscasts for the period of June 7-11, 1982, which preceeded the main sample period. The recorded news content from this additional five-day period was utilized to train coding personnel and to ascertain intercoder reliability. The author recorded the sample newscast data for the Lansing-East Lansing market.

In early June, prior to the taping of newscast data, the author designed a 17-item questionnaire which was used in the administration of in-depth personal interviews with editors described earlier. The questionnaire, included in Appendix D, was designed to gain perceptual data from station news editors as related to each budget of unique stories carried by editors' respective stations on each of the five sample days. Consequently, cards briefly describing each station's unique news stories on a given sample day were prepared and used in the interview process. These cards are provided in Appendix B.

All tape recordings made by the seven recording assistants were received by June 25, 1982. During the period of June 7-18, an

independent panel of coders, including the author, was recruited. This three member panel monitored the recorded newscast content and coded each local news story with respect to several variables discussed earlier in this chapter (after participating in three training sessions supervised by the author). Each coder was provided with a set of coding instructions and category definitions which were referred to during coding activities. Copies of the above items are included in Appendix A. The two coding assistants were both graduate students of the Department of Telecommunication at Michigan State University in East Lansing. Each assistant was paid a fee of four dollars per hour for participating in both training and formal coding sessions.

It should be emphasized that only the early evening newscast of each station was recorded for a given news day. This newscast was generally the first major newscast in the late afternoon or early evening (between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.). It was selected for analysis because the early evening news program is generally considered to be the show case news broadcast of the day, and is frequently the object of heavy sponsorship by local advertisers. This newscast was also selected for analysis because of a minimal probability that stations within a market would air a story based on having viewed it on a competing station earlier in the news day.

Due to a technical problem, the sample newscast recording for Toledo station WTOL (June 14, 1982) was not available for coding. Instead, a copy of the newscast script and story rundown sheet (complete with times for each story) used in the broadcast was obtained from the news director of WTOL-TV. These materials and the recorded newscast data were used by panel members in the coding of individual stories.



This formal coding process was carried out over a four-day period in early July.

In mid-July, data from the individual code sheets (see Appendix C) used in the formal coding process were transferred to cards for computer processing. Based on the information provided on the code sheets (and after some limited personal verification of the data by the author) the cards used in conducting in-depth personal interviews with editors were drafted. In addition, some slight modifications in the phrasing of some questionnaire items were made in an attempt to improve the clarity of the interview instrument. The questionnaire was also administered to several broadcast journalists employed in the Lansing market to check the instrument's utility in gathering the types of information for which it was designed. These informal checking procedures indicated that the final questionnaire was satisfactory with respect to the above considerations.

The interview questionnaire was carefully constructed to pose questions about editors' perceived newsroom philosophies in covering unique news items on individual news days. Some probes were included to obtain additional detail on such philosophies and to obtain perceptual data on news product differentiation and sources from which unique news items were obtained. The design of the questionnaire was relatively simple and straight forward, and because it was personally administered, the author had an opportunity to clarify questions as needed.

The final phase of the data gathering process involved the administration of in-depth personal interviews with station editors. This procedure was carried out over a four-day period (July 20-23, 1982)



approximately one month after the sample period. The author visited the newsrooms of eight of the nine TV stations and conducted interviews with the editors, who in most cases were station news directors. News editors at Detroit station WXYZ would not consent to a personal interview (for personal and policy reasons), but the station news director indicated that he would consider responding to a self-administered questionnaire. Consequently, the questionnaire utilized in personal interviews with the eight consenting editors was carefully transformed into a self-administered questionnaire to be used with the cards described earlier (see Appendix G).

Questionnaire items discussed with editors during personal interviews generally related to editors' perceived rationale and/or newsroom philosophies for covering the unique news stories carried by respective stations on each of the sample news days. Other interview questions related to the sources of unique stories and general information about the station news department, e.g. the number of full-time news department staffers, the number of ENG camera units used in the department, etc. Still additional questionnaire items asked editors about any conscious efforts which editors may or may not have made to differentiate the content of their respective newscasts from that of their competitors.

Another set of questionnaire items asked editors about their perceptions and evaluations of unique news stories carried by station competitors. Editors were asked why they chose not to cover and/or include such stories in their newscasts. News editors were also asked if their local newscasts devoted more attention to certain news topics over others. Each of the personal interviews was administered in an informal manner and included a number of probes to generate a more





detailed discussion of the relevant issues investigated. Notes of editors' responses were taken by the author during each personal interview. The length of each interview was approximately one hour. The self-administered questionnaire returned by WXYZ was partially completed by the news editor and the resulting information included in this analysis.

### Coding Procedures

The independent panel of coders described earlier in this chapter was chiefly responsible for monitoring each of 44 sample newscasts recorded on audio tape and for coding each local news items with respect to the variables specified on the formal code sheet. A copy of the code sheet is provided in Appendix C. Some of the key variables for which each local news story was coded included story time (in seconds), story topic, story type, story originality, and story duplication, all of which were described earlier in this chapter in the section "Description of Variables Studied."

In addition to coding individual stories with respect to the above variables, panel members were required to write a brief description for each local story. Unique stories aired in an individual market on a given sample day were numbered by panel members. This procedure was followed to provide ready identification of unique stories so they could be catalogued and placed on cards used in the administration of personal interviews. To facilitate the above procedure, each panel member generally was assigned coding responsibility for newscast data broadcast by one of the markets. Each coder was assigned to code recorded news output for an individual market and to keep a numbered

list of unique news stories, including a brief written description of each such item.

All items specified on the formal code sheet were assigned numbers to facilitate coding efficiency and to permit transfer of the resulting data to cards for computer processing. Before undertaking formal coding responsibilities, uniform coding practices and intercoder reliability were evaluated and enhanced by requiring panel members to participate in three training sessions. At these sessions, each panel member was familiarized with the formal code sheet and required coding responsibilities. In addition, panel members received detailed definitions for each story topic and story type as well as specific instructions on determining how to code certain types of stories (in the minority) which could conceivably relate to more than one topic category. Those definitions and special coding instructions are included in Appendix A.

Intercoder reliability was computed as a percentage of agreement between each pair of coders. An average of these percentages was expected to be 85 or higher before formal coding procedures would be attempted. Preliminary coding exercises, using randomly selected news items from newscasts of the extra sample week (June 7-11, 1982), were undertaken by panel members to determine intercoder reliability at two different stages of coder training. In each of the two exercises, panel members were asked to code the same recorded newscast content (approximately 30 minutes in length), after which intercoder reliability was checked for the variables story topic and story type. The reliability estimates which resulted were 77 percent and 81 percent respectively.

In these initial trials some critical differences were exhibited by coders with respect to story topic. A primary reason for this

difference was uncertainty about whether to include (for analysis) state news items with local pegs. It was decided to include such items in the analysis and to view them as local stories. State stories which did not contain a local peg were excluded from the analysis. This discrepancy and other minor discrepancies were resolved by openly discussing them and by implementing more specific coding guidelines for special story situations. These differences were later overcome as a result of additional initial trials. After additional training activities, an official estimate of intercoder reliability on story topic and story type variables was obtained by administering a final preliminary coding exercise. Intercoder reliability between each pair of coders averaged one hundred percent.

Discrepancies among coders in coding story topic and story type were resolved by clarifying specific elements of individual category definitions, and by including some additional guidelines for coding stories which represented special cases, where under differing conditions similar reports might be coded differently. These additional guidelines were discussed among coders to insure general comprehension and consistency in application.

Formal coding procedures were carried out by panel members over a four-day period in early July. Each member was provided with a tape recorder, marking pens, and code sheets which were used to document characteristics of the recorded newscast content in the study sample. Coding procedures took place both in a group as well as in private. And, intercoder reliability was checked several times during the coding process. Reliability estimates obtained during this process averaged

between 90 percent and 100 percent on the variables of story topic, story type, and story time.

### Analysis of Data

Shortly after the completion of the coding process, code sheet data were transferred to data processing cards and subsequently entered into the Cyber 750 computer system at Michigan State University. The data were then tabulated and treated according to basic programs of statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) (Nie, et al.). Data analysis included comparisons of news content diversity with respect to each market individually and with respect to all markets collectively.

Percentage data were utilized to describe the magnitude of news content diversity exhibited in each broadcast market. Percentage data were also used to describe story topics and story types most frequently associated with unique or non-duplicated stories. The data analysis included percentage breakdowns to show the quantity of time (in minutes) which each market devoted to unique stories over the five-day period. Additional percentages were computed to address other of the quantitative research questions outlined in Chapter I. These percentages related to: (1) the proportion of unique stories aired by each of the nine stations studied; (2) the amount of time stations devoted to unique stories associated with either of the two different story types; and (3) the proportion of "duplicated" stories broadcast in each market and the number of such stories broadcast. For purposes of this study, percentages were used to provide a measure of news content diversity within markets by dividing the total number of unique stories

aired in a given market over the five-day sample period, by the total number of all news items broadcast in the market over that period.

The data base of local television news output used in the content analysis included a total of 45 newscasts, which accounted for 37.5 hours of commercial broadcast time. The time devoted to an early evening news program by the sample stations ranged from 30 minutes (typical of most local TV stations) to a maximum format of two hours (broadcast by WXYZ in Detroit). The data were transferred to cards for computer analysis, and as a safeguard, the author went to the additional expense of verifying the keypunched data before it was entered into the computer system.

In addition to obtaining the percentage data described above, the data analysis process also included a qualitative analysis of transcribed interview data from in-depth personal interviews with news editors of the local stations. These data were generally presented in narrative form and were used to describe sources of unique news stories. The transcribed interview data were also examined and analyzed to provide description of news philosophies which editors perceived to be influential in the coverage of unique stories. In several instances interview data were analyzed in conjunction with percentage data derived from the content analysis to explore issues relating to (1) the relationship between number of full-time staff reporters and the percentage of unique stories broadcast; (2) the relationship between number of full-time news department employees and the percentage of unique or non-duplicated stories; and (3) the relationship between the number of ENG camera units used by the news department and the percentage of non-duplicated stories broadcast by a station.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Unique Story Output of Sample Stations

A total of 527 local news stories broadcast by the nine television stations were content analyzed. Table 3 below shows how stories were distributed among the nine stations. Stations WXYZ and WJBK aired the largest percentages of local news stories during the sample period, 22.8 percent and 16.5 percent, respectively, of all such news stories which were broadcast. This result was not particularly surprising, because both stations carried the longest newscasts of all stations (WXYZ - 2 hours, WJBK - 1.5 hours).

TABLE 3  
Frequency Distribution of Local News Stories by Station

Category Label	Absolute Freq.
WJBK	87
WXYZ	120
WDIV	42
WGPR	40
WTVG	45
WDHO	62
WTOL	56
WJIM	33
WILX	42
TOTAL	<u>527</u>

The distribution of local news items as aired over the five-day sample period was quite balanced. Table 4 below shows the quality of stories aired by all nine stations during each of the five news days. An average of 20 percent of the total local news items was broadcast by the stations on each day. This distribution was based on newscast data analyzed in the study, which included 45 individual newscasts covering a total of 37.5 hours of television news programming time.

TABLE 4  
Frequency Distribution of Local News Stories by Day

<u>Sample Day</u>	<u>Absolute Freq.</u>	<u>Relative Freq. (PCT)</u>
Monday, June 14	106	20.1
Tuesday, June 15	100	19.0
Wednesday, June 16	108	20.5
Thursday, June 17	113	21.4
Friday, June 18	100	19.0
TOTAL	527	100.0

Of the total 527 local news stories examined in the study, 265 items were coded as unique news stories. Consequently, nearly 50.3 percent or roughly half of all local news items broadcast over the sample period were non-duplicated stories. Table 5 shows the number and percentage of unique news stories broadcast by each of the nine stations. The stations which broadcast the largest number of unique stories were WXYZ (72), WJBK (42), and WDHO (31) respectively. It was noteworthy that Detroit station WXYZ also aired the largest percentage of unique



stories (60 percent), as may be observed in column three of Table 5. Stations WILX (Lansing) and WDHO (Toledo) aired the second and third largest percentages of unique stories, based on the total number of stories broadcast by each station (59.5 percent and 50 percent respectively).

The percentage of all unique stories contributed by each station as shown in column three of Table 5, and was based on a ratio of each station's total number of unique stories to the total number of all local stories aired, or the row percent for columns one and two. Again, Detroit station WXYZ made the largest contribution in this regard (60.00 percent), followed by station WILX (Lansing) with 59.52 percent and station WDHO (Toledo) with 50.0 percent. In terms of sheer quantity of unique story output (as indicated in column one), station WXYZ was clearly the most productive of all nine stations studied.

An examination of unique story output by broadcast market, showed that the largest market, Detroit, aired the largest number of unique stories. In column one of Table 6, it may be observed that unique stories broadcast in Detroit totaled 149 or 51.6 percent of total local stories. Toledo and Lansing broadcast markets aired the second and third largest number of unique stories, 75 and 41 respectively. These figures represented an output of 46.0 percent of all local stories for Toledo, compared to 54.7 percent for Lansing (as listed in column three). The above findings are consistent with Steiner's (1952) theoretical perspective that a potential relationship exists between size of broadcast market and the number of different types of programs, such that the larger the market, the greater the number of different program types.

TABLE 5

## Percent of Unique News Stories by Station

<u>Station</u>	<u>Number Unique Stories</u>	<u>Total Number Stories</u>	<u>Percent Stories Unique</u>
WJBK	42	87	48.28
WXYZ	72	120	60.00
WDIV	16	42	38.10
WGPR	19	40	47.50
WTVG	19	45	42.22
WDHO	31	62	50.00
WTOL	25	56	44.64
WJIM	16	33	48.48
WILX	25	42	59.52
Total	265	527	

TABLE 6

## Percentage of Unique News Stories by Market

<u>Market</u>	<u>Number Unique Stories</u>	<u>Total Number Stories</u>	<u>Percent Stories Unique</u>
Detroit	149	289	51.56
Toledo	75	163	46.01
Lansing	41	75	54.67
Total	265	527	

In terms of news content diversity (as defined in this study), the results show that each individual station adds substantially to television news diversity in each market. Consequently, the percentage of news content diversity exhibited in each market appeared to be about the same, approaching or slightly above 50 percent.

In terms of news content diversity (as defined in this study), however, the findings fail to support the above proposition. In column three of Table 6 the percentage of news content diversity exhibited within each market is listed. This percentage was based on a ratio of total number of unique news stories aired in a given market (column one) to the total number of local news stories broadcast in the market (column two). With respect to news content diversity, results indicated that the Lansing market aired the largest percentage of unique stories (54.67 percent). Lansing represented the smallest market of the three markets studied. Approximately 52 percent of Detroit stories were unique stories, compared to 46 percent of local news stories aired in Toledo. When news content diversity was examined in relation to market size, findings showed that the smallest market exhibited the largest percentage of diversity, while the largest market ranked second in this respect, and the second largest market (Toledo) ranked third. Nonetheless, the findings demonstrate that individual stations in a market contribute substantially to the pool of unique stories aired in the particular market.

#### Time Devoted to Unique News Stories

Several research questions investigated in the study related to the amount of time devoted to unique news stories under various conditions

and sometimes with respect to newscast length. As noted earlier, six of the sample stations studied carried 30-minute early evening newscasts (WGPR, WTVG, WDHO, WTOL, WILX, and WJIM). The remaining three stations, all of which were located in Detroit, aired longer newscasts (WXYZ-2 hours; WJBK-1½ hours; and WDIV-1 hour). A specific question which the study addressed involved the nature of the relationships between length of newscast and percentage of time devoted to unique news stories. Table 7 (on page 77) shows the percentage of time which each station devoted to unique news stories (column four). Each percentage was computed by obtaining the ratio of total time devoted to unique news stories to total time devoted to all local stories. The specific amount of time (in minutes) corresponding to each part of the above ratio for each station is listed in columns one and two, respectively.

The data in Table 7 indicate that six of the stations devote nearly half of the time spent on all local stories to unique news stories (WXYZ, WGPR, WDHO, WTOL, WJIM, and WILX). Although the station which aired the longest newscast, WXYZ, devoted the largest percentage of time to unique news stories among all nine stations, no recognizable pattern emerges which would indicate a consistent relationship between newscast length and "percentage of time" devoted to unique news stories. However, when actual amounts of time devoted to unique stories is examined in column one, results indicate that for the Detroit market, the station with the longer newscast did, in fact, devote more time to unique news stories than did stations with shorter newscasts.

As the station which devoted the largest amount and percentage of time to unique news stories, Detroit station WXYZ broadcast 122 minutes of "unique story time," comprising 54 percent of the time which the

station devoted to all local stories over the sample period. On the low end of the scale, WTVG (Toledo) devoted the lowest amount and percentage of time to unique news stories. The station broadcast 14.4 minutes of unique story time during the sample period, comprising only 30.7 percent of the time which WTVG devoted to all local stories.

TABLE 7

## Newscast Length Versus Unique Story Time By Station

<u>Station</u>	<u>Unique Story Time</u>	<u>All Story Time</u>	<u>Length of Newscast</u>	<u>Percent Time Unique</u>
WJBK	51.1	146.5	90.00	34.9
WXYZ	122.0	225.0	120.00	54.2
WDIV	42.6	98.7	60.00	43.2
WGPR	26.0	51.2	30.00	50.8
WTVG	14.4	46.9	30.00	30.7
WDHO	28.6	59.8	30.00	47.8
WTOL	31.3	62.0	30.00	50.5
WJIM	16.6	32.2	30.00	51.6
WILX	25.0	50.2	30.00	49.8
Totals	357.6	772.5		

Table 8 (on page 78) lists the percentage of time devoted to unique news stories by each of the three markets (column four). Also shown are the total times (in minutes) which each market devoted to all local stories as well as to total unique stories.

TABLE 8

Unique Story Time Versus All Story Time by Market

<u>Market</u>	<u>Unique Story Time</u>	<u>All Story Time</u>	<u>Average Length of Newscast</u>	<u>Percent Time Unique</u>
Detroit	241.7	521.5	75.00	46.35
Toledo	74.3	168.7	30.00	44.04
Lansing	41.6	82.4	30.00	50.50

Column four of Table 8 shows that the percentage of time associated with unique news stories in each of the three markets is consistent with the percentage of unique news stories aired in each market (or each market's content diversity). Again, Lansing led all markets by devoting the largest percentage of local news time to the broadcast of unique news stories (nearly 51 percent). Detroit broadcast the second largest percentage of time devoted to unique news stories (46 percent), followed by Toledo with 44 percent of unique story time. In terms of news content diversity, the Lansing market broadcast the largest percentage of unique story time. However, the data also showed that the larger the broadcast market, the larger the amount of both unique story time and all story time.

With respect to the average amount of time stations devoted to each unique news items, the study found times (for all stations) ranged from forty-five seconds to approximately two minutes, 40 seconds. Table 9 (on page 79) lists, in minutes, the average times which each station devoted to a unique news story (column one) and any local story (column two). Detroit station WDIV led all stations with regard to the amount

of time devoted in each of the above areas. WDIV averages 2.66 minutes for each unique story, compared to 2.35 minutes any given local news item. The station which devoted the smallest average amount of time to a given unique news story was WTVG (.76 minute). In examining columns one and three, a reader may observe that there appears to be no consistent relationship between length of newscast and average amount of time which stations devoted to individual unique news items.

TABLE 9

Average Unique Story Time Versus Average  
All Story Time By Station

<u>Station</u>	<u>Unique Story Time</u>	<u>All Story Time</u>	<u>Length of Newscast</u>	<u>Percent Time Unique</u>
WJBK - Mean	1.22	1.68	90.00	34.9
WXYZ	1.69	1.88	120.00	54.2
WDIV	2.66	2.35	60.00	43.1
WGPR	1.37	1.28	30.00	50.8
WTVG	.76	1.04	30.00	30.7
WDHO	.92	.97	30.00	47.8
WTOL	1.25	1.11	30.00	50.4
WJIM	1.04	.97	30.00	51.5
WILX	1.001	1.20	30.00	49.8

Results reported in Table 9 indicate that stations tended to vary widely in the average amount of time which each station devoted to both a unique news story and any local news item. Four stations (WDIV, WGPR, WTOL, and WJIM) devoted a larger average amount of time to a given unique news story than to any given local news story. Consequently, the stations showed no consistent pattern with respect to average unique

story time and average all story time. The evidence contained in Table 8 and Table 9 also fail to show any consistent relationships between either market size or length of newscast with respect to percentage of time devoted to unique news stories. The data also indicated that the above percentage averaged 46.97 percent among markets and 45.94 percent among stations.

Another related question which the study sought to answer involved the nature of the relationship between length of newscast and the percentage of unique news stories broadcast by the stations investigated. Table 10 (on page 81) lists the percentage of unique news items aired by each station, in addition to the newscast length of individual stations (columns four and three, respectively). Again, no consistent pattern emerged with respect to newscast length and percent of unique stories broadcast by the stations studied. However, it is noteworthy that the two stations which broadcast the longest newscasts, WXYZ and WJBK, aired the greatest total number of unique news stories (72 and 42, respectively). As noted earlier, the three stations which aired the largest percentages of unique news items were WXYZ (60 percent), WILX (59.52 percent), and WDHO (50 percent). The station which broadcast the smallest percentage of unique news stories was Detroit station WDIV (38 percent). No consistent pattern or association was recognized between length of newscast and "number of unique news stories" broadcast, as the data indicate in columns one and three of Table 10.

In addition to investigating the nature of the relationship between newscast length and time devoted to unique news stories, the study examined the nature of the relationship between newscast length



TABLE 10

## Newscast Length Versus Percent of Unique Stories

<u>Station</u>	<u>Number Unique Stories</u>	<u>Total Number Stories</u>	<u>Length of Newscast</u>	<u>Percent Stories Unique</u>
WJBK	42	87	90.00	48.28
WXYZ	72	120	120.00	60.00
WDIV	16	42	60.00	38.10
WGPR	19	40	30.00	47.50
WTVG	19	45	30.00	42.22
WDHO	31	62	30.00	50.00
WTOL	25	56	30.00	44.64
WJIM	16	33	30.00	48.48
WILX	25	42	30.00	59.52
	<u>265</u>	<u>527</u>		

and the percentage of time devoted to such stories relating to different story types. Table 11 (on page 82) divides unique story time in terms of story type (columns one and two). By examining column four, one may observe that stations which aired a 30-minute newscast generally tended to devote a larger percentage of unique story time to hard news than did stations which aired longer newscasts. Conversely, these latter stations generally tended to devote a larger percentage of unique story time to soft news, compared to stations which aired 30-minute newscasts.

The above finding seems logical in that the smaller news hole of the 30-minute newscast often prompts television news editors to emphasize hard news stories at the expense of soft news items. Longer news formats generally permit a more liberal mixture of soft news with hard

news to help fill a larger news hole (with respect to air time). When sheer amounts of unique story time devoted to either hard news or soft news are examined (columns one and two), one may easily discern that all stations devoted a larger amount of unique story time (in terms of minutes) to hard news than to soft news. In numerous instances, the stations studied devoted at least twice as much unique story time to hard news, as they devoted to soft news. A total of 256.73 minutes (or about 4.3 hours) of unique story time was devoted to hard news, compared to 100.92 minutes (or about 1.7 hours) for soft news.

When unique story time associated with story type was examined by market, the study found a potential relationship between market size and percentage of unique story time devoted to soft news.

TABLE 11  
Station Unique Story Time By Story Type

<u>Station</u>	<u>Hard News Time</u>	<u>Soft News Time</u>	<u>Unique Story Time</u>	<u>Percent Hard News Time</u>	<u>Percent Soft News Time</u>	<u>Length of Newscast</u>
WJBK	35.17	15.97	51.13	68.8	31.2	90
WXYZ	82.00	39.92	122.00	67.2	32.7	120
WDIV	26.98	15.58	42.57	63.4	36.6	60
WGPR	20.63	5.40	26.00	79.3	20.8	30
WTVG	13.22	1.18	14.40	91.8	8.2	30
WDHO	20.48	8.15	28.63	71.5	28.5	30
WTOL	19.97	11.30	31.27	63.9	36.1	30
WJIM	14.27	2.32	16.58	86.0	14.0	30
WILX	23.93	1.10	25.00	95.7	4.4	30
	<u>256.73</u>	<u>100.92</u>	<u>357.6</u>			

TABLE 12

## Market Unique Story Time By Story Type

<u>Market</u>	<u>Hard News Time</u>	<u>Soft News Time</u>	<u>Unique Story Time</u>	<u>Percent Hard News Time</u>	<u>Percent Soft News Time</u>
Detroit	164.87	76.87	241.73	68.20	31.80
Toledo	53.67	20.63	74.3	72.23	27.77
Lansing	38.2	3.42	41.62	91.78	8.22
	<u>256.74</u>	<u>100.92</u>	<u>357.65</u>		

As is indicated in Table 12 above (column five), the larger the broadcast market the larger the percentage of unique story time it devoted to soft news. The Detroit market devoted both a larger amount (about 77 minutes) and percentage (about 32 percent) of unique story time to soft news, compared to Toledo which devoted nearly 21 minutes and approximately twenty eight percent of unique story time to soft news. The Lansing market devoted the smallest amount and percentage of unique story time to soft news...approximately 3.5 minutes, which represented slightly more than 8 percent.

When unique story time associated with hard news is examined, two more interesting patterns emerged. Data in columns one and four of Table 12 indicate a potential association between size of market and both amount and percentage of unique story time devoted to hard news, however, this potential relationship appeared to be an inverse relationship. These data show that the larger the market size the greater the amount of unique story time and the smaller the percentage of unique story time devoted to hard news. For instance, the smallest market, Lansing, devoted the smallest amount of unique story time to hard news

(38 minutes), but the largest percentage of the market's unique story time was devoted to hard news (about 92 percent).

One of the central questions of this study involved the nature of the relationship between market size and the percentage of unique news stories likely to be broadcast by a station. Earlier discussion has spoken to this issue in terms of the percentage of unique stories aired in each of the markets studied. Table 13 (on page 85) lists the percentage of unique news stories broadcast by each individual station in a market context, in addition to indicating the total percentage of unique news stories aired in each of the three markets. The percentage data in column three show no consistent pattern which would indicate a relationship between market size and percentage of unique news stories likely to be broadcast by a station. This finding was born out by percentage data for both market and individual station. Consequently, the evidence generated by this case study fails to support the proposition which states that the larger the broadcast market, the greater the percentage of unique news stories likely to be broadcast. The smallest market, Lansing, exhibited the largest percentage of news content diversity (about 55 percent), followed by Detroit (nearly 52 percent) and Toledo (46 percent). All three markets collectively broadcast a total of 527 local news items of which half (50.28 percent) were unique news stories. However, given the consistent volume and percentage of unique news stories, each of the stations add to the pool of information available to the market. And, it would appear the more stations in the market, the more information available to viewers in the market.

TABLE 13

## Market/Station Distribution of Unique News Stories

Market Size Versus Percentages				
<u>Market</u>	<u>Station</u>	<u>Number Unique Stories</u>	<u>Total Number Stories</u>	<u>Percent Unique Stories</u>
Detroit	WJBK	42	87	48.28
	WXYZ	72	120	60.00
	WDIV	16	42	38.10
	WGPR	19	40	47.50
	Total	149	289	51.56
Toledo	WIVG	19	45	42.22
	WDHO	31	62	50.00
	WTOL	25	56	44.64
	Total	75	163	46.01
Lansing	WJIM	16	33	48.48
	WILX	25	42	59.52
	Total	41	75	54.67
	TOTAL	265	527	50.28

Unique Story Output in Individual Markets

For a deeper conceptualization of news content diversity and a more detailed analysis of unique news story output, an overview of such output follows for each market. This overview entails the reporting of results for each market with respect to (1) the amount of unique news stories contributed by each station in the individual market, (2) the percentage of time devoted to unique news stories by each station in the individual market, and (3) the distribution of unique news items within the individual market in terms of story topic and story type.

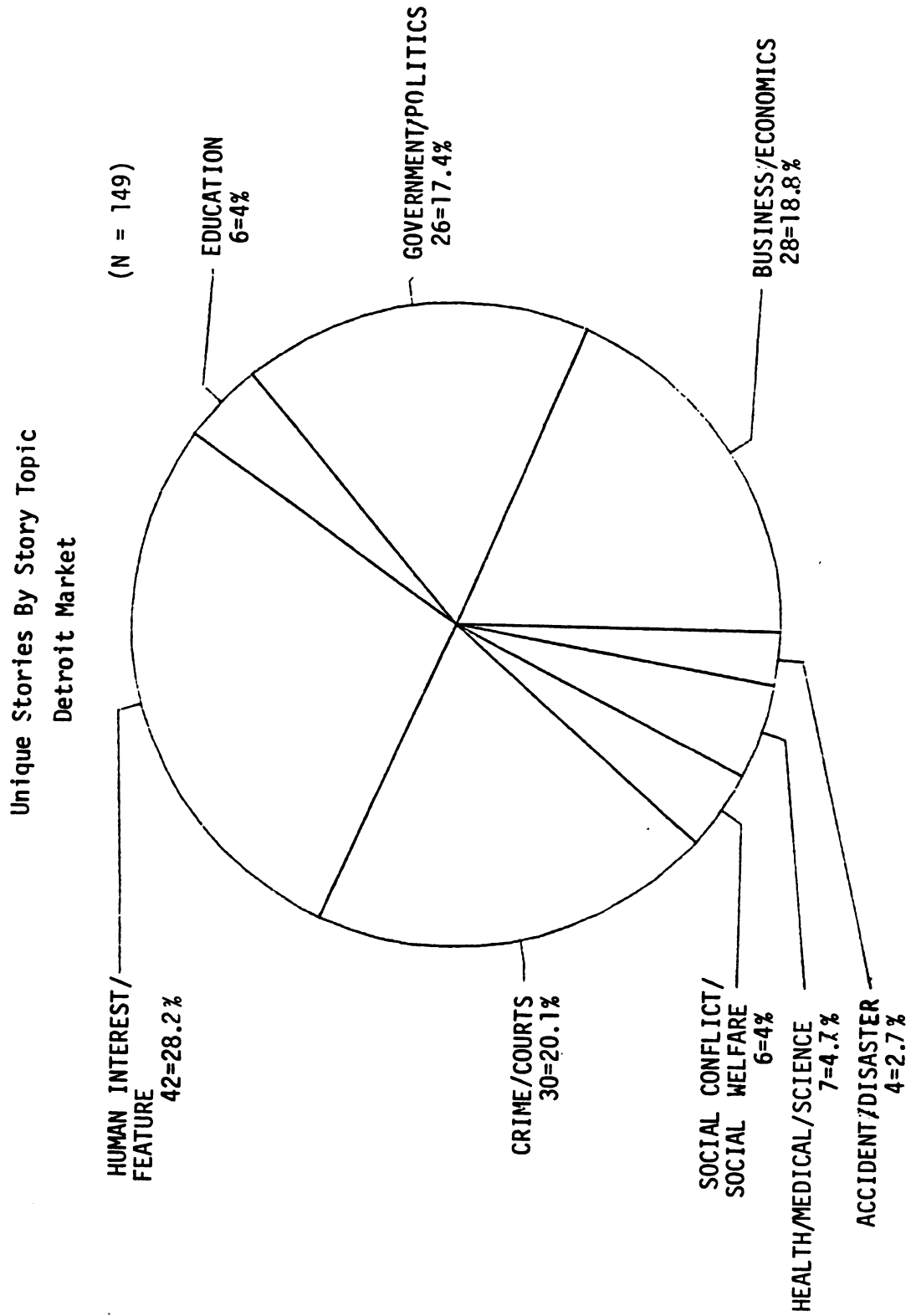
### Unique Story Output in Detroit

Data in Table 13 show that in the Detroit market station WXYZ led all other stations in both the largest number and overall percentage of unique news stories broadcast. Sixty percent of WXYZ's local news output involved unique news stories, compared to 48 percent for WJBK, 47.5 percent for WGPR, and 38 percent for WDIV. This latter station (WDIV) also broadcast the smallest number of unique news stories in the Detroit market (16). A total of 149 unique news stories complemented the market's local news budget of 289 items (about 52 percent). Stations WXYZ and WJBK contributed the largest amounts of unique news stories among Detroit stations (72 and 42, respectively).

The Detroit market devoted a total of 241.73 minutes to unique news stories or 46 percent of the time associated with all local news stories aired. In terms of the percentage of time devoted to unique news stories by individual stations, WXYZ led in the Detroit market with 54 percent, followed by WGPR (50.8 percent), WDIV (43 percent), and WJBK (34.9 percent). As may be observed in Table 11 (page 82), WXYZ had the largest amount of unique story time (122 minutes) while WGPR broadcast the smallest amount (26 minutes).

Figure 3 (on page 87) illustrates the distribution of Detroit unique news stories based on story topic. Findings showed that in the Detroit market, unique news stories most frequently involved the topic Human Interest/Feature (28 percent), followed by Crime/Courts (20 percent), and Business/Economics (about 19 percent). The topic category which had the smallest percentage of unique news stories in the Detroit market was Education with only 4 percent of all such stories. Unique news items relating to Government/Politics were also numerous and accounted for 17.4 percent of the market's total number of unique news stories.

FIGURE 3



When unique news stories were compared to all local stories for each story topic, again the largest number and percentage of unique news stories related to Human Interest/Feature. Figure 4 (on page 89) shows that 42 of all local stories involving the topic Human Interest/Feature in Detroit were unique news stories (or 82 percent). Health/Medical/Science and Business/Economics categories were also topics in which unique news stories comprised large percentage of all local stories (78 percent and 70 percent, respectively). In the more traditional beat-related topic categories of Government/Politics, Education, and Accident/Disaster, findings showed that unique news items comprised less than 40 percent of all local stories aired with respect to each of the three topics. One exception to this pattern was Crime/Courts, in which unique news items comprised nearly 53 percent of all local stories relating to this topic.

When Detroit unique news stories were analyzed with respect to story type, findings indicated that nearly 72 percent of such stories involved hard news, compared to 28 percent which involved soft news, as shown in Table 14 below (column four). However, it should be noted that a substantially larger percentage of all local soft news stories aired in Detroit were unique news items (82 percent) in comparison to the percentage of all hard news stories which were unique news stories (45 percent.. as shown in column three).

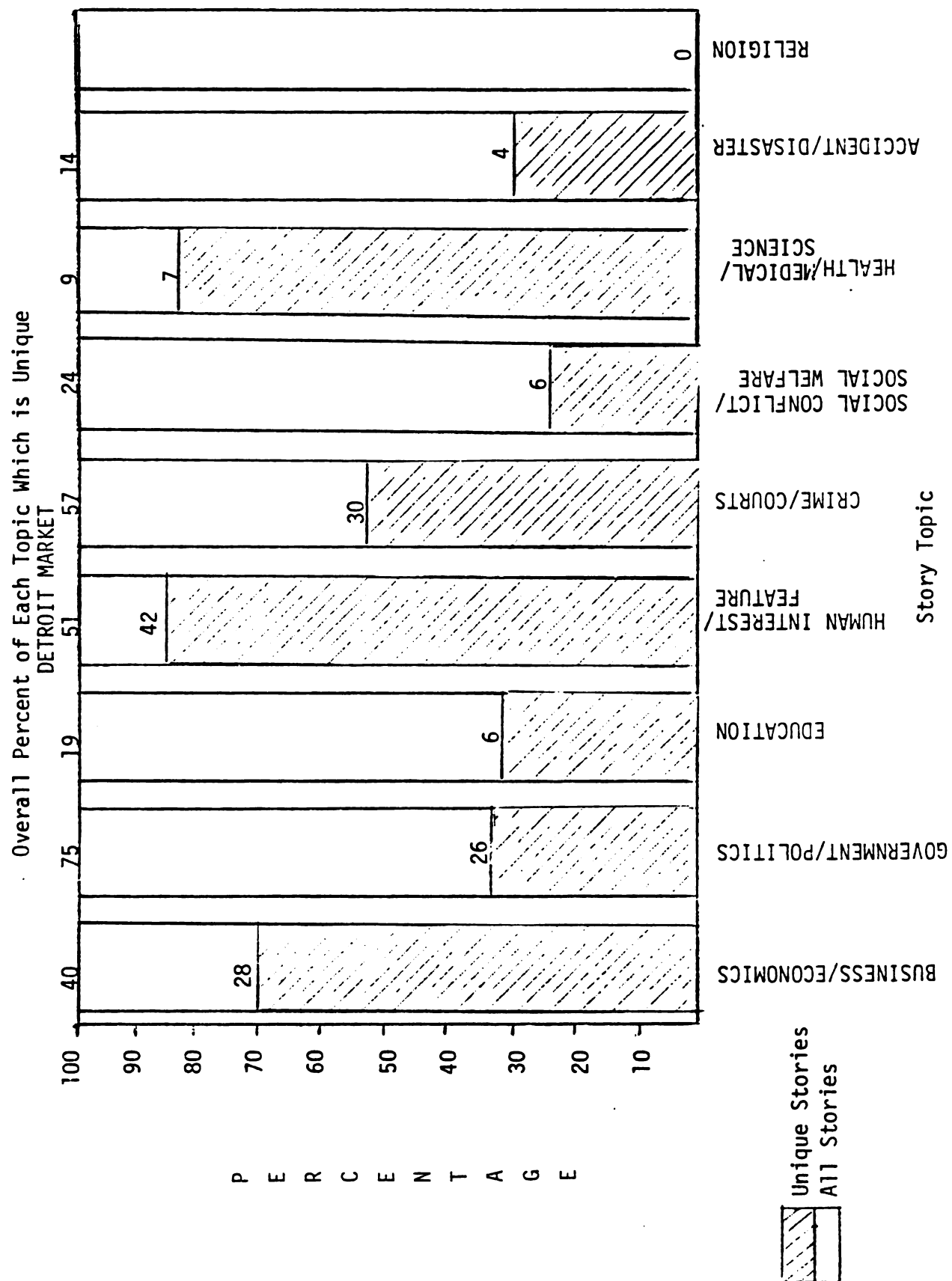
TABLE 14

## Unique Stories By Story Type--Detroit Market

<u>Story Type</u>	<u>Number Unique Stories</u>	<u>Total Number Stories</u>	<u>Percent Stories Unique</u>	<u>Percent of Total Unique Stories</u>
Hard News	107	238	45.0	71.8
Soft News	42	51	82.4	28.2
Total	149	289		100.0



FIGURE 4



This pattern characterized the budget of unique news stories broadcast in Toledo as well. Approximately 82 percent of all soft news items aired in Toledo were unique stories as compared with approximately 42 percent of hard news stories broadcast in the market. In Lansing, however, a larger percentage of hard news stories were unique (55 percent), as compared with 50 percent of soft news stories. These results suggest that for Detroit and Toledo there were proportionally more unique stories in the soft news category, as in the hard news category. Nonetheless, the fact remains that on an absolute basis, a substantially larger number of unique stories involved hard news as compared with soft news across each of the three markets. Consequently, those who theorize that unique stories generally involve soft news may be incorrect. However, the findings indicated that for Detroit and Toledo, soft news stories are more likely to be candidates for unique stories.

#### Unique Story Output in Toledo

A total of 75 unique news stories were aired in the Toledo market over the sample period, comprising 46 percent of the total 163 local stories broadcast in the market. Table 13 (on page 85) shows that station WDHO broadcast the largest percentage of unique news items overall (50 percent) and contributed the largest number of such stories in the Toledo market (31). WDHO was followed by WTOL, which aired 25 unique news stories, which comprised about 45 percent of the station's output of all local stories. The station which contributed the smallest amount of unique news stories in Toledo was WTVG, which aired 19 unique news items, comprising 42 percent of all local stories aired by the station.

The Toledo market devoted 74.3 minutes to unique news stories, or forty-four percent of the time associated with all local news stories aired. In terms of the percentage of time devoted to unique news stories by individual stations, WTOL led in the Toledo market with 50.4 percent, followed by WDHO (47.9 percent) and WTVG (30.7 percent) (Table 7, page 77). WTOL aired the largest amount of unique story time (31.3 minutes), compared to 28.6 minutes aired by WDHO, and 14.4 minutes aired by WTVG.

Figure 5 (on page 92) shows that the topic which Toledo unique news items most frequently involved was clearly Government/Politics. This topic category contained 24 unique news items, comprising 32 percent of the market's total pool of unique news stories. Other topics which were associated with sizeable portions of Toledo's unique story output were Human Interest/Feature (18.7 percent), and Crime/Courts (14.7 percent), which contained 14 and 11 unique news items, respectively. The topic categories of Social Conflict/Social Welfare and Health/Medical/Science were associated with the smallest percentage of unique news stories aired in Toledo (only 4 percent in each instance).

When unique news items were viewed in relation to all local news stories for each story topic, Human Interest/Feature emerged as the topic containing the largest percentage of unique news stories (82 percent) as illustrated in Figure 6 (on page 93). Other topics in which unique news items comprised substantial percentages of all local stories included Business/Economics (67 percent), Government/Politics (62 percent), and Health/Medical/Science (60 percent). The story topic in which unique news stories comprised the lowest percentage of all local stories was Accident/Disaster (24 percent).

FIGURE 5

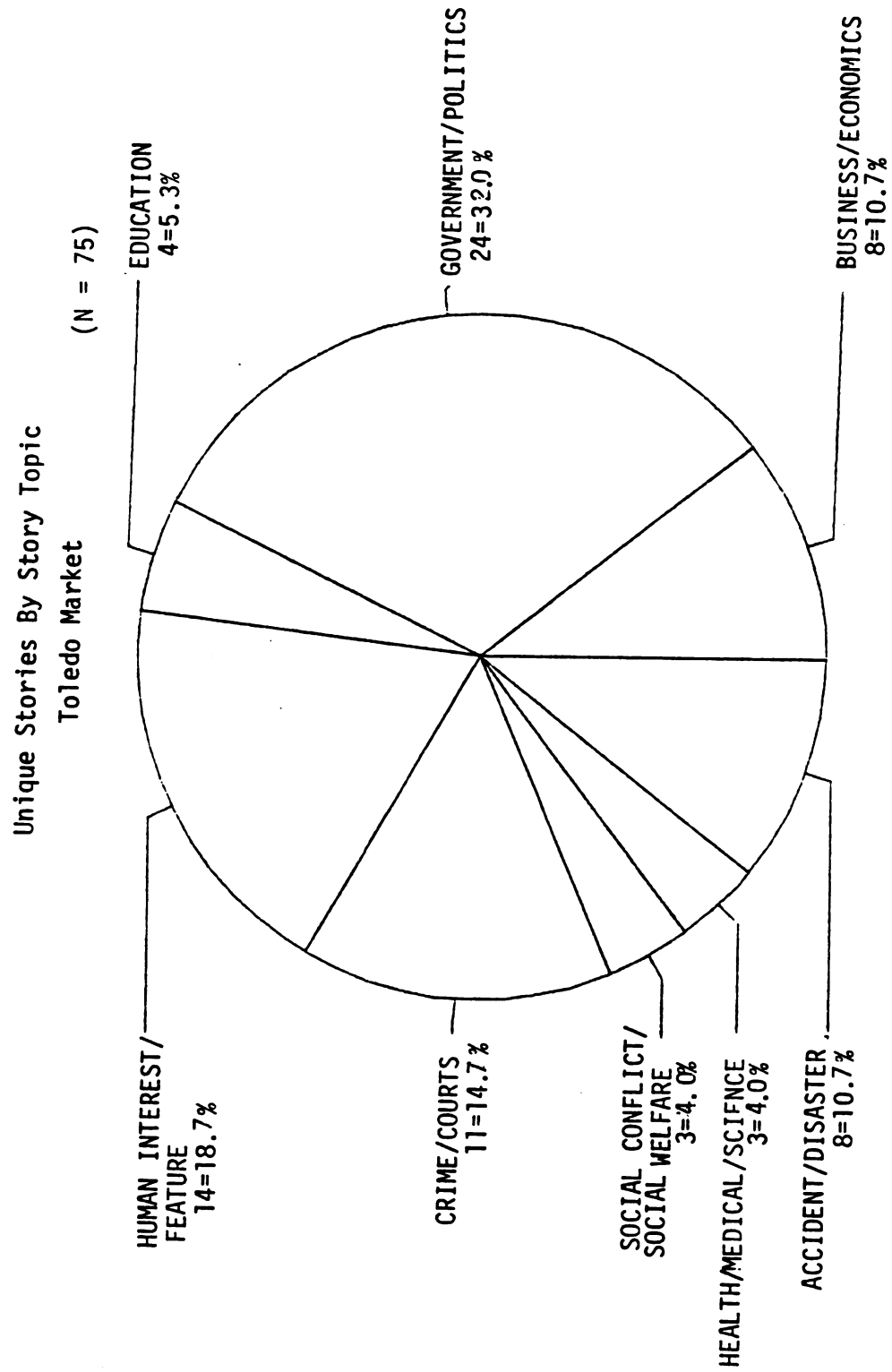
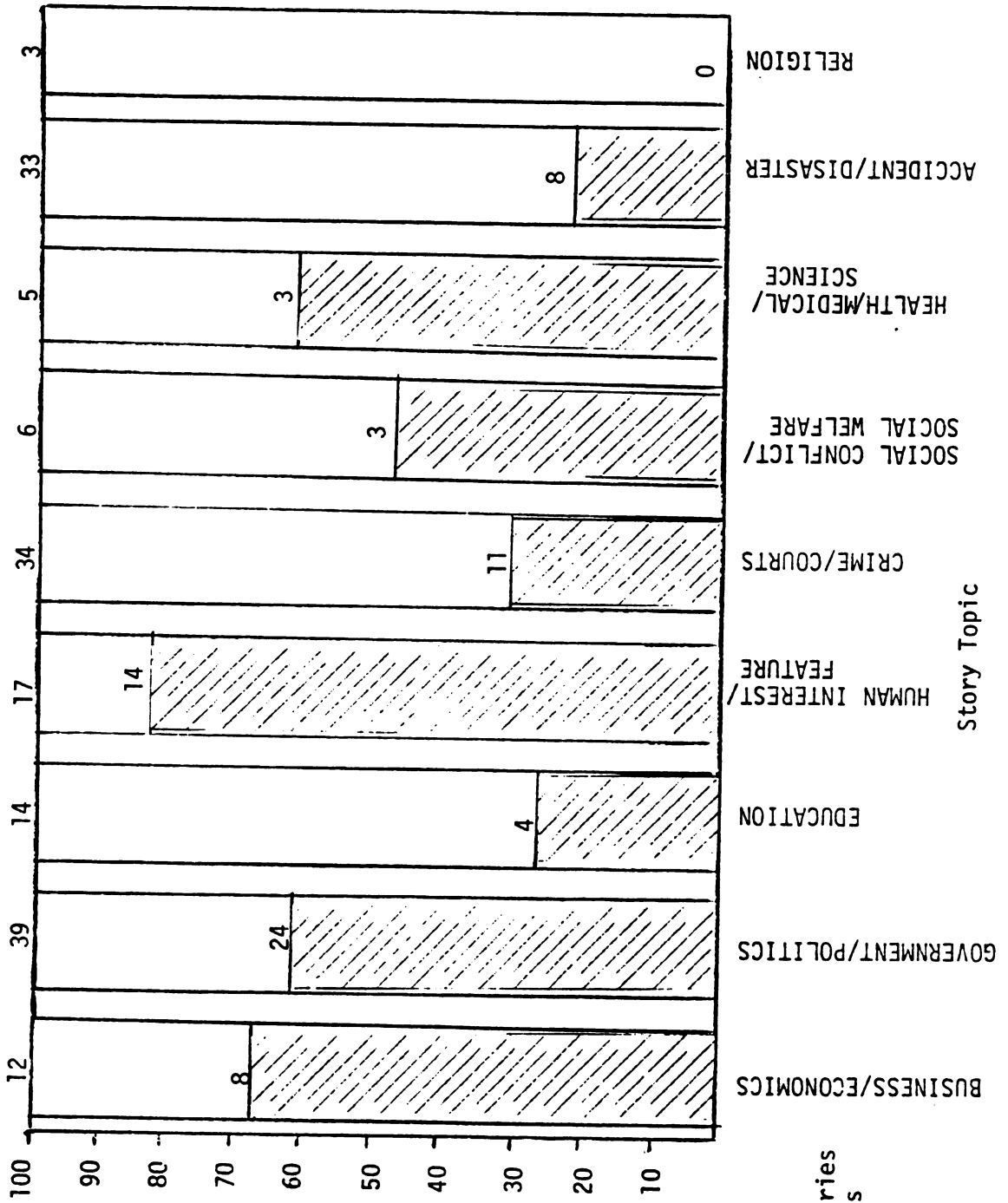




FIGURE 6

Overall Percent of Each Topic Which is Unique  
TOLEDO MARKET



Unique Stories  
All Stories

Story Topic



Table 15 below analyses Toledo's unique story output in terms of story type. As may be observed in column four, 81 percent of all Toledo unique news stories involved hard news, while 18.7 percent of such stories involved soft news. Again, however, findings showed that a noticeably larger percentage of all local soft news stories were unique stories (82.4 percent) as compared to all local hard news stories (41.8 percent), as indicated in column three of Table 15. The Toledo market broadcast 61 hard news items which were unique news stories, compared to 14 soft news items which were unique news stories.

TABLE 15

## Unique Stories By Story Type--Toledo Market

<u>Story Type</u>	<u>Number Unique Stories</u>	<u>Total Number Stories</u>	<u>Percent Stories Unique</u>	<u>Percent of Total Unique Stories</u>
Hard News	61	146	41.8	81.3
Soft News	<u>14</u>	<u>17</u>	82.4	<u>18.7</u>
	75	163		100.0

Unique Story Output in Lansing

A total of 41 unique news stories were broadcast in the Lansing market over the sample period, comprising approximately 54.7 percent of the total 75 local stories aired in the market. Table 16 (on page 95) shows that station WILX broadcast the largest percentage of unique news stories overall (59.5 percent), and contributed the largest number of such stories in the Lansing market (25). Station WJIM followed with a total of 16 unique news items, which comprised nearly 48.5 percent of all local stories aired by the station.





TABLE 16  
Unique Stories By Story Type--Lansing Market

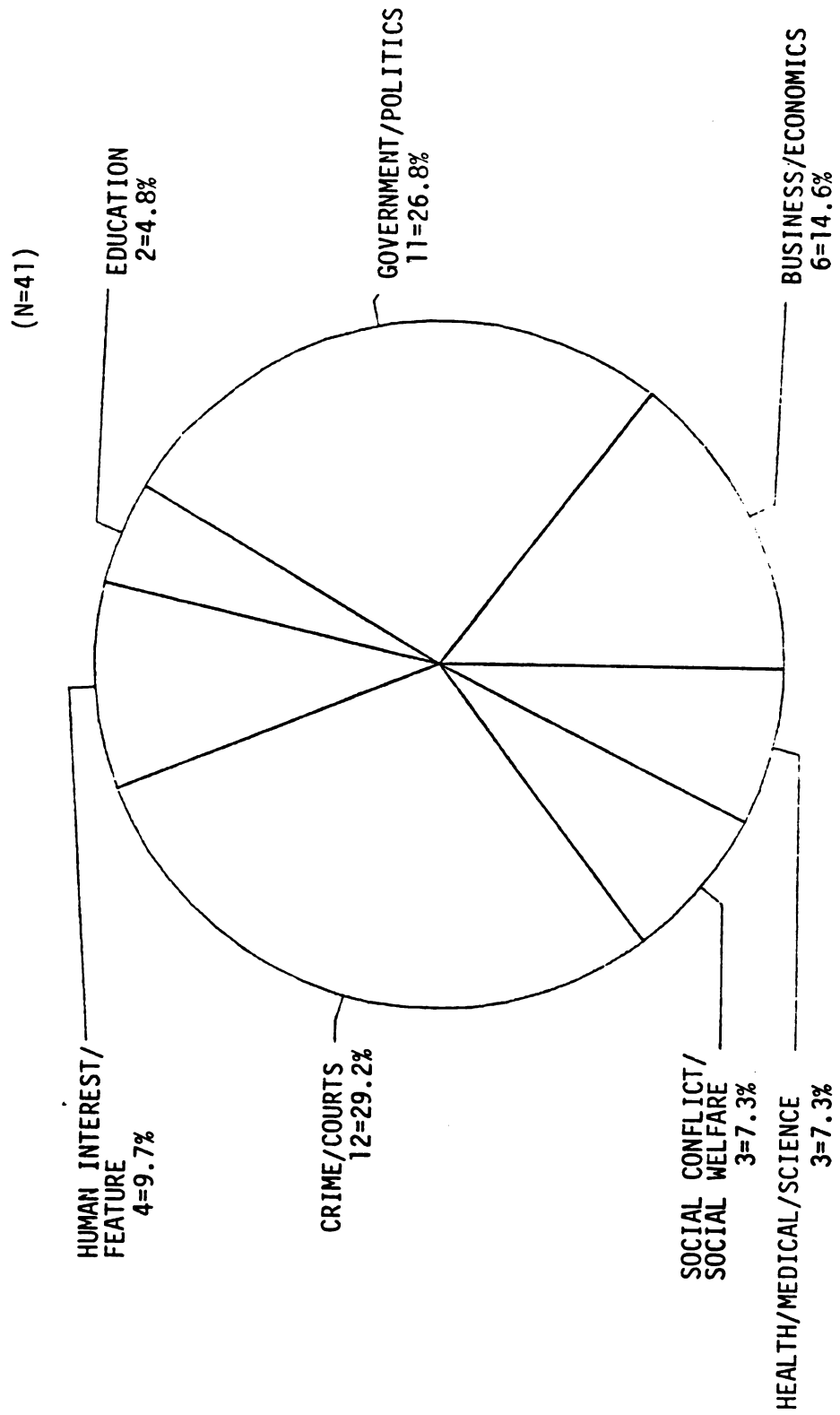
<u>Story Type</u>	<u>Number Unique Stories</u>	<u>Total Number Stories</u>	<u>Percent Stories Unique</u>	<u>Percent of Total Unique Stories</u>
Hard News	37	67	55.2	90.2
Soft News	4	8	50.0	9.8
	<u>41</u>	<u>75</u>		<u>100.0</u>

The Lansing market devoted 41.6 minutes to unique news stories, which comprised 50.5 percent of total time associated with all local stories aired in the market. Table 7 (on page 77) indicates that WJIM devoted the largest percentage of all story time to unique news stories (51.6 percent), compared to WILX (49.85 percent). When sheer amount of unique story time was examined, results showed that WILX devoted the largest amount of time to unique news stories (25 minutes), compared to WJIM, which devoted 16.6 minutes.

Figure 7 (on page 96) shows that Crime/Courts and Government/Politics were the two story topics associated with the largest percentages of total stories comprising the pool of unique news stories aired in Lansing. Crime/Courts accounted for 29 percent of Lansing unique news items (i.e. 12 of such stories), while nearly 27 percent of unique news stories related to Government/Politics (a total of 11 unique news stories). Business/Economics also contained a sizeable portion of unique news stories (14.6 percent), while the topic categories of Social Conflict/Social Welfare and Health/Medical/Science were associated with the smallest percentage of unique news items (only three percent in each instance).

FIGURE 7

Unique Stories By Story Topic  
Lansing Market



When unique news stories were examined with respect to all local stories relating to each topic, three of the topic categories were found to be totally saturated with unique news stories. Figure 8 (on page 98) shows that 100 percent of all local stories were unique news items with respect to the topics of Business/Economics, Social Conflict/Social Welfare, and Health/Medical/Science. Three topics in which unique news stories comprised sizeable proportions of all local stories in the given story topic were Government/Politics (55 percent), Human Interest/Feature (50 percent), and Crime/Courts (54.5 percent). Virtually no Lansing unique news stories related to Accident/Disaster and Religion topics. The topic in which unique news items comprised the smallest percentage of all local stories for an individual topic category was Education (40 percent).

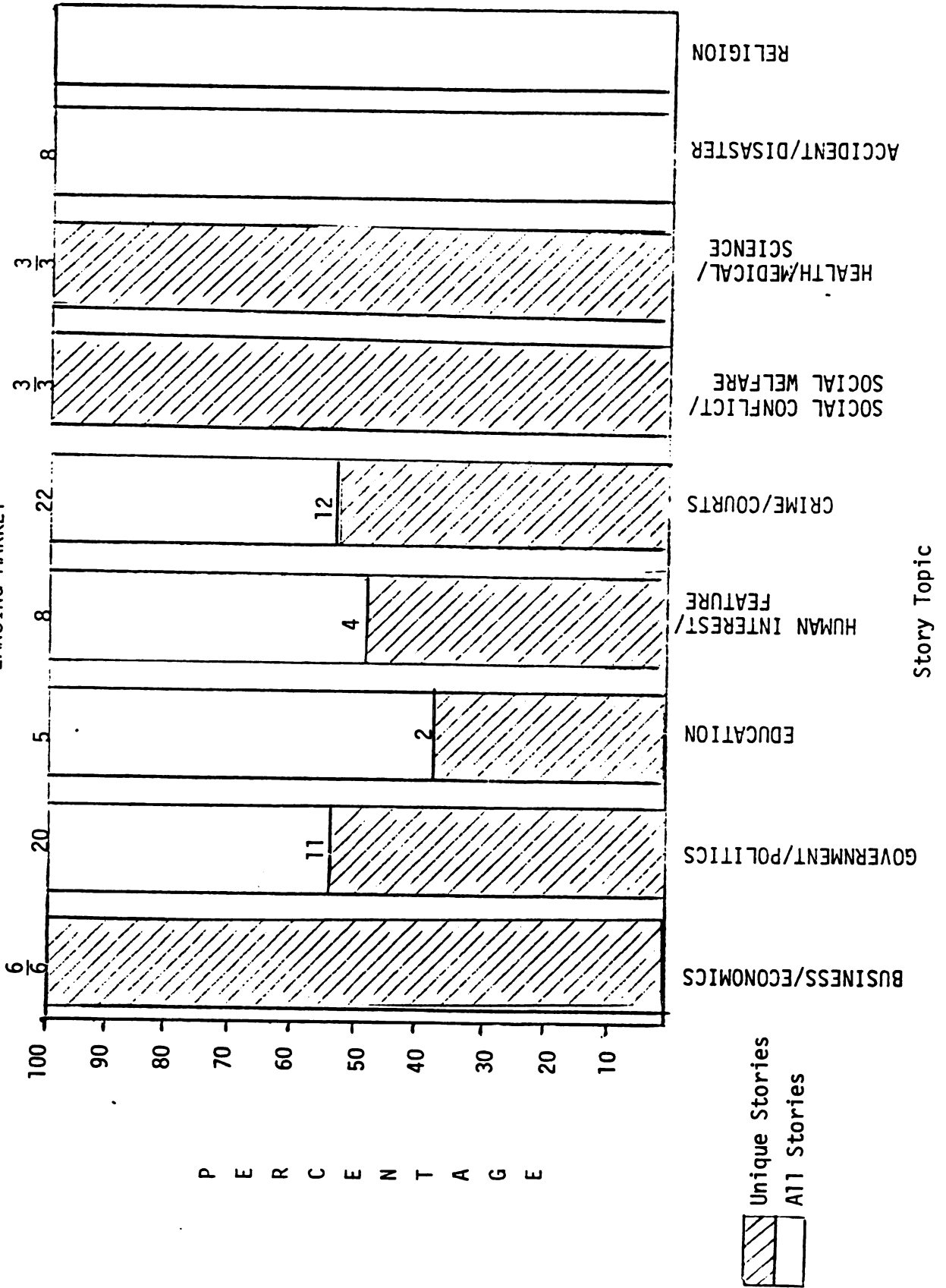
Table 16 (on page 95) analyzes Lansing's unique story output in terms of story type. As may be observed in column four, 90 percent of all Lansing unique stories involved hard news, while only 9.8 percent of such stories involved soft news. Unlike the Detroit and Toledo markets, findings showed that a larger percentage of all local hard news stories were unique news items (55.2 percent), as compared to all local soft news stories (50 percent), as indicated in column three of Table 16. The Lansing market aired 37 hard news items which were unique news stories, compared to 4 soft news items which were unique news stories.

#### Story Duplication in Detroit, Toledo, and Lansing

An additional question which the study sought to address related to the nature of the relationship between market size and the percentage of

FIGURE 8

Overall Percent of Each Topic Which is Unique  
LANSING MARKET



P E R C E N T A G E

Unique Stories  
All Stories

Story Topic

"duplicated" news stories broadcast within a market. Although the major focus of the study centered on unique or non-duplicated news stories, it was felt that an examination of story duplication, as generally exhibited in the three markets, would complement findings which related primarily to unique news stories.

Table 17 (on page 100) lists the percentages of items in each market's total local news budget which were aired by one station (unique news stories), aired by two stations, aired by three stations, and aired by four stations (all within a given broadcast market). Of Detroit's 289 local news stories, 140 were duplicated by two or more stations within the market (or 48.4 percent). In Toledo, 88 of the market's 163 local news items were duplicated (or 54 percent). And, in the Lansing market, thirty four of the total 75 local news stories were duplicated (or 45.3 percent).

The data in Table 17 generally fail to support the notion that a systematic relationship exists between market size and the percentage of duplicated stories broadcast in a market. The results indicated that the second largest market, Toledo, broadcast the largest percentage of duplicated stories, followed by the largest market, Detroit, which broadcast the second largest percentage of duplicated local news stories. Lansing, the smallest of the three markets, broadcast the smallest percentage of duplicated local news items.

#### Perceived Newsroom Philosophies and Unique Stories

On the basis of comments made by editors during in-depth personal interviews, it was possible to characterize stations with respect to the perceived attitudes and philosophies which editors attributed to the

TABLE 17

## Percentage of Stories Duplicated By Market

Story Market	Unique Stories (Percent)	Shared by 2 Stations (Percent)	Shared by 3 Stations (Percent)	Shared by 4 Stations (Percent)	Total
Detroit	51.56(149)	18.69(54)	14.53(42)	15.22(44)	289
Toledo	46.01(75)	20.86(34)	33.13(54)	0	163
Lansing	54.67(41)	45.33(34)	0	0	75

coverage of unique news stories. Local television news editors frequently associated the coverage of unique news items with unwritten newsroom philosophies, as opposed to a written departmental policy. The newsroom philosophies which editors most frequently cited in this regard included the philosophies of: (1) covering "people oriented" stories which have direct impact on the greatest number of people in the station viewing area, (2) covering local labor and economic news stories in view of economic hard times which have been experienced in the local community, (3) pursuing follow-ups or of providing continuous coverage of an ongoing news story or one which the station had carried earlier, (4) providing continuous coverage of governmental figures and of political campaigns to assist voters in deciding for whom they should cast their local and state ballots, and (5) covering consumer-user type stories which viewers will find informative and useful, and which will promote "self help" among consumers.

Most of the editors interviewed took particular pride in Human Interest/Feature news items. One editor noted that a station's identity, in terms of news, often rests with the kinds of feature pieces which the news organization routinely incorporates into its local newscasts.

Comments from several editors endorsed the notion that feature news items are apt to be unique news stories more often out of design, as opposed to by coincidence. Editors generally agreed that a touching feature story offers the station a unique opportunity to relate to viewers on a personal level. Comments such as those above supported the finding that soft news and/or Human Interest/Feature stories are significantly related to unique news stories in several respects, as noted earlier in this chapter.

Interview data also revealed that individual stations within a market often place a premium on certain news topics, and one way which stations express this preference is by assigning beat reporters or special correspondents to cover these particular topic areas, e.g. education, consumer news, city hall, etc. Seven of the nine editors agreed that local newscasts generally devote more attention to certain news topics over others. Some of these particular topic areas which receive special attention on television newscasts, according to the editors, were employment, politics, education, and Business/Economics.

The sources associated with most unique news stories, according to editors, were "reporter contacts." These were individuals, both everyday citizens and newsmakers, who contacted reporters or who were contacted by reporters during the course of the news day, and frequently on a news beat. Reporter contacts were cited with overwhelming frequency as primary sources instrumental in prompting station news coverage of specific unique news items. Less frequently cited as sources of unique news stories by editors were the assignment editor, the news wire, futures file, and press releases. Most editors agreed that a substantial



number of unique news items are the product of the staff reporter's initiative through the practice of enterprise reporting.

While each of the stations exhibited its own individual character, in terms of news, several stations were relatively similar in their news-room philosophies relating to unique news stories. Interview data suggested that stations WTOL and WXYZ share a strong and common interest in covering unique news items relating to crime and the courts. Both stations' editors also noted a commitment on the part of respective news-rooms to cover consumer/user type stories which viewers might use to improve their own personal finances and livelihood.

Stations WDHO and WGPR, although substantially different in character, shared a strong sensitivity about generating community awareness about information and topics of value to viewers in the station viewing area. Consequently, the editors of both stations felt that well packaged human interest features and "self help" pieces were important items to cover on a daily basis. Both stations look to cover "people oriented stories."

Station WGPR exhibited a very distinct news philosophy compared to the other stations studied. This black-owned Detroit station sought to provide a news product which had been formerly unavailable in the greater Detroit area. WGPR deliberately chooses to differentiate its news product from competitors in order to emphasize positive news about blacks, both locally and nationally. The station news editor noted that the station avoids covering murder stories because they frequently involve blacks and qualify as negative black news. The station's editor reasoned that other station competitors covered these types of stories thoroughly, and that WGPR could perform a unique service by turning its

news focus elsewhere. Consequently, the station endeavors to provide a black perspective (according to the editor) on news about black officials and newsmakers.

In summary, most editors indicated that they were not seriously concerned about news content duplication, but most agreed that their newsrooms made a conscious effort to differentiate their respective news products. Some ways which editors indicated that they attempted to do this involved an emphasis on investigative reporting, the professional and dramatic packaging of local news stories, and avoiding coverage of pseudo news events and of minor crime and accident/fire stories.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this case study was to examine and to describe the nature of local television news items which were unique to one station within a broadcast market on a given news day. In addition, the study investigated diversity of local newscast content within three different sized broadcast markets and attempted to describe the extent to which nine commercial broadcast stations contributed to "news content diversity" within their respective markets. News content diversity was defined as the percentage of unique news items aired by stations studied in a given market over the sample period, based on the total number of local news stories aired in the market. An additional objective of the study was to investigate what each additional station within a market adds to the market's daily budget of unique news stories.

An underlying policy issue which prompted the investigation related to the Federal Communication Commission's policy interest and regulatory objective associated with diversity in local news and public affairs programming. The Commission has consistently advocated that multiple news voices in the local community enable broadcasters to serve the public interest through exposing viewers to a diversity of viewpoints and ideas. This perspective corresponds with the First Amendment theory of "the marketplace of ideas," which proposes that truth emerges from robust public debate and discussion of competing ideas. Few systematic

studies have investigated the degree to which local television stations serve as separate news voices within the local community. This dissertation attempted such an investigation by exploring and describing the incidence of news content diversity within three broadcast markets.

An additional motive for conducting the study related to exploring the applicability of Steiner's (1952) theoretical framework on diversity of program types to diversity of program content within an individual program type (the local television newscast). This theoretical perspective generally provided that, under a given set of assumptions, the fewer the number of stations operating in a broadcast market, the greater will be duplication of individual program types. A hybrid proposition relating to the above theory was used as a general guide in exploring the relationship between market size and news content diversity. The proposition held that the larger the broadcast market, the greater the number of unique news stories likely to be broadcast.

In addition to the above research issues, this thesis addressed specific questions involving the nature of relationships between (1) the percentage of unique or non-duplicated local news stories broadcast in a market and news story topic, (2) size of broadcast market and their percentage of unique local news stories aired in a given market, (3) length of television newscast and percentage of unique stories broadcast by individual stations studied, (4) length of television newscast and percentage of time devoted to unique stories by stations studied, and (5) length of television newscast and percentage of time devoted to unique stories of different news story types.

Using as its theoretical base the mass communication theories of media gatekeeping and agenda-setting, the thesis also investigated and

described local TV news editors' perceived newsroom philosophies associated with the coverage of unique local news stories. Data obtained from in-depth personal interviews with station news editors were used to portray these philosophies in addition to describing common sources of unique news stories and some methods used by station news departments to differentiate local television newscast content within their respective markets. This component of the study complemented its mission of exploring content patterns in the broadcast of unique news stories by examining an aspect of news judgment which is potentially relevant to the electronic news gatekeeping process.

The study's design and approach to investigating the above issues involved a case study of three midwest broadcast markets in June of 1982. A content analysis of 45 early evening local television newscasts, recorded on audio tape, was followed by the administration of in-depth personal interviews with television news editors of the stations studied. The three markets investigated in this case study included Detroit, Michigan; Toledo, Ohio; and Lansing, Michigan. Analysis of the data included comparisons of news content diversity both with respect to individual stations within a market and with respect to the three markets collectively. Percentage data were utilized to describe the incidence of news content diversity and to describe the story topics and story types most frequently associated with unique news stories by market and overall. Percentage data was also used to describe the proportion of time devoted to unique news stories in the three broadcast markets, both individually and collectively, over a five-day period.

### Conclusions

Three different sized television markets were investigated to explore the extent to which local television stations exhibited news content diversity in local newscasts and to describe content characteristics of unique news stories. Of the total 527 local news items aired in all three markets, slightly over half (50.3 percent) were coded as unique news stories (local news items aired by only one station in a given market). This finding indicated that in the markets studied, the incidence of news content diversity was relatively substantial.

The Lansing market, which was the smallest of the markets studied, aired the largest percentage of unique news items (54.67 percent), based on the total number of local stories broadcast in the market. The second largest percentage of unique news stories was broadcast in the Detroit market (51.56 percent), followed by the Toledo market, in which forty six percent of local news items were coded unique news stories. This finding prompts the conclusion that in the markets studied, the evidence failed to demonstrate that a systematic relationship existed between size of broadcast market and the percentage of unique news stories aired in a given market. The first and second largest markets of those studied broadcast the second and third largest percentage of unique news stories, respectively.

While the evidence failed to demonstrate a relationship between market size and news content diversity, as defined in this study, results tended to lend support to the proposition that a relationship exists between market size and number of unique news stories broadcast, such that the larger the market the more unique news stories likely to be broadcast in a given market. This proposition, which corresponds to

Steiner's (1952) theoretical framework, was supported by the finding that Detroit, the largest market studied, broadcast the largest number of unique news items (149), compared to Toledo, which aired 75 unique news items, and Lansing, which broadcast 41 such stories.

The study found that the percentage of local news time devoted to unique news stories appeared to be consistent with results obtained on the percentage of unique news stories aired in the markets studied, i.e., the Lansing market devoted the largest percentage of local news time to unique news items (50.52 percent), followed by Detroit (46.35 percent), and Toledo (44 percent). These data suggest that no systematic relationship existed between market size and percentage of time devoted to unique news items. All three markets devoted an average of approximately 47 percent of local news time to unique news stories. When "amount of time" devoted to unique news stories was examined, the largest amounts of unique story time were devoted by the larger markets, however, variations in newscast length in the Detroit market make it difficult to conclude that a systematic relationship existed between market size and amount of local news time devoted to unique news stories. A total of 357.65 minutes of local news time was devoted to unique news stories aired in all three markets.

The average amount of time which each station devoted to an individual unique news story ranged from a minimum of 45 seconds to a maximum of 2.66 minutes (or about 2 minutes and 40 seconds). Therefore, the stations studied exhibited relatively wide variation in the average time length devoted to individual unique news items. And, results suggested that much of the variation was not a consequence of newscast length. Additionally, the data indicated that the average amount of time which

stations collectively devoted to an individual unique news story was somewhat less than the average amount devoted to any individual local news story (1.35 minutes compared to 1.47 minutes, respectively).

In addition to ascertaining the amount of time and average times associated with unique news stories, the study investigated newscast length to ascertain the nature of the relationship between this variable and both percentage of unique news stories aired and percentage of time devoted to such stories. In the former instance, findings revealed that no substantive relationship existed between newscast length of individual stations and the percentage of unique news items aired by each station. However, the two stations which aired the longest early evening newscasts, WXYZ and WJBK were found to have aired the largest number of unique news stories (72 and 42, respectively).

On the basis of study results, although no consistent relationship was found between newscast length and percentage of time which individual stations devoted to unique news stories, when the relationship between newscast length and "amount of time" devoted to unique news stories was considered, a recognizable pattern emerged in the Detroit market. Results indicated that in this particular market, stations which aired longer local newscasts devoted longer amounts of time to unique news stories than did stations which aired shorter local newscasts. This finding lends support to the notion that stations with larger news holes for local news tend to devote longer amounts of time to unique news stories. The amount of unique story time contributed by individual stations over the sample period ranged from 14.4 minutes to 122 minutes, demonstrating broad variation among stations on this item. An average of 46 percent of station's local news time was devoted to unique stories.



Findings clearly indicated that in the three markets studied, stations emphasized certain news topics over others with respect to the broadcast of unique news stories. The percentage of unique news stories which comprised each of the story topics considered in the study tended to vary somewhat from market to market. However, the topics of Human Interest/Feature, Government/politics, and Crime/Courts were frequently associated with unique news stories across all three markets.

#### Selected Newsroom Attributes and News Content Diversity

Another area of investigation worthy of study involves characteristics of the station news department and their potential relationship to the number of unique news items aired by the individual station. This study did not attempt to systematically explore the nature of the above relationship, however, several selected newsroom attributes were examined, e.g. number of full-time news reporters and number of ENG camera units. The following data are simply a listing of information relating to characteristics of the newsrooms investigated in this study. These data were obtained from station news editors through the administration of personal interviews, described earlier.

One of the most noteworthy findings was that the station with the largest numbers of newsroom staff members and ENG units, Detroit station WXYZ, also devoted the largest percentage of its local news budget to unique news stories (60 percent). When the data are examined with respect to news content diversity and the three newsroom attributes, the evidence does not indicate any systematic relationships between news content diversity and either of the three attributes. However, the results showed both similarities and differences within markets with

respect to staffing and equipment resources. In general, the findings indicated that stations with larger number of full-time employees in the newsroom tend to staff larger numbers of full-time news reporters. No consistent relationships were recognized, however, between number of full-time news reporters and news content diversity either in the context of all stations collectively or in a market context.

TABLE 18

## Selected Newsroom Attributes Versus Percent Unique Stories

<u>Station</u>	<u>Number Full-time Employees</u>	<u>Number Full-time Reporters</u>	<u>Number ENG Unites</u>	<u>Percent Unique Stories</u>
WJBK	65.00	8.00	12.00	48.28
WXYZ	117.00	13.00	14.00	60.00
WDIV	70.00	12.00	6.00	38.10
WGPR	9.00	9.00	1.00	47.50
WTVG	29.00	8.00	7.00	42.22
WDHO	22.00	7.00	4.00	50.00
WTOL	29.00	13.00	6.00	44.64
WJIM	22.00	8.00	3.00	48.48
WILX	19.00	5.00	7.00	59.52

The station with the smallest full-time news staff was Detroit station WGPR, with nine full-time newsroom employees. By contrast, WXYZ (also in Detroit) operated the largest full-time newsroom staff which consisted of 117 employees. Stations WXYZ and WGPR also represent the minimum and maximum levels with regard to the number of ENG camera units used by the news department. WXYZ's newsroom utilized 14 such units in covering the day's news, compared to the use of only one ENG camera unit by WGPR.

No consistent pattern emerged with respect to number of ENG camera units used by a station news department and the percentage of the station's local news budget which was devoted to unique news stories. The average number of full-time news reporters for all stations collectively was nine. The station with the smallest number of full-time news reporters was Lansing station WILX with five. WXYZ operated the largest staff of full-time news reporters, which consisted of 13 broadcast journalists.

The above data on news department characteristics give additional information about the nine stations studied, however, conclusions cannot be made with respect to the relationship between certain newsroom attributes and the broadcast of unique news stories. This research issue is worthy of future study. A more specific research issue requiring future analysis relates to the proposition that a station which is richly endowed with budget and staff resources is more likely to air a greater number of unique news stories than a station which operates on a very limited budget and with less staff resources.

Interview data obtained from station editors revealed that the most common source of unique local news stories was "reporter contacts." Sometimes these sources were sought out or consulted during the coverage of a reporter's daily beat. On other occasions these unique news story sources contacted the newsroom or the reporter, typically by telephone.

Findings indicated that other sources of unique news stories included the news wire, the assignment editor, futures file, and press releases. Most editors agreed that many of the unique news stories aired by their respective stations were the result of a staff reporter's initiative through the continuous practice of enterprise reporting.

The interview data also supported the notion that local television newscasts devote more attention to certain news topics over others. Percentage data on the amount of unique news stories and the corresponding percentage of local news time associated with certain story topics add additional support to the above proposition. In addition, most editors claimed that they made conscious efforts to differentiate the newscast content of their respective stations from that of competitors. Some methods which editors indicated they used to differentiate their news products included emphasizing investigative reporting, packaging local news stories in professional and dramatic ways, and avoiding coverage of pseudo-news events.

#### Public Policy Limitations

Overall findings of this study are significant in that they provide documented evidence in support of the Federal Communications Commission's table of assignments and policy of local service. All stations contributed unique news stories in substantial numbers. Even the stations which exhibited the smallest unique news story output, WJIM and WDIV, contributed 16 unique news stories to the respective markets, which each station served, over the course of a five-day period.

The results of the study attest to the wisdom of the Commission's decision to maximize program sources in an endeavor to facilitate the broadcast of a broad diversity of viewpoints. By implementing a system of local service in which stations are operated within communities, the Commission determined that wide public access to a select number of powerful broadcast stations located throughout the nation in various regions was an inferior alternative. This study dramatically demonstrated that each local station within a given market makes an important

contribution to that market in the form of unique news stories added to the locality's total information pool. Further, each station's contribution, in terms of numbers of unique stories, is a balanced and complementary contribution, the elimination of which could limit substantially the amount of local news diversity generated in a given market.

Because local television stations do make a collective contribution to diversity of information and of viewpoints in the community, broadcasters possess valuable opportunity and responsibility with respect to the maintenance of a marketplace of ideas. The greater the number of local television stations within a market, the more the viewer will be exposed to diverse information and viewpoints. It is within such an environment that competition among opposing opinions and ideas is most likely. Under such conditions, according to the concept of the marketplace of ideas, truth will ultimately prevail to help sustain an informed electorate.

Because local television stations contribute to a community's total information pool, the results suggest that a large number of stations within a given market potentially determine the size of that pool (at least up to four stations in a market). This implication is relevant to both the marketplace of ideas concept and to localism. The unique needs of the community are more apt to be served by an information pool which is relatively large, as opposed to one which is relatively small. Diverse ideas and viewpoints are also apt to be aired more frequently in markets where the information pool is relatively large and where public access to local television news is abundant. Correspondingly, a dramatic reduction in the size of the information pool within a community potentially limits the extent to which citizens' unique information needs are met, as well

as the extent to which viewers are exposed to diverse information and viewpoints.

### Limitations of Study

This project was a pilot study designed to describe the nature of unique local television news stories as well as the extent to which local stations exhibited news content diversity in three midwest broadcast markets. The method of investigation utilized in the thesis was the case study, and consequently, the results reported are not broadly generalizable to markets outside of those examined. Because of the above limitation and the exploratory nature of the study, it serves as a model and provides a limited foundation upon which more rigorous and comprehensive studies of television news diversity might build in future years.

The study was limited to the textual content of local news items and did not attempt to analyze visual content of television news stories or any other non-textual message dimensions. Emphasis on certain news items as exhibited by "order of presentation," was not analyzed in the study. However, the study did examine story emphasis with respect to unique stories as a percent of total local stories carried. The percentage of time devoted to unique stories based on story type was also examined on a market-by-market basis. While the study of shared television news content has merit, the focus of this thesis was not directed at shared news stories. The aim of this dissertation was concentrated on local news items which were "not shared" by television stations in a market.

A major limitation of the study was its scope. Only one case was included for each of the three different market sizes studied. Future studies of this kind should include a larger number of markets within each of the market sizes used in the analysis. Such a practice would

help in increasing the generalizability of findings. In addition, the purposive selection of news days and of broadcast markets also contributed to the limited generalizability of findings. Random sampling of newsdays and of broadcast markets would enhance the external validity of future studies of this kind.

A major purpose of the study was to ascertain what additional numbers of stations contribute to the pool of information within individual communities. No attempt was made to evaluate the quality of unique news items or their value for television audiences. It also must be acknowledged that unique news stories were not, necessarily, enterprise stories, because unique news items could have been obtained from other media which were the genuine originators of such stories. Identification of these media would have been enlightening but such an investigation exceeded the scope of this study.

#### Future Research

Although the above findings are of limited generalizability due to the case study nature of this investigation, the study serves as a model and a starting point for more rigorous studies to follow which may attempt to analyze content patterns of local television newscasts with respect to news content diversity. Future studies should expand the scope of this kind of investigation to include a broader and more representative cross section of stations and markets. Doing so would significantly enhance generalizability of study findings, while permitting a meaningful application of summary statistics and appropriate statistical tests, to several of the research issues dealt with in this thesis.

The research missions and questions addressed in the study point toward several additional research issues which warrant further systematic investigation in future mass communication research. One of these

relates to a relatively novel approach to testing the agenda-setting hypothesis of mass communication. Relatively few studies have rigorously explored the creation and/or maintenance of the broadcast newsroom agenda in either network or local settings. Previous agenda-setting research has focused heavily on the potential of the mass media to set the public agenda and how this process operates. Fewer studies have systematically investigated the incidence of reverse agenda-setting or the potential of the public and/or other sources to set the newsroom agenda in specific news media. One possible influence on the newsroom agenda which was discussed in this thesis was editors' perceived newsroom philosophy.

The three policy issues noted in the introduction bear upon the role of the local station in representing a separate voice within the community and in contributing to the community's information pool. The results in this study have implications for localism, diversity, and "the marketplace of ideas." Firstly, the localism concept is clearly advanced by the results. The data indicate that each station within a market contributes a substantial number of unique news stories, and of local stories generally, to the information pool of a community. The findings support the FCC's policy of local service in both respects noted above, and suggest the viability of this policy approach as compared with that of regional broadcast service.

It should be noted that it is possible that a one-station market could air as many unique news items as a two-station market. However, this consequence is highly improbable because the length of newscasts in each market are likely to be the same. Also, in one-station markets, generally television stations tend to operate on more limited budgets than stations in larger markets. A two-station market will probably have twice as many local news stories as a one-station market. Many



stories in the two-station market will be duplicated, but each station will make a unique contribution.

The results also supported the notion that local stations provide a level of diversity in terms of the local news items which the stations broadcast to their publics. The results of this study, however, demonstrated the incidence of diversity in a different way than Steiner (1952), since the study addressed diversity of content within a program type. Still, the results offered support for Steiner's theoretical framework by showing that the more stations within a market, the greater the number of unique news stories broadcast.

The results demonstrated that each additional station within a market adds to a community's information pool and to the community's budget of unique news stories. This finding tends to support the notion that the more local stations serving a community, the closer it comes to representing a "marketplace of ideas," serving the unique needs of citizens and helping to maintain an informed electorate. Conversely, the loss of a local station might have a negative impact on localism, diversity, and "the marketplace of ideas."

This study did not attempt to ascertain what effects, if any, the broadcast of unique news stories may exert on a community. While future research should explore potential influences of such stories on audiences, this study proceeded under the assumption that the more information which exists in a community's information pool, the more facts available for debate of public issues, and the higher the quality of such debates. The above condition seems to adhere to the spirit of the concept of a "marketplace of ideas." Further, the broadcast of unique news stories in a two-or-more station market serves to assure citizens of a community

that one station is not setting the local news agenda, exclusive of other television station competitors.

Future research on television news content and television news gatekeeping should attempt to further establish the role played by editors' perceived newsroom philosophy on local news output and in the coverage of certain news topics. Such studies could yield valuable insights in better understanding the reporter/editor relationship as well as the social influences which may affect both newsgathering and news processing operations in the broadcast newsroom. A study which might accomplish the above objectives would be one designed to investigate editors's perceived newsroom philosophy as an agenda-setting influence on reporters' preferences in news coverage and in news selection.

This study found that the staff news reporter for television was significantly involved with the output of unique news stories by individual stations. Findings showed that reporters' coverage of unique news stories is sometimes influenced by people and events encountered in daily rounds covering beats. Consequently, reporters play an important role in the gathering of unique news items for broadcast and deserve to be studied in this regard in future studies. In some instances, the evidence reported in this study suggests that assignment editors are more likely to shape that portion of the local news budget which is duplicated among stations in a given market. Reporters, some of whom practice enterprise journalism, are more apt to come up with unique news items.

Another virtually unexplored avenue for future research, which this thesis points toward, involves empirical study of the practice of enterprise reporting within the journalistic community. The concept is a

relatively familiar one to professional journalists, but few if any studies have attempted to explore and describe the extent to which enterprise reporting is practiced either between individual types of news media (television versus newspapers) or simply within a major individual news medium. In this thesis, no conclusion or assumption was made that unique news stories are always those stories which are the result of enterprise reporting. A future study could expand the investigation initiated by this thesis by exploring and ascertaining the nature of the relationship between unique local news stories and local news stories which are the result of enterprise reporting.

An additional approach to extending the research reported in this thesis would be to apply the concept of news content diversity to the study of other electronic news media, e.g. radio news, cable network news versus broadcast network news. Because of the trend toward deregulation in the broadcasting industry, such studies could be useful in assessing the impact of such a trend on localism and diversity of information as technology moves the world closer to becoming a global village. Local news content diversity could become as much of a victim as a benefactor of the new world information order if technological influences contribute to promoting homogeneity of news content among local news media. The potential realization of this consequence suggests that future research on local television news diversity be rigorous and extensive as perhaps one means of helping to maintain a marketplace of ideas conducive to an informed public opinion.

New communication technologies, e.g. cable television news may or may not contribute significantly to television news diversity in future years. A determining factor in this issue will be the impact of market

forces in encouraging diversity of news content or homogeneity of news content. A scenario of either option can be painted to consider potential consequences for consumers. On the one hand, viewers may begin to watch cable news networks, e.g. CNN, with regularity during the dinner hour, prompting advertisers to reduce investments in local television news. Such a potential consequence could stifle the economic viability of local television news and indirectly encourage high viewership of national news programs. A corresponding results could be that local stations would be forced to reduce news budgets and perhaps would generate fewer unique news stories. A radical consequence of such events could be homogenization of local news content, where stations generally air the same stories.

However, a much more positive scenario can be developed for how the new communication technologies will enhance diversity of local television news. Because cable systems operate a multitude of channels, the potential exists for each community within a region to have access to a cable channel for the purpose of receiving or of producing local news pertaining to a given community or communities. Educational access and public access channels make such visions distinct possibilities. Another instance in which the new communication technologies may enhance local television news diversity is through the development of local cable news channels. Providing continuous coverage and regular updates of local news events for an extended period during the day could generate renewed interest in supporting local television news, on the part of advertisers. In addition, such coverage, if viewed regularly in the community, would make important contributions toward the maintenance of diversity of information and of viewpoints within a given market.

Because local news viewers do not typically view the newscasts of competing stations during the same time interval, a future goal of broadcasters could be to afford greater opportunities for viewers who wish to consume the diverse information aired by local stations. One way of meeting such a goal might be an initiative assumed by broadcasters to lease channels on the local cable system and air duplicate editions of their newscasts. Broadcasters could also contribute to news content diversity by airing news stories which did not get on the air, and doing so via cable.

The study results clearly demonstrate that additional stations within a market, which air local news, contribute in significant ways to a community's information pool. While local television stations are required to broadcast a percentage news programming, the trend of broadcast deregulation could eliminate such a requirement in much the same way as the commercial radio industry has been relieved of this obligation. If such a change was to occur for television, licensees could choose not to carry news. The findings of this study indicate that such a choice poses serious implications for local communities in terms of a reduction in the information pool and of diversity in newscast content. The evidence suggests that such a state of affairs might be detrimental to the public welfare of Americans, and that local news service by numerous stations in a community is more likely to contribute favorably to a marketplace of ideas.

Future studies should also investigate the incidence of unique news stories as disseminated by all media outlets within a community. Such an approach would provide a broader and clearer perspective of each mediums' contribution to the communities' information pool than

afforded in this study. The approach might also lead to the development of empirically-based criteria for evaluating the degree to which a community approximates a "marketplace of ideas."

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### DEFINITIONS: NEWS STORY TOPICS

#### CODE NO.

- 01 BUSINESS/ECONOMICS - news items relating to business, industry, commerce, banking, finance, employment, labor and agriculture. Stories about labor unions, labor strikes, consumer news, and farm news. Excluded are news items about taxes (which will be coded GOVERNMENT/POLITICS).
- 02 GOVERNMENT/POLITICS - news items dealing with public policy issues, elections, campaigns, and activities of governmental bodies (local, state, and federal) excepting items about school board elections and millages associated with school operation and other school related matters (which would be coded EDUCATION). Also included are stories about political organizations on the city, county, state, and national levels. Stories about the legislative process and the execution of laws. News items about taxes, political issues, candidates, leaders in addition to stories relating to criticisms of government activities.
- 03 EDUCATION - news items involving private and public schools, colleges, universities, trade schools, adult education, R.O.T.C., libraries, and statements by educators. Stories about school board elections and millages associated with school operation and other school related matters. Also stories relating to general educational programs and activities, as well as special educational programs (Bush, 1960).
- 04 HUMAN INTEREST/FEATURE - soft news items of prominent people, oddities, children, animals, and entertainment. This category includes items which are not straight news stories, but which instead are timeless in nature and which appeal to people's emotions (i.e. curiosity, amazement, skepticism, humor, sadness, and amazement). News items which are light and entertaining. This category also includes "how-to-do-it" features, advice--items with no real news peg (consumer-user type stories). Also stories about entertainers and celebrities, and their obituaries.
- 05 CRIME/COURTS - news items relating to acts of crime and vice, i.e. stories of extra-legal acts, robberies, murders, assaults, rapes, etc. Excluded are stories relating to SOCIAL CONFLICT/SOCIAL WELFARE. Also news items about criminal apprehension, arrest, and trial. News items about suicides. Stories about trials, pleadings, and reviews of civil suits, excluding items relating to GOVERNMENT/POLITICS.



CODE NO.

- 06     SOCIAL CONFLICT/SOCIAL WELFARE - news items which involve conflict between social groups, rather than between individuals (Lowry, 1971a), i.e. protests, riots, and demonstrations, excluding labor strikes, picketing, and disputes. Stories concerning the failure of individuals or society to function in a cooperative manner. This category also includes news items about social welfare, with the exception of stories relating to HEALTH/MEDICAL/SCIENCE.
- 07     HEALTH/MEDICAL/SCIENCE - news items concerning development of new devices, techniques, and applications within the medical and physical science fields. Stories about public health services, health related matters, diseases, epidemics, and cures. Also stories about the services of medical and health organizations. News items involving theories, inventions, and innovations from the natural and social sciences, News stories relating to the environment.
- 08     ACCIDENT/DISASTER - news items involving natural disasters or unforeseen events which result in personal injury or in destruction of life or property. Stories about fires, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, explosions, transportation accidents, and public safety. Stories about accidents befalling individuals, i.e. a hunting accident (Lowry, 1971a).
- 09     RELIGION - news items about churches and religious sects. Stories involving statements by the clergy or by religious leaders. Stories about religious holidays, celebrations, and observances (Bush, 1960).
- 10     OTHER NEWS - news items which do not belong to one of the above nine categories.

## DEFINITIONS: NEWS STORY TYPES

- 01     HARD NEWS - news items categorized in any of the ten topic categories, with the exception of HUMAN INTEREST/FEATURE, will be coded as HARD NEWS.
- 02     SOFT NEWS - news items categorized in the topic category HUMAN INTEREST/FEATURE will be coded as SOFT NEWS.

## Appendix A

## NEWS STORY CODING GUIDELINES

1. Only local news stories (or those stories having local news pegs) will be coded for analysis. For example: for the Lansing market, Detroit stories without a local peg are not to be coded.
2. Code news stories about local government issues, when they qualify as "local news." Do not code news stories that deal solely with state and national government issues (and which do not exhibit a local "news peg").
3. Try to code news stories involving recalls and layoffs of municipal employees as Government/Politics.
  - Stories about utilities usually will be coded as Government/Politics. (However, such stories may be coded as Business/Economics if "government" is not specifically mentioned and if they deal primarily with a private corporation or corporations.)
4. Movie reviews will not be coded for analysis.
5. Stories involving comments made by State Legislators will be coded, if the legislator represents a jurisdiction in the coverage area of the sample station, and if the story has impact or potential impact on the local community.
6. Stories which involve administration of the health principle will be coded Health/Science/Medicine.
7. If the same story is broadcast more than once during a sample newscast, code the item as a separate story, and so indicate that it is a repeat story.
8. Code general local stories relating to "traffic" as Social Welfare.

## Appendix A

## NEWSCAST CONTENT NOT INCLUDED IN ANALYSIS

This study will not analyze the following kinds of newscast content: (1) Editorials, (2) Stock Market and Commodities Reports (local, state, or national), excepting stories relating to general business news of local interest, (3) Weather information (except when it is broadcast in the body of the newscast and serves as a warning or to relate a disaster, (4) Sports Reports, (5) National and International News Stories (with no state or local peg, often originated by a network), and (6) Commercials, Teases, and Banter (between anchor persons).

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

- LOCAL NEWS - News items originated by the sample television station and which make reference to people, places, events, and issues within the station coverage area. (National and international news items with a local news peg will be considered local news.) A story may originate elsewhere, but if it has a major local "news peg" (as defined below) it is considered "local."
- DUPLICATED - This term will be used to refer to a condition in which two news stories share the same news peg, including discussion of the same event, the same principal characters, and the same geographic region. Duplicated stories need not include the same details. If the basic stories are the same, they are considered duplicates, even though the reporting may take different directions and provide unique information.
- NEWS PEG - The aspect of a news event that makes it newsworthy.
- NEWS STORY - Any topic introduced by the anchorman coupled with any report or reports by other correspondents on the same topic and any concluding remarks by the anchorman.

## APPENDIX B

### CARD A

(Monday June 14 -- Toledo)

#### WTVG

1. Scioto Co. Community Action Agency ordered not to use CETA funds to help Ohioans find work in other states.
2. Lucas County Library System launches summer reading program.
3. Ohio Building Authority seeks to finance bonds for new office building in Columbus.
4. Recycling program in Toledo keeps area youth busy and city clean.

#### WDHO

1. Hike in Toledo payroll income tax prompts city council to recall refuse collectors and clerical workers.
2. Spokesman for Plasgon Company workers on strike in Toledo comments on U-A-W contract dispute.
3. Lucas County Democratic Party to meet and choose party chairman.
4. Flag Day...feature report on the proper way to dispose of colors.

#### WTOL

1. Two arraigned on murder charges in the deaths of Diane Brown and Iguest Holston.
2. Canine Parvo virus affects area farm live stock.
3. Toledo zoo perpetuates its existence by applying creative breeding.
4. Feature report on fire works safety.
5. Needy Toledo residents receive government surplus cheese.

CARD B

(Tuesday June 15 -- Toledo)

WTVG

1. Gubernatorial candidate Clarence Brown comments on state taxes at Masonic Auditorium in Toledo.

WDHO

1. Citizens groups protest merger of Ohio Citizens Bank.
2. City hears request to close road by Metro Park, near Walnut Grove picnic area.
3. City Park Board to start legal proceedings against Ida Green.
4. Toledo Better Business Bureau warns residents against door-to-door scams this summer.
5. Ohio Senator Metzenbaum speaks to Cleveland labor leaders about G-O-P administration's policies.

WTOL

1. Teachers strike in Washington School District to be mediated soon.
2. University of Toledo faces space problems with increased enrollment and loss of residence hall.
3. Steam locomotive in Continental, Ohio restored by residents.
4. Strawberry crop in Sylvaia exceptionally good this year... Extension Service gives advice on picking the fruit and nutritional considerations.
6. "Healthy Woman" health care facility opens in Toledo to serve working women.
7. Beach house home for battered women holds reception for donors and financial support.
8. Police seek suspects in Banner slaying.

## CARD C

(Wednesday June 16 -- Toledo)

WTVG

1. Infant child, Randall Styber remains in critical condition after he fell into bay and almost drowned.
2. Jury selection nears end in the retrial of accused mass murderer James Ruppert.
3. Swanton County is without a police chief as city council refused to confirm a candidate.
4. Station News Director becomes parent of new baby.

WDHO

1. Citizens protest use of municipal funds by Oregon City. Public hearing scheduled.
2. Bank teller shot and killed in robbery of United Bank in Canton.
3. Crime increase in Toledo prompts seminar for store owners on robbery prevention.
4. Craig bridge is site of several car accidents...near Star St. exit, north bound.
5. American Motors extends special sales program on locally made jeeps to other models.
6. Local construction picture brightens as revenue bonds approved for building new warehouse and grain elevator.
7. Coroner investigates case where corpse of child found packed in concrete. (Parents charged with abusing a corpse.)

WTOL

1. 16-year-old jogger struck and killed by motorist...driver arrested.
2. Construction of \$8 million nursing home promised as state comes up with matching funds.
3. Commissioners and zoological society strike compromise on new board of directors to run city zoo.
4. Construction underway to close site of 29 accidents...open median at Hemoine Road and I-280.
5. Toledo area truckers wives organize group (Tough) to support striking truckers.
6. Passenger traffic at airport down 19% as Piedmont Airlines to begin service.
7. Belly dancer arrives at area nursing home to help residents celebrate Fathers Day.

## CARD D

(Thursday June 17 -- Toledo)

WTVG

1. Reno Beach Coast Guard continues search for three missing men.
2. Infant, Randall Styber, alive after falling into bay and nearly drowning.
3. Sierra Club endorses local Democrats for the first time.
4. Steamboat "Princess" readies herself to sail from Providence Park for 12th season.
5. City tax increase may result in renovation and reopening of five Toledo swimming pools.
6. Area physician warns that starch-blocking diet pill could be harmful.
7. State spends millions on paraplegic convict Leo Jenkins, destined for execution in electric chair.
8. Village of Swanton cannot decide on candidate for police chief.

WDHO

1. Ricker residence on Norwood is safe of mid-day fire as 11-year old boy summons firemen.
2. Gas prices may increase due to tax on imported oil according to an Indiana oil distributor from Toledo.
3. Bowling Green tries to head off water scarcity by letter writing campaign by city council...urging residents to conserve water.
4. Archaeological dig at Maumee's Ft. Miami State Park seeks 200-year-old fort with aid of city funds.
5. Ten years after Watergate break-in, area kids asked about what they remember about the incident.

WTOL

1. Controversy develops over use of a plot of Toledo land, initially to be used for housing development. (Opponents to object in City Hall.)
2. New law eliminates individual pricing requirements for Toledo grocery stores using electronic scanners.
3. Antique glass works flown to Owensville by helicopter as part of exhibit scheduled for August 14.
4. \$8 million nursing home project in Sandusky to result from conversion of veterans hospital.
5. Local woman turns game of Rubick's Cube into way of life. Offers model for the blind.

## CARD E

(Friday June 18 -- Toledo)

MTVG

1. Lucas County may spend .25 million dollars on new jail facilities to alleviate overcrowding at county jail.
2. Murder suspect in killing of two University of Michigan students pleads insanity.

WDHO

1. Toledo woman files suit in U.S. District Court on behalf of retirees...to protect retirement and social security benefits.
2. Columbus police use tear gas to apprehend man in boarding house.
3. Coast Guard recovers body of Dan White, who drowned at the mouth of Toussan River.
4. Toledo major compares city to Chrysler...needs increased revenues and management.
5. Lower education in Toledo criticized...prompts Toledo teachers to attend seminar in Bedford on "power writing."
6. Fathers Day feature on how animal fathers protect their young at the Toledo Zoo.
7. Archbold Ohio residents pay to have businessman arrested as part of Cystic Fibrosis campaign.

WTOL

1. Toledo postal employees and wife arraigned on charges of food stamp fraud.
2. Fines for Toledo parking tickets likely to increase.
3. Gibsonburg is site of weekend games and races to honor volunteer firemen.
4. Night crawlers hunted by poverty stricken Laotian immigrants...as well as area fishermen.



## CARD A

(Monday June 14 -- Detroit)

WJBK

1. Rep. Jim Dunn announces reelection bid.
2. Report on home mortgage rates released.
3. Job telethon on Channel 56
4. U. of M. men featured in Playgirl magazine.
5. Father Kern to be honored.
6. Barricades at Hines Park may come down.

WXYZ

1. President of Detroit Bar comments on personal safety of lawyers.
2. Rescue helicopters in Detroit buildings.
3. Bicycling for fitness and health; consumer user.
4. Library starts "Lend-a-tool" program for do-it-yourselfers.
5. Rowdy fans in Tiger Stadium will be penalized.
6. Wayne State University financial crisis.
7. Police seek murder suspects in killing of party store owner.
8. Squatters occupy abandoned city homes.
9. Old building revitalized in downtown area.

WDIV

1. Consumers look out for cook ware company.
2. Detroit police conduct search for 87-year-old woman.
3. State to provide aid for Detroit public schools.
4. Political battles develop in Wayne County.

WGPR

1. Local woman flute player tours Germany.

CARD A (continued)

WJBK

WXYZ

WDIV

WGPR

10. Mayor Young to be installed as president of Conference of Mayors.
11. Amtrak cancels service from Detroit to Jackson.
12. Local woman tries to break into show business.
13. Bud Company drops injunction against N.Y.C.
14. The health problem posed by back aches... medical matters.

CARD B

(Tuesday June 15 -- Detroit)

WJBK

1. Blood drive held today downtown.
2. Building trades council...tradesmen strike, H.E.O.'s settle.
3. Residents send petition to Rep. Jim Dunn.
4. Four southeast Michigan cities to go to court over tax assessments.
5. Police hunt bank robbers of National Bank of Detroit branch at 7-Mile and Ileen.
6. Local man killed in Missouri helicopter crash.
7. Johnny Lee Brown renigs on deal with police and faces additional car theft charges.

WXYZ

1. Police obtain confession from suspect in Buhi Building murders.
2. Clean-up of Jeffries Project.
3. Feature report on keeping your car out of the body shop.
4. Feature report on dieting and restaurants.
5. Wayne State U. engineering students work on alcohol car.
6. Fire safety in downtown buildings.
7. Police arrest woman for embezzling funds from travel agency.
8. Kaiser/Fraiser Club meeting.
9. "Mothers against pot-holes."

WDIV

1. Feature report on protecting your home from burglars.
2. U. of M. study results on Detroit relocation of Poletown residents.
3. Wayne County political outlook.
4. "Tuesday's Child" feature report... finding big brothers.

WGPR

1. Rally to be held at Kennedy Square to protest Reaganomics.
2. Lucas challenges tax package in Wayne County.
3. Government surplus cheese distributed in Detroit.

Appendix B

CARD B (continued)

WJBK

WXYZ

WDIV

WGPR

10. Lee Iacocca should be  
"Man of the Year."

11. Feature report--"Gift  
of Love" ...a child.

## CARD C

(Wednesday June 16 -- Detroit)

WJBK

1. Highland Park residents protest towing.
2. New housing construction down in Michigan bucking upward trend nationally.
3. Horse show opens in Bloomfield Hills.
4. Feature report on lightning safety.
5. Dearborn tells man to get rid of cougar.
6. Detroit schools may lay off teachers.
7. State certifies Detroit budget is balanced.
8. Golfers pay to play for charity.
9. Government surplus cheese to be distributed in Detroit.

WXYZ

1. Aftermath of Buhl Building murders... woundings.
2. Police conduct search for missing woman... Wanda Evans.
3. Feature report on today being the last day of the school year.
4. Local perspective on Nat'l Science Academy report on diet and cancer.
5. Son of former president of G-M, Tom Estes, goes to prison in Illinois.
6. Feature report... pulling weeds is tough on your body.
7. McClouth steel workers trying to save their jobs.

WDIV

1. Feature report on keeping your home safe from burglars.
2. Wayne County Road Commission executives adopt new labor contract, guaranteeing their jobs for six years.
3. Nursing home residents get puppies as visitors...pet therapy.

WGPR

1. AFL-CIO may make local endorsements.
2. State Board of Education advances funds to Detroit Schools.
3. Detroit Edison to sell power to G.P.U. of New Jersey.
4. Senior citizens affected by Reaganomics...feature report.
5. Beware of cook ware sold from phone booths.
6. Conference on Black female businesses.
7. Detroit area gas prices up.
8. Clark's Co-op...people pool buying habits and take advantage of quantity buying.

CARD C (continued)

WJBR

WDIV

WXYZ

10. Wayne Co. Community College may fire President Simmons.

9. Cycle Tech takes over old plant.

10. Opening of VW plant in Sterling Heights delayed indefinitely.

11. Federal government helps state clean up toxic waste dump at Schwartz Creek.

12. Feature report on repairing dam in Bald Mt. Park.

13. Building Trades strike almost over.

14. Warehouse workers strike at Vernors.

15. Feature report on the importance of grand parents in a child's life.

16. Doris Bisco honored by March of Dimes.

## CARD D

(Thursday June 17 -- Detroit)

WJBK

1. Striking Vernors workers hold meeting to vote.

2. Highland Park drivers had cars towed...win in court.

3. Washington Blvd. re-named for Father Kern.

4. O.C.C. students rebuild mastodon...feature report.

5. Wayne Co. recinds layoffs...may ask for tax hikes.

6. Company employees may purchase McClouth Steel.

7. Shareholders approve Strohs/Schlitz merger.

8. Vernor's strikers stone scabs.

9. Man hunt ends for suspect in Shelby Township murder.

WXYZ

1. Nuclear weapons to be located near Detroit.

2. Detroit state rep. accused of possession of a stolen car.

3. Aftermath of Buhl Bldg. murders/woundings/fire.

4. Dead baby found outside local church.

5. Carol Webb charged with torture of her sons.

6. Queen of Netherlands to visit Detroit.

7. Detroit may host 1984 Democratic convention.

8. G.M. workers in Pontiac to be laid off.

9. Wayne Co. may return patrol to Hines Park.

10. Gross Isle man charged with manslaughter.

WDIV

1. Candidates emerge for chief executive post in Wayne County.

2. Mickey Schorr to sell tape/stereo business.

WGPR

1. Monroe evacuation plan found to be inadequate.

2. Academic survival course offered at M.S.U. for minority undergraduate students.

## Appendix B

WGPR

## CARD D (continued)

WXYZWDIVWJBK

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>10. Lucille Walker verdict.</p> <p>11. Feature report on smashing Japanese import cars...a charity campaign sponsored by local ad agency.</p> <p>12. "Pub Crawl" to-night to benefit Detroit Opera.</p> <p>13. Historical marker placed on Y.M.C.A. branch.</p> <p>14. Local ice cream company finds work for teens.</p> | <p>11. Police count money obtained in local drug raid.</p> <p>12. Daughter of state representative to run for state rep. seat... same last name on ballot.</p> <p>13. Last day of school today.</p> <p>14. Detroit man to serve time for supplying false i.d.'s to aliens.</p> <p>15. Feature...woman dedicated herself to convalescent home.</p> <p>16. Health problem posed by flat feet.</p> <p>17. Oak Park High radio marathon.</p> |
|---|--|



## CARD E

(Friday June 18 -- Detroit)

WJBKWXYZWDIVWGPR

- |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ethnic Festival steals business from downtown restaurants.</li> <li>2. Surgical technique developed in Detroit aimed at curing diabetes.</li> <li>3. Bloomfield Township doctor sentenced in shooting.</li> <li>4. Jury selection starts for two Detroit suspects in Trooper Scott murder case.</li> <li>5. Area treasurer charged for lewd and lascivious behavior.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reputed drug dealer involved in operation of VISTA waste treatment plant.</li> <li>2. Drug dealers face arrest in aftermath of heroin drug bust on Tracy Street.</li> <li>3. E.P.A. Research Center on Gross Isle closing due to federal cuts.</li> <li>4. Detroit ruled out for G.O.P. convention, but may still be in running for Democratic convention.</li> <li>5. VW plant in Sterling Heights still under construction in face of company losses.</li> <li>6. Kiegle Harbor authorities seek extradition of Michigan murder suspect (Nugen).</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Federal employment program helps teach Detroiters to compete for jobs.</li> <li>2. Reaganomics takes social security benefits away from elderly Jewish emigrant living in Detroit.</li> <li>3. Wayne County Road Commission members protect jobs contractually.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mayor Young to attend Mayor's Conference... explains missions for conference.</li> <li>2. Wayne Co. judge closes Michigan Democratic Federated Club after illegal activities.</li> <li>3. Residents and clergy conduct prayer walk to raise spirits of Detroit's needy.</li> <li>4. Detroit officials attend fund raiser for education of Third World students ...sponsored by Israel.</li> <li>5. Renowned Detroit model comments on challenges of being Black in the modeling profession.</li> </ol> |
|---|---|--|--|

WJBK

CARD E (continued)

WXYZ

WDIV

WGPR

7. Hickory street crimes follow murder in Troy (Harless case).
8. Detroit police seek suspect in robbery of Detroit Bank in Troy.
9. Wayne Co. judge rules Detroit police reservists carry guns illegally.
10. Feature report on Mickey Schorr retiring from stereo business.
11. State penalizes Detroit nursing homes for not providing proper care.
12. Walt Disney animator visits Detroit.
13. Bendix newly weds attend Southfield reception.
14. Fruhoff's Neighbor Get Acquainted Picnic gets under way.

CARD A  
(Monday June 14 -- Lansing)

WJIM

1. City council hears ordinance allowing local vendors to do business in Washington Mall.

WILX

1. City council hears proposal to commit new parking spaces in downtown area to city real estate developers.
2. Lansing police arrest Detroit man for carrying loaded weapon in trunk of car.
3. Cascades Waterfall Goddess returns to Jackson to present personal scrapbook to Cascades museum.

CARD B

(Tuesday June 15 -- Lansing)

WJIM

1. Vietnam veteran program in Mason helps vets readjust by providing therapy and other assistance.

WILX

1. Father and son (The Cropsy's) file candidacies for state senate seat.
2. Representative Jim Dunn and opponent Bob Carr debate postal privilege of U.S. representatives.
3. Downtown Jackson hotel undergoing renovation to house elderly citizens.
4. Michigan Supreme Court reinstates law suit against Jackson County Road Commission...stemming from earlier accident involving car and motorcycle.
5. Goodyear Tire Company manager in Jackson transferred to Virginia.

CARD C

(Wednesday June 16 -- Lansing)

WJIM

WILX

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hart bound over to circuit court for arraignment on concealed weapon charge.</li> <li>2. State senate prepares to adopt child abuse bill sponsored by Representative Stabenow.</li> <li>3. Lansing postal employee wins out-of-court settlement in sex discrimination suit.</li> <li>4. Feature report on how to deal with power outages.</li> <li>5. Students build robot with 15-inch nose.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Representative Stabenow receives reelection challenge from Paula Johnson.</li> <li>2. Representative Hornum announces he will not seek reelection.</li> <li>3. Thieves rob local bike shop... leather jackets reported stolen.</li> <li>4. Meridian police seek witnesses in robbery of Michigan National Bank.</li> <li>5. Lansing police warn residents to beware of gypsy scams and swindles during the summer.</li> <li>6. Conferences to be held at MSU to educate public on how to avoid lake pollution problems, cropping up around the state.</li> <li>7. Capital City Airport officials discuss plans for adding new restaurant.</li> </ol> |
|--|--|

## CARD D

(Thursday June 17 -- Lansing)

WJIMWILX

1. Lansing School administrators may not receive proposed salary raises, in the aftermath of a district re-organization.
  2. Oldsmobile in Lansing to lay off 75 auto workers.
  3. Senator Sederburg comments on how new coal mining bill will affect Ingham County.
  4. Lansing attorney Luomo released from jail after receiving contempt charge in Benda Gas Station case.
  5. E. Jackson and Lapeer Schools sued for assessing charges for student athletics.
  6. State transportation department required to install water mains in Brighton area.
1. Alsner murder trial begins in St. Johns...defendant accused in the murder of his father.
  2. Judge in Haggard mass murder case refused to remove himself from the case.
  3. Community leaders air concerns for improving safety and conditions in Lansing playgrounds. (Some minority youths use playgrounds for illegal purposes).
  4. MSU students take part in bicycle marathon to New Orleans to raise funds to fight arthritis.
  5. A look at the need for weather sirens in Munith...on the heels of a recent tornado incident.

CARD E

(Friday June 18 -- Lansing)

WJIM

1. Foreclosure announced on office wing of Long's Convention Center.
2. Lansing-Jackson area is test market for promoting Jacob Best Beer.
3. MSU entomologist describes damage and affects caused by aphid disease on Michigan crops.

WILX

1. Senator Sederburg comments on advantages of a part-time Michigan legislature.
2. Alsner murder trial continues in Clinton County...defendent charged in killing of his father.
3. Representative Hollister criticizes G.O.P. administration's budget plan.
4. Eight illegal aliens arrested in Stockbridge.
5. Swedish band and ballet performances take place in downtown Lansing... performed by foreign exchange group.

# APPENDIX C

## NEWS STORY CODE SHEET

(1) \_\_\_\_ Coder I.D. Number (1=McMillan, 2=Eckhout, 3=Atwater)

(2-3) \_\_\_\_ Month

(4-5) \_\_\_\_ Day

(6) \_\_\_\_ Station Market (1=Detroit, 2=Toledo, 3=Lansing)

(7) ____ Station I.D.	<u>Detroit</u>	<u>Toledo</u>	<u>Lansing</u>
	1=WJBK	1=WTVG	1=WJIM
	2=WXYZ	2=WDHO	2=WILX
	3=WDIV	3=WTOL	
	4=WGPR		

(8-11) \_\_\_\_ Time (in seconds)

(12-13) \_\_\_\_ Story Topic

- 01=Business/Economics
- 02=Government/Politics
- 03=Education
- 04=Human Interest/Feature
- 05=Crime/Courts
- 06=Social Conflict/Social Welfare
- 07=Health/Medical/Science
- 08=Accident/Disaster
- 09=Religion
- 10=Other

(14-15) \_\_\_\_ Story Type

- 01=Hard News
- 02=Soft News

(16) \_\_\_\_ Story Originality (within newscast)

- 0=Non-repeat
- 1=Repeat

STORY DESCRIPTION (write in) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(17-18) \_\_\_\_ Unique Story Number

(19) \_\_\_\_ Duplication (within market)

- 1=Unduplicated
- 2=Story shared by 2 stations
- 3=Story shared by 3 stations
- 4=Story shared by 4 stations



## APPENDIX D

### TELEVISION NEWS EDITOR QUESTIONNAIRE

\_\_\_\_\_ Time started  
\_\_\_\_\_ Time ended  
\_\_\_\_\_ Total interview time

This research project involves news interests and judgment in the selection of stories aired only by your station in this market on the early evening news of a recent broadcast day. The study is partially funded by a contribution from the Radio-Television News Directors Association (RTNDA). Your station is one of nine stations in three midwest markets selected for study. I would like to ask you a series of questions about your news judgments and philosophy with respect to some of the "unique" news stories which your station broadcast in recent weeks.

STATION (\_\_\_\_\_)

EDITOR NAME (\_\_\_\_\_)

DATE OF INTERVIEW (\_\_\_\_\_)

1. What is your present title at this station?  
(\_\_\_\_\_)
2. How many full-time news department personnel are employed by your station? (\_\_\_\_\_)
- 2a. Of this number, how many news department employees are reporters?  
(\_\_\_\_\_)

## Appendix D

- 2b. How many part-time news department personnel are employed by your station? (\_\_\_\_\_)
3. Must anyone else approve your news decisions?  
 (   1   ) YES            (   2   ) NO            (   3   ) DK/REFUSED
- 3a. IF YES: Who are these staff members?  
 (\_\_\_\_\_)
4. Which members of your news department share responsibility for deciding the news items to be covered and included in the early local newscast?  
 (\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_)
5. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD A) Here is a card listing several local stories broadcast by your station, and which no other station carried on a recent sample day, i.e. "unique" stories. Is there anything about any of these stories which is characteristic of your station's news philosophy?
- 5a. What was the source of story number \_\_\_\_\_?  
 (\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_)
- 5b. Why did you choose to cover this story?  
 (\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_)
- 5c. Is there a newsroom policy or philosophy which influenced your judgment in deciding to carry this story?  
 (   1   ) YES            (   2   ) NO
- 5d. IF YES: Explain the newsroom policy or philosophy.  
 (\_\_\_\_\_)

## Appendix D

6. Is there anything about the stories listed for each of the other stations that you might say are characteristic of that station?

( 1 ) YES                      ( 2 ) NO                      ( 3 ) DK/REFUSED

PROBE: Why do you think those stations chose the particular news stories that appear? (other probes...)

( \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

- 6a. Were there any of these stories (your competitors') which you chose deliberately not to cover?

(        ) YES                      (        ) NO                      (        ) DK/REFUSED

- 6b. Were there any of these stories (your competitors') which you regret not carrying?

(        ) YES                      (        ) NO                      (        ) DK/REFUSED

IF YES: Which stories and why so? ( \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

- 6c. (REPEAT QUESTIONS 5 THROUGH 6, USING CARDS B, C, D, AND E RESPECTIVELY)

7. Does your news department make a conscious effort to differentiate its newscast content from that of your TV news competitors?

( 1 ) YES                      ( 2 ) NO                      ( 3 ) DK/REFUSED

- 7a. IF YES: In what ways do you differentiate news content?

( \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

8. Generally, how do you feel your newsroom obtains leads to exclusive or unique news stories?

( \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

## Appendix D

9. Does a station competitor's plans to cover a news event (or actual coverage of the event) influence your decision whether or not to cover the event?

(  1  ) YES                      (  2  ) NO

- 9a. IF YES: Why is this the case and how do you respond to these kinds of situations?

( \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ )

10. Do you have any concerns about duplication of news stories by television stations in your market?

(  1  ) YES                      (  2  ) NO                      (  3  ) DK/REFUSED

(PROBE: Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ )

11. Do you feel the local television audience is aware of unique news stories carried by TV stations in your market?

(  1  ) YES                      (  2  ) NO                      (  3  ) DK/REFUSED

IF YES: In what way is the audience aware of them?

( \_\_\_\_\_ )

12. Does the time length of your early evening newscast generally dictate a standard for the number of items to be included and the amount of time devoted to each item?

(  1  ) YES                      (  2  ) NO                      (  3  ) DK/REFUSED

- 12a. IF YES: Describe the nature of this standard or philosophy.

( \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ )

13. How does your early evening newscast rate in the market?

( \_\_\_\_\_ )

## Appendix D

14. How would you describe the attitude of your station's management with respect to local TV news and broadcast ratings?

( \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

15. Does your news department utilize the services of a consultant?

(   1   ) YES            (   2   ) NO            (   3   ) DK/REFUSED

- 15a. IF YES: What kind of input does the consultant provide with respect to differentiating you news product?

( \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

16. In general, do you feel your local newscasts devote more attention to certain news topics over others?

(   1   ) YES            (   2   ) NO            (   3   ) DK/REFUSED

- 16a. IF YES: Which specific topic areas do you emphasize and why?

( \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

17. Finally, what are your equipment capabilities relative to live microwave facilities and ENG camera units?

( \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

APPENDIX E

June 8, 1982

Dear News Director:

I am writing to request your cooperation in a research project that I am conducting through the support of the Radio-Television News Directors Association. This research project is an analysis of local TV news content in the Detroit, Lansing and Toledo markets and is also for partial fulfillment of Ph.D. requirements. As a veteran TV news reporter, I am very much aware of your hectic schedule, and I am asking if I might have about 30 minutes of your time for a brief interview.

The focus of the research study is on news judgment with respect to unique stories broadcast by your station within your market (during the period June 7 - June 18). I would appreciate your views on news judgment as they relate to the "unique" stories carried in your market. Your kind cooperation is sorely needed in making this project viable, and consequently in my progress in completing my doctoral dissertation. I hope that you can participate, and I will phone you in the near future on this matter. Thanks immensely for your help.

Sincerely,

Tony Atwater

APPENDIX F

May 27, 1982

Dear Riad,

Thanks for your cooperation on my dissertation project. You have been assigned to record the early evening newscast of WTOL-TV, Channel 11 for the periods June 7-11 and June 14-18. I am totally reliant on you to make these 10 newscast recordings, and hope that you will not miss any of them. This phase of the study is crucial to my successful completion of the dissertation, and I hope that you will give your recording assignments serious attention.

Enclosed you will find audio cassette tapes and stick-on labels, in addition to an instruction sheet. Please read the instruction sheet carefully, and follow the directions. Each side of each cassette should be labeled to indicate the station recorded and the date of the recording. If any questions or unforeseen problems arise, please contact me promptly by calling collect: (517)355-5785. I cannot express to you the importance of your reliable service. Thanks again for your kind help.

Sincerely,



Tony Atwater

## Appendix F

## NEWSCAST RECORDING INSTRUCTIONS

1. If at all possible, always record via an electrical outlet (use an AC/DC cord).
2. Before each recording session, check tape to see that it is cued up at the beginning.
3. Prior to recording each newscast, make a brief test recording to ensure that your machine is recording properly and that volume levels are set properly. (Avoid tape distortion by keeping volume set at the middle range--between high and low.)
4. The cassette tapes provided contain 45 minutes on each side. If newscast exceeds 30 minutes, you will need to turn cassette over (or change cassettes, if on 2nd side). Do so between the 35 and 44 minute mark, during a commercial break, sportscast, or weathercast.
5. It is important that all news items be recorded, and that none be left out. (If you must change the side of a tape or the tape, itself, do so during a commercial, a sportscast, or a weathercast... these items will not be analyzed.)
6. Don't make a practice of stopping the tape during a commercial, sportscast, or weathercast. You may forget to turn the recorder back on when the newscast resumes.
7. It is important that you monitor the recording of the newscast and ensure that the tape does not get jammed or stops. (Check continually to ensure that heads are moving the tape).
8. For newscasts longer than 30 minutes, you will have to keep track of the time to know best when you'll need to switch the side of a tape or to change to another tape.
9. Label each side of each cassette to indicate station recorded and the date of the recording.
10. If an assigned newscast is missed, the recorder may either be docked \$5, or asked to record an additional day's cast.



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATION

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824

July 24, 1982

APPENDIX G

Dear Mr. Rosenbaum:

Enclosed is the questionnaire which we discussed recently. I hope that you will look it over and respond where you can, particularly to items 17-20 for the five sample news days (see front page of questionnaire...Questionnaire Components). If you have any questions about any aspect of the questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact me at (517) 355-5785. I would very much appreciate it if you could return the completed questionnaire to me within one week from the time that you receive it. Once again, my thanks for your consideration and participation in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Tony Atwater

Enclosure

QUESTIONNAIRE COMPONENTS

This research project involves news interests and judgments in the selection of stories aired only by your station in this market on a recent broadcast day. The questionnaire which follows consists of two parts: items 1-16 are general questions which relate to your philosophy in carrying unique news stories (as mentioned above). Items 17-20 relate to the specific unique stories carried by your station (and those of your competitors) over the five-day period June 14-18. You will need to respond to items 17-20 for each of the five news days which are represented on Cards A-E. Separate pages (pp. 5-9) have been allotted for this purpose. Additional instructions about this section are contained on page 4. Thanks immensely for your responses.

## Appendix G

## INSTRUCTIONS:

Television News Editor Questionnaire. Please print responses to items 1-16 in the space provided when necessary. Also check the desired YES/NO response in the appropriate items. If more space is needed, please use the back of the page and indicate by item number the question to which you are responding.

1. What are the call letters of the station where you are employed?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your name and station title?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How many full-time news department personnel are employed by your station?

a. Of this number (mentioned in item #3) how many news department employees are reporters?

\_\_\_\_\_

b. How many part-time news department personnel are employed by your station?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Is there anyone else who must approve your news decisions with respect to newscast content? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

a. If you answered yes to item 4, what is the title(s) of the person(s)?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Who are the members of your news department (by title) who share responsibility for deciding the news stories to be covered and included in the early evening local newscast?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Does your news department make a conscious effort to differentiate its newscast content from that of your TV news competitors?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES

\_\_\_\_\_ NO

\_\_\_\_\_ DON'T KNOW

## Appendix G

6. a. If you answered yes to item 6, in what specific ways do you attempt to differentiate your news content?

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7. Generally, how do you feel your newsroom obtains leads to exclusive or unique news stories?

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8. Does a station competitor's plans to cover a news event (or actual coverage of the event) generally influence your decision whether or not to cover the event?

\_\_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_\_ NO      \_\_\_\_ DON'T KNOW

- a. If you answered yes to item 8, why is this generally the case?

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9. Do you have any concerns about duplication of news stories by television stations in your market?

\_\_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_\_ NO      \_\_\_\_ DON'T KNOW

- a. Explain your response in item 9; why or why not?

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10. Do you feel the local television audience is aware of unique news stories carried by TV stations in your market?

\_\_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_\_ NO      \_\_\_\_ DON'T KNOW

11. Does the length of your early evening newscast generally dictate a standard for the number of items to be included in the newscast?

\_\_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_\_ NO      \_\_\_\_ DON'T KNOW

- a. Does it dictate a standard for the time devoted to each item in the newscast?

\_\_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_\_ NO      \_\_\_\_ DON'T KNOW

11. a. Does it dictate a standard for the time devoted to each item in the newscast?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_\_\_ NO      \_\_\_\_\_ DON'T KNOW

- b. If you answered yes to item 10 or 10a, or both, how would you describe the standard(s) involved?

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12. How does your early evening newscast rate in the market?

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13. How would you describe the attitude of your station's management with respect to the relationship between newscast quality and broadcast ratings?

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14. Does your news department utilize the services of a consultant?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_\_\_ NO      \_\_\_\_\_ DON'T KNOW

- a. If you answered yes to item 14, what kind of input does the consultant provide with respect to differentiating your news product?

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---



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15. In general, do you feel your local newscasts devote more attention to certain news topics over others?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_\_\_ NO      \_\_\_\_\_ DON'T KNOW

- a. If you answered yes to item 15, which specific topic areas do you emphasize, and why?

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## Appendix G

16. How many live microwave units and ENG tape units does your news department have access to?

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NOTE: Items 17-20 are on pages 5-9. Responses for all six items should be made for the news breakdowns (listed on cards A-E) for each of the five news days. A separate sheet is provided for responding to items 17-22 for each day. Use the space provided after each item to print your response. Remember to match your response sheet with the appropriate news day (indicated on each card).

(MONDAY JUNE 14 -- REFER TO CARD A)

17. Is there anything about any of the stories listed for your station on this news day which is characteristic of your station's news philosophy?

\_\_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_\_ NO      \_\_\_\_ DON'T KNOW

- a. If you answered yes to item 17, indicate the news story or stories by number designation and describe the relevant philosophy or philosophies (for each story).

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18. What was the source of the story or stories mentioned in item 17 (if any)? Specify each item by its card number listing.

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19. Why did you choose to cover the story or stories mentioned in item 17 (if any)? Specify each items by its card number listing.

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20. Is there anything about the stories listed for each of the other stations that you might say is characteristic of that station?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES

\_\_\_\_\_ NO

\_\_\_\_\_ DON'T KNOW

- a. If you answered yes to item 20, indicate the news story or stories by number designation and describe the relevant characteristic(s).

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