Competitive Fire: An Historical Descriptive Analysis of Adherence to Traditional Journalistic Tenets in Television News Coverage of the Mark Hofmann Salt Lake City Bombings

B. William Silcock
Brigham Young University - Provo

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COMPETITIVE FIRE: AN HISTORICAL DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF ADHERENCE TO TRADITIONAL JOURNALISTIC TENETS IN TELEVISION NEWS COVERAGE OF THE MARK HOFMANN SALT LAKE CITY BOMBINGS

A Thesis
Submitted to the Department of Communications Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

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by B. William Silcock
December 1989
This thesis by B. William Silcock is accepted in its present form by the Department of Communications of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

[Signatures]

Norman C. Tarbox, Committee Chairman

R. Irwin Goodman, Committee Member

12/7/89

Date

Gordon C. Whiting, Department Chairman
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

What you are about to read is not an individual effort. It represents four years of my research aided by the direction of fellow faculty, the workhorse energy of loyal students and the keen interest of professional colleagues who share my care for a craft we both deem critical to mankind. Some of these individuals deserve to be singled out.

Fellow faculty - Dr. Norman Tarbox, my committee Chairman, ever was loyal, supportive and a true defender in times of need. His especially sharp red editing pen, in the early drafts, has made its mark. Dr. Irwin Goodman not only secured the funding but was courageous enough to reject easy answers. He constantly challenged me to the point of growth; a process painful but profound. The final manuscript is stronger because of the reviews by Dr. William Porter, Dr. Kathryn Egan and Dr. Peggy Knutson.

Loyal Students - Over a dozen played key roles. They climbed dusty shelves obtaining video tapes, transcribed and coded thousands of sentences, and perfected computer graphs until they were finally right. Norm Tarbox Junior symbolizes them all. He, like they, was willing to execute my directions, bear with patience my corrections and through wise, personal interpretations make up for my failures to communicate clearly.

Concerned Professionals - Five broadcast journalists serving as the professional reviewers give this study meaning beyond the ivory tower. Lynn Packer's pilot project and what he believes, that I don't, have taught me much. KBYU Administrators and staff members provided support services and a loud cheering section.

Finally, one colleague, T. Mark Phillips always answered an urgent call and more than anyone else was willing to spend hours "teasing the data" in a profession that, as SPJ's oath states, "knows no midnight."

This is not an individual work but the language, the learning and the lessons are mine. Some lessons I will have to learn over again "in the press of time" until they are burned into my soul. I welcome the heat.

The laughter and love notes from my children, Nicholas and Jane, the prayers of my parents, Burt and Ruth Silcock, and the listening ear of my angel wife Cathy healed over any of the hurt a moment of crisis could bring.

Over the years the challenges faced will fade. One clear memory will remain with me still - my wife, facing a 4 a.m. December morn, drove a slick highway to the University hoping desperately I was not dead in the barrow pit. Without anger for my forgetting to call, she understood the need of another "all nighter." Long after Mark Hofmann and this study are gone, that symbol of true love, of sacrifice, of friendship, will ever inspirit my once selfish head and now humbled heart. To Cathy, with love, this work is dedicated.
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<td>An unexpected, unpredictable news event.</td>
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<td>Code of Ethics</td>
<td>A written set of guidelines governing the professional practice of journalism. Compliance with the SPJ and RTNDA's ethical codes is not enforceable by law and violators rarely are censured by the organizations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Editorial Rules</td>
<td>An intuitive set of standards regarding objectivity, fairness and the elimination of bias adhered to by print and broadcast journalists practicing their craft in the United States.</td>
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<td>Follow-up Story</td>
<td>A news story with subject matter continuing a story broadcast on a previous newscast.</td>
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<td>Gatekeeper</td>
<td>A television news management function performed at various times by a News Director, Executive Producer, Managing Editor or Producer. These positions are responsible for determining what stories are aired, in what form they are aired, and how the stories are written.</td>
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<td>On-going Story</td>
<td>A news event that stays prominent for a period of days, weeks or event months.</td>
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<td>RTNDA</td>
<td>Radio-Television News Director's Association, the primary professional organization of broadcast journalist. Its purpose is to improve the performance of broadcast news and public affairs.</td>
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<td>Side-bar Story</td>
<td>A story that immediately follows a story in a broadcast newscast and is related to it. The term comes from print journalism where a related story was place next or to the side of the first story.</td>
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<td>SPJ</td>
<td>The Society of Professional Journalists is the oldest journalism organization in the United States. Founded as the fraternity Sigma Delta Chi in 1909, the name was changed in 1987 to the Society of Professional Journalists.</td>
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Chapter One

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

GENESIS OF THE STUDY

The Press of Time

Curiosity is a natural character trait of the broadcast journalist. Inquisitiveness seems central to a newsperson’s nature. It might seem apparent that a profession spending so much of its time in the business of questioning would set aside certain periods for self-introspection in order to ponder its own methods and procedures. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Broadcast news is oriented toward a constantly diminishing amount of time. At the moment the story process starts a deadline clock begins counting down until the climactic finish when it is delivered on the air. The process becomes a competitive race as each station strives to be first with the facts. This competitive time pressured orientation is shared across all mediums delivering news. As John Whale observes:

Our product is put together by large and shifting groups of people, often in a hurry, out of an assemblage of circumstances that is never the same twice. Newspapers and news programs could almost be called random reactions to random events.¹

Day after day the news practitioner enters the deadline time track knowing he is constantly moving toward the final second when the story must be ready for air. Along this "time track" compromises become constant as the reporter chooses not to make one more phone call or ask one more question or double check one more fact for fear that he will run out of time. The compromises along the daily deadline time track seem paradoxical to a profession that prides itself on truthfulness.

News reporting is in the business of telling truth. This truth telling process begins with a question. A news tip generates a question, prompts a phone call, stimulates more questions, produces facts, prompts double checking until eventually the practitioner is simply out of time. The questioning stops, the writing begins, all the while the clock ticks over the deadline time track. The process is cyclical.

This deadline orientation and the constant flow of new tips, new questions, new stories, produces a synergistic profession that rarely allows those involved the time off to stop and think about the process that is taking place. This analytical role belongs to the communications researcher who in the academic setting, away from the deadline racetrack, can question the methods of the questioning itself and offer insights into what kind of coverage is taking place. Such was the role of the Communications Research Center at Brigham Young University when it began a unique project in the Winter of 1985.

**Broadcast News Analysis Project**

The need to seriously inspect and reflect on how television news performs its truth telling functions reached the attention of the Communications Research Center at
Brigham Young University through part-time faculty member Lynn Packer. As a veteran television news reporter and part-time instructor in broadcast news reporting, Packer had a unique vantage point.

In a February 16, 1985 memorandum to Dr. Irwin Goodman, Director of Brigham Young University’s Communications Research Center, Packer proposed a pilot study to examine the content of television newscasts. Packer wrote:

The analyses I’ve seen in the past deal with quantitative issues, i.e.: how much time in a news block is actually devoted to news stories, how many stories involve spot news such as fires and accidents, and how much commercial time is allotted in the news blocks. Such information can be useful. But deeper analysis is needed if major journalistic problems are to be pinpointed. For example: how accurate are certain stories, how fair and how free from bias are they? These qualitative issues are much more difficult to deal with than quantitative issues. This would make a successful study all the more rewarding and helpful.²

From Packer’s initial memorandum began a pilot project to examine how well Salt Lake City’s three commercial network affiliates followed two basic foundations of broadcast journalism: fair reporting and unbiased narrative.

The Broadcast News Analysis Project Group was organized by the Communications Research Center at Brigham Young University. Five faculty members, two adjunct faculty and 11 students participated in the pilot study project.

Packer presented the results to the a diverse nationwide faculty audience attending the annual meeting of the Radio Television News Director’s Association meeting in Nashville, Tennessee in September 1985.

As an adjunct faculty member participating in this pilot study, this author became intrigued with the idea that flaws in the broadcast news process as practiced in America, namely the influx of reporter opinion in supposedly unbiased narrative, could be studied. As a broadcast news professional who was now employed by a university, a strong urge developed to research broadcast news in meaningful ways beyond the "ivory tower." The pilot study was viewed as the start of a series of television news research projects that could have direct application in the professional newsroom. Thus, Packer’s pilot study served as the foundation stone for the present study.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Television news contains factors of time constraints and deadlines that add pressures to the underlying rules of objectivity, fairness and bias. This study seeks to determine if the elements of "responsible journalism" dissipate in television news coverage of a highly significant, developing news story. In other words, how well do the rules hold up under pressure? The momentous story selected for observation was the Mark Hofmann bombings in Salt Lake City, Utah. The focus centered on the coverage by local stations rather than the network television news operations. Specific questions derived from the statement of the problem are as follows.
Research Questions

1. In the coverage of the series of stories known as the Mark Hofmann Salt Lake City bombings, did the news reports by the local television stations contain violations of one or more of the editorializing rules as defined in this study?

2. If rule breaking occurred, was the distribution balanced or was one rule violated more frequently than another?

3. The series of Mark Hofmann stories contain ten key events as identified by United Press International. The wire service identified ten key events in the Hofmann news coverage occurring within the parameters of this study. If rule violations occurred were more, less, or about the same number of rules violated on a UPI key-event day compared to a non UPI key-event-day?

4. If violations of the rules took place in key events stories, which rules were violated the most?

5. If violations of the rules took place were there differences between the types of rules violated on key event days and those violated on non-key event days?

6. Did possible rule violations differ between key event days, those following key events days, and those Hofmann stories not occurring near a key event day?

7. Did any patterns emerge in the overall coverage related to the type of possible rules violations and the relationship of the frequency of their violation to a key event?
The Hofmann Case

To examine local television news performance of traditional journalistic tenets under deadline and competitive pressures, a case study of monumental significance was chosen. October 15, 1985, pipe bomb blasts killed two people in Salt Lake City, Utah. The murders, the motivations and the mediated messages communicated through television news accounts attracted international attention. News historians called it one of the biggest stories in the history of the state. A third victim was the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The LDS Church became a central subject in the media coverage of the Hofmann reports.

As court confessions now confirm, for five years Mark Hofmann, a dissident LDS Church member, deployed a series of fraudulent schemes. Through forgeries Hofmann succeeded in deceiving LDS Church leaders and collectors of "Mormon memorabilia." His "discoveries" of a variety of historical documents and letters disputed traditional LDS Church tenets on the origin of the faith. The most controversial letter became known as the "white salamander letter." Hofmann claimed it was written by Martin Harris, an early associate of the founder of the LDS Church Joseph Smith. Supposedly the letter described an angel named Moroni transfiguring himself from the body of a white salamander into an angelic being and striking Harris three times on the head.³ Latter-day Saints believe Moroni to be an ancient American prophet who delivered golden plates containing history to Joseph Smith.

³Martin Harris, Letter to W. W. Phelps, 23 October 1830, Brigham Young University, "The Mark W. Hofmann Case Collection," Mss1571. Brigham Young University Harold B. Lee Library, Provo, Utah, MSS 1571.
Hofmann's pattern of deception spread beyond religious documents to include a host of other manuscripts, most notably "The Oath of A Freeman." It purported to be the first printed document in the British Colonies. Hofmann's conniving climaxed as he became caught in a desperate need to deliver more and more significant documents to the various parties. Finally, driven by financial pressure and unable to deliver what he promised, Hofmann turned to violence. Deadly homemade devices, deliberately set by Hofmann, killed Salt Lake businessman Steve Christensen and the wife of his partner, Kathleen Sheets. The next day a third pipe bomb blew up in Hofmann's car, sending him first to the hospital, then after the largest criminal investigation ever conducted in the state of Utah, to a life prison term following his guilty confession and plea bargain. Because the case never went to trial, and Hofmann has not revealed, it is unknown if the third bomb was built for yet another victim or a suicide attempt. Police linked his motive for murder to dealing in fraudulent documents.

This thesis Examined the three Salt Lake City network-affiliated stations news coverage of the Hofmann bombings from October 15, 1985, the day of the first two bomb killings, until February 8, 1986, the day of Hofmann's bail release following his arrest. The three Salt Lake City stations studied are the local ABC affiliate KTVX, owned by United Television Stations, part of the Chris-Craft Communications Group; the CBS affiliate KSL, which is part of the Bonneville International Communications Corporation owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and the NBC affiliate KUTV, owned by the George Hatch family, which also owns radio stations, newspapers and cable systems in three states.
Confining the study to the most intense period of coverage, the first 117 days, provided rich opportunities for data collection. Elements in this highly intense competitive study period, included a diversity of story types. The wide variety of story categories included breaking "spot news" events, live press conferences, "follow-up" and "side-bar" stories, and "in depth" background and investigative style reporting.

STUDY DELINEATIONS

This study made no attempt to examine accuracy. Although clearly a fundamental tenet in the traditional codes, it was beyond the scope of this thesis. No attempt was made to identify which local station performed the best under deadline pressure. This study did not seek to discover internal or external motivations that may have lead to the news practitioner failing to follow the established codes. All television news practitioners were viewed as a collective whole. The descriptive data were examined in relationship to television news performance on a breaking story, rather than on individual performance of reporters or of stations. Still some details will emerge that could provide the reader with insights into a particular station's performance. This was unavoidable. There will be no attempt to compare the performance of television coverage of the Hofmann events to other news mediums such as print or radio journalism. In the case of newspaper reporting, a companion study has been conducted by Dr. Alf Pratte and the Brigham Young University Communications Research Center.
Finally, this study was not designed to explain the sociological and motivational forces behind any found violations of the editorial rules. The subject matter, the history of the LDS Church, is sensitive to KSL which is owned by the LDS Church, and to Brigham Young University which supported the research, and is also owned by the LDS Church. LDS Church leaders believe some of the news media unfairly targeted the Church in their coverage of the Hofmann case. During a 1987 symposium on the Hofmann case held at Brigham Young University, LDS Apostle Elder Dallin H. Oaks said in speech broadcast via satellite to the news media:

> There is evidence in some media coverage of this episode that religious prejudice is alive and well in many newsrooms, and that Mormon-bashing is still popular and apparently profitable. The subsequent investigation and prosecutors’ interviews at the Utah State Prison proved Hofmann to be a liar and showed the lack of care taken by many historians, critics and journalists in dealing with him and his tales. Vicious lies have been exposed. Innuendos of church leader involvement in the crimes of Mark Hofmann have been demonstrated to be groundless.4

Some of the findings could give insights on the relationship of ownership to coverage of a breaking story. If so, this is incidental and beyond the parameters of the present research. This author’s ambition was to lay some pioneering groundwork on the topic of television news performance in a local setting under time pressure and deadline driven conditions.

---

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The Historical Descriptive Method

In the more than forty years of research in the field of communication, sharp distinctions have arisen among various methodological approaches. Scholars have often divided into two camps, those choosing a quantitative approach and those favoring the qualitative method of inquiry. The conflict over research methods appeared in the early part of this century at the Chicago School of Sociology where the roots of communication research can be traced to pioneer scholars such as George Herbert Mead. Arguments over methods stretched from the classroom to the ball field where graduate students divided up into two softball teams know as the "the statisticians" and "the qualitatives."  

More recently, research in the field of mass communications reflects variations of the old methodologies combined into new research strategies. An example of a blended approach, the triangulation method, is defined in Research Methods and the New Media. Williams, Rice, and Rogers note:

> It is often advantageous when doing research to use a variety of methods and collect multiple kinds of data. This process, called triangulation, comes originally from navigation, where multiple reference points are used to locate an exact position. The logic for

---

<sup>1</sup> Frederick Williams, Ronald E. Rice and Everett M. Rogers, Research Methods and the New Media (New York: The Free Press, A Division of MacMillan, Inc., 1988), 32.
triangulation is that the weaknesses of any single method, qualitative or quantitative, are balanced by the strengths of the other methods.\textsuperscript{6}

Increasingly, there are appeals being made for more respect and understanding of the individual disciplines, as noted by H. J. Hsia:

"Historical researchers are suspicious of all these numbers, formalized methods and procedures, standardized hypothesis formulation and testing, and statistical analysis factored by quantitative researchers. Instead of belittling each other, historical and behavioral researchers have a great deal to offer to each other; historical research could adopt many quantitative measures and behavioral research could benefit from the historians sensitivity, creativity, and inductive and intuitive mind."\textsuperscript{7}

Hsia does not eliminate the use of numbers by the historical researcher. More specifically, he defines historical/qualitative research as "often a combination of numbers and words."\textsuperscript{8} D. P. Nord and H. L. Nelson argue that history can be quantified and the use of numbers can "provide objective, weighty evidence to historical generalization, present substantial evidence, and direct to new sources of data."\textsuperscript{9} The presence of numbers in reporting data in qualitative studies does not mean they necessarily have to be analyzed statistically. As Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick observed:

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., p. 47.


\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., p. 285.

Qualitative research describes or analyzes a phenomenon without specifically measuring variables. No statistical analysis is involved in qualitative research, although the data might be expressed numerically.¹⁰

Much of the data in this study will be reported in numerical form but no statistical tests will be employed. Only percentages of observed editorial violations will be presented with no attempt at comparisons. This does not suggest a failure to recognize the power of statistics in research or that such an approach with the Hofmann material would be useful. It simply means the numerical data in this study will used along with a variety of other source materials in a historical approach to understand the phenomenon taking place.

In addition to the numerical data, a variety of source material was gathered including video tape, news transcripts, primary and secondary sources such as letters, memos and reports. Indeed, a common challenge in historical research was encountered, namely an over-abundance of material. Hsia's observation that the historical scholar "may have to give up more data than he can possible analyze" rang true in this study.¹¹ Ultimately, like any television news story caught in the "press of time" some material in this study simply had to be abandoned.

An historical descriptive method was selected for this study. The descriptive method is defined as "a type of research that provides the context for both adjusting


¹¹Hsia, p. 284.
and testing a theory. The premise of this study is that television news strays away from traditional journalistic tenets under deadline pressures. In choosing the historical descriptive approach the author has not joined either team of the old Chicago School rivalry but recognizes the strengths both can bring to helping understand the complicated processes at work in the communicated media of television news. The final selection of the historical/qualitative method simply parallels more closely the nature of the subject matter. As Hsia has observed:

> A qualitative researcher, very much like an impartial reporter, relies upon naturalistic observation to collect, compare, analyze, and finally present an in-depth report.

These same research steps so akin to the nature of television news processes itself will be used in this study.

**The Research Steps**

This thesis utilizes a historical descriptive research method. This procedure was deemed to be more compatible with the qualitative nature of the research questions. To examine news content under crisis pressure, this study utilized the three Salt Lake City network affiliate television stations coverage of the Mark Hofmann bombings. The parameters covered the early evening newscast of October 15, 1985 through the late Saturday night newscast of February 8, 1986. The study confined itself to the early and late evening newscasts of the three stations. Early morning, noon and

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12 Williams, Rice, and Rogers, p. 46.

13 Hsia, p. 282.
evening news magazine broadcast were disregarded, unless specific elements of the story unfolded during these time periods. The research method followed six distinct steps.

The first phase of the procedure called for the recording and transcribing of the Hofmann stories. The three News Departments granted free and open access to stories broadcast in both evening newscasts. As a professional television news producer with an inside understanding of how the system works, this author reviewed the rundowns or story lists for each newscast and selected the Hofmann stories to be acquired. This entailed a careful inspection of the story "slugs" or titles assigned by the news departments. The Hofmann stories contained wide and diverse topics with numerous story slugs. This collection phase overlooked no stories that because of unusual slugs might appear to be unrelated to the Hofmann stories. This collection phase of dubbing and transcribing the Hofmann stories began in February 1986. One year later, a rechecking of the source material revealed that stories were missing from the KUTV files after December 12, 1985. This oversight was noted, the material collected, transcribed and coded by the research center staff.

One of the stations, KSL, operated a fully computerized news system. Written scripts of the broadcast reports could easily have been obtained. KTVX utilized a limited computer system primarily to produce newscast rundown logs. KUTV's computer capability was limited. To insure impartiality, it was determined not to rely on the news departments' transcripts of the stories. Videotape duplications of the original broadcast reports were made and transferred to audio cassettes where the staff
of the BYU Communications Research Center transcribed the material to produce the most complete and accurate written copy of the broadcast news report.

Step two of the procedure used in this study was the coding of the material by the research center staff, while step three was a review of their coding by professional experts in television news. Thus after obtaining the written scripts, coding of the Hofmann stories was accomplished in a two phase process. The same set of editorial rules were used by both the research center coders and the professional reviewers.

Trained research center coders completed the first phase of the procedure at the Communications Research Center at Brigham Young University. It lasted six months between March and September of 1986. College juniors and seniors majoring in broadcast journalism served as coders. The editorial rules utilized to measure the Hofmann reports were initially developed by the Brigham Young University Broadcast News Analysis Group in May 1985. A revision of the rules preceded their use in this study. Seven editorial rules were used in the coding portion of this study. The need to reduce the number of rules for the data processing portion of the study was noted. It was determined that if any reduction of the original seven rules occurred, it must be done in such a way to maintain the original intent and integrity of the study.

During the third step of the research procedure, the Hofmann material rated by the research center coders was evaluated by five professional reviewers. The material was divided into booklets according to the seven editorial rules. There was one booklet for each of the rules. Stories found containing violations of the editorial rules by the research center coders were identified on the pages of the booklet with red dots.
Using a Likert-type scale, these professional reviewers assessed their levels of agreement or disagreement on whether or not the marked stories were violations. If a professional reviewer strongly agreed the marked sentence was a violation of the rule, the numeral five was written the page. Similarly, a numerical scale indicated an opinion in this manner: four for a strong agreement, three for undecided, two for disagreement and one for strong disagreement. Appendix B contains samples of the instructions and definitions used by the professional reviewers. The evaluation booklets of Hofmann stories were constructed and distributed in such a way that at least three professional reviewer evaluated each story. It would have been an overwhelming task to ask each of the five reviewers to review all of the material. Upon completion of their review the five reviewers each received a $250 honorarium.

The third step of the research procedure lasted nearly two years, from June of 1987 through April of 1988. The professional review process was lengthy because evaluators had to be changed twice. In one instance Ed Turner, Executive Vice President of Cable News Network, could not complete the assignment. Overseeing the relocation of CNN corporate headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia prevented Turner from participating. In the past, Turner had provided valuable input to the May 1985 pilot project. His critique of that study helped formulate the set of editorial rules used in this study. John Spain, News Director of WBRZ-TV Baton Rouge, Louisiana and President of RTNDA was selected to replace Turner as a judge. For personal reasons, Spain could not complete the evaluation. A second replacement for the Turner position was selected. Larry Smith, News Director of WHAS-TV Louisville,
Kentucky received the material in February 1988. His evaluation was complete by April 1, 1988.

The professional reviewers who completed the review process had a diverse background. Two were veteran network news journalists, while three are news directors at local television stations. All five represented a geographically diverse mix. The two network judges worked in New York City. The three local news directors worked in medium and small markets in the states of Kentucky, Arizona, and Washington.

One of the three local station news directors selected was Brink Chipman. Highly familiar with local television news operations, Chipman has worked as a news director at KIVI-TV in Boise, Idaho and WHO-TV in Des Moines, Iowa. His background includes three years as a news consultant with the Frank Magid Company, the nation’s oldest and most prestigious television news consultant. Currently he is the news director of KVOA-TV in Tucson, Arizona the 81st television market. Larry Smith also represented the middle size television markets, having served as News Director at WSBT, South Bend, Indiana, the 84th television market. At the time of this study he served as News Director of WHAS-TV Lexington, Kentucky. Thom Spencer of KVEW-TV in the Tri-Cities area of Washington, the 127th television market, represented the small stations.

The two professional reviewers representing the network perspective both live in New York City. Elmer Lower, past President of ABC News and a noted journalist for 45 years has considerable academic experience including serving as an Interim
Dean for The School of Journalism at the University of Missouri. Lower is an adjunct faculty member at Brigham Young University. David Fitzpatrick, formerly the CBS News national assignments editor, currently works as a producer for the "CBS Evening News With Dan Rather."

Four of the five, Lower, Fitzpatrick, Chipman and Spencer, are familiar with Salt Lake television news operations. Lower has visited and lectured many times on at Brigham Young University. Fitzpatrick lived in Utah while obtaining his undergraduate degree from Brigham Young University. As a CBS producer/reporter he covered the Hofmann story for the network. Chipman worked as a producer and reporter for one of the stations, KUTV in the early 1970s. Chipman’s career included employment as a news consultant for Frank M. Magid Associates, Inc. KSL employs the Frank Magid firm as their news consultants. Chipman is a longtime colleague of John Edwards, the News Director at KTVX. Thus, to all three stations Chipman had some kind of ties. It was determined if any familiarity bias existed it would be equally distributed. To avoid any prejudice during either the first or second level of the coding and evaluation process, the names of reporters and promotional phrases identifiable to a station were removed before any coding took place.

The potential for bias by the professional reviewers was not only possible in the area of station preference but in the religious orientation of the reviewers. Tenets and teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as well as the institutional LDS Church, was a factor in much of the Hofmann coverage. Of the five professional reviewers, one is a practicing member of the Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints, Spencer, and four are not. Two of the professional reviewers, Thom Spencer and David Fitzpatrick, obtained undergraduate degrees from Brigham Young University which is owned by the LDS Church. The high level of integrity, the tolerance for other beliefs and the ability to set aside any religious prejudice, on the part of all five reviewers reduced any concerns about a bias related to the religious nature of the stories from spoiling the data.

Upon return of the study material by the professional reviewers, the fourth phase of the procedure began. Coding sheets were developed to transcribe the data for computer analysis. Once entered into an SPSS statistical program, simple data descriptions were produced. A standard was selected in deciding which stories would be used to answer the research questions. To further strengthen the integrity of the study, it was determined to examine only those stories where at least three of the five professional reviewers agreed or strongly agreed with the student coders. Inadvertently, some of the Hofmann stories were evaluated by more than three of the professional reviewers. Since more than three experts evaluated some but not all of the coded material, the possibility existed that an artificially high number of violations could have been tabulated. A randomization process was used so that each story was evaluated by three and only three judges. A new universe was created containing only those stories found to contain violations agreed or strongly agreed to by the professional reviewers. Of the 425 stories in the Hofmann coverage, 103 met this criteria and will be the set of stories used in reporting the findings of the study.
One judge, Brink Chipman, News Director of KVOA-TV in Tucson, Arizona seriously disagreed with the study's third editorial rule, "colorful descriptions." He declined to code the stories related to this rule. His refusal to code this section did not hinder the analysis. This study's design required that none of the stories be considered to contain violations unless at least three judges concurred. This standard was met despite Chipman's refusal to code for rule three. His reason for refusing to code for rule three will be discussed in chapter five.

During step five of the research process the data were reviewed and a detailed historical study of the material transpired. In addition to the original transcripts and the coded Hofmann stories, other historical materials had been collected. These included letters from the professional reviewers and numerous academic, journalistic and religious reports dealing with the Hofmann bombings. From this fifth phase of the procedure emerged patterns of editorial violations.

Finally, step six of the research method included drawing conclusions, preparing graphic displays of the data and producing this finished report of the findings. The original framework for this study contained a series of seven editorial rules under the umbrella of the three basic journalistic tenets of objectivity, fairness and the elimination of basis. For analysis purposes, the original seven rules were modified. Rule four, "reporter interrogative" was not included for analysis since barely one percent of the sentences contained rule four violations. It was found there were too few instances where this type of rule was violated to provide sufficient data
for study. Evidence of the rule’s value is noted by one of the professional judges. In his review of the findings, CBS producer David Fitzpatrick noted:

This is one of the trickiest and in my mind, most easily abused benchmarks for journalists. A question such as: "Is this the most bizarre case, etc..." has no real value nor any real place in a question or on the air. It’s not only misleading but calls for a predictable response.  

Rule six, "projecting attitudes," and rule seven, "projecting feelings," were combined because of their similarity. The modified set for analysis purposes contains 1) "attribution," 2) "drawing conclusions," 3) "colorful description," 4) "predictions," and 5) "projecting attitudes and feelings."

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A limited amount of literature relates to the research questions. Although a maturing topic in communication research, television news remains an uncharted area. This author’s essential study inquiry of how traditional journalism tenets perform in the television news medium under deadline pressure is unique. Related academic studies in this field were sought from the disciplines of communications, political science and sociology. This author consulted professional sources from specialized and public periodicals as well as unpublished speeches, lectures and discussions from seminars, and national and international conferences. Many of the conventions were personally attended by the author. Manual and computer assisted searches of the following sources constitute the literature review for this thesis.

Academic summary sources searched by computer and through other sources encompassed *Dissertations International, Communications Abstracts*, and *Journalism Abstracts*. Journals consulted included *Journalism Quarterly, Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, and *Gannet Media Journal*. Academic organization publications and papers delivered at annual conventions were researched. The Association for Journalism and Mass Communications, as well as the Broadcast Education Association were the two principle source organizations for this portion of the literature search. Sociological and political science sources related to the topic of news were located through manual and computer searches of the *Social Science Index, and Social Science Citation Index*.

The professional publications reviewed consisted of *The Quill*, the monthly magazine from the Society of Professional Journalists, and *RTNDA Communicator*, a monthly periodical from the Radio Television News Director’s Association. In addition, the literature review incorporated two publicly oriented monthly magazines focusing on news media topics, *Columbia Journalism Review, and Washington Journalism Review*.

The writer attended seven annual conferences of the Society of Professional Journalists and the Radio Television News Director’s Association beginning in 1985. Many of the workshops and seminars, as well as keynote addresses from broadcast news professionals devoted their topics to the erosion of journalism ethics. This author witnessed the historic changing of ethical codes for both SPJ and RTNDA, participating in the debates and discussions surrounding them. During this study
period, the writer served as President of the Society of Professional Journalist's Utah Headliners Chapter from September 1988 through September 1989. In 1988, the author was appointed a member of SPJ's national ethics committee.

In addition to academic studies, journals and periodicals, yearly conventions and conferences, more than fifty books dealing with the broad topics of television news writing and journalism ethics, were consulted. In the process of the literature review, an increasing awareness of international research in television news processes became apparent. First, findings that relate internationally will be treated then, United States news studies will be noted.

The research on local television news and journalism ethics is narrow. As British sociologists Peter Golding and Philip Elliot note, "Few studies of broadcast news production have been conducted, and not many more of the press." It is unclear if their reference refers to just British studies. The research conducted in reference to this statement looked at "making the news" in television newsroom in three countries, Ireland, Sweden and Nigeria; it can surmised that their statement extends internationally. Golding and Phillips base their conclusions on the limitations of news studies as of 1979. These researchers analyzed news processes at work within systems and across systems, and noted broad topics of journalistic ethics including the elements of objectivity and bias. However, their content analysis did not concentrate on the writing content of the news reports in searching for examples of rules the writer served as President of the Society of Professional Journalist's Utah Headliners Chapter from September 1988 through September 1989. In 1988, the author was appointed a member of SPJ's national ethics committee.

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"Golding and Elliott, p. 6."
violations. Nonetheless, as the reader will note from the numerous references to their work, their methods pioneered many ideas present in this study.

One other set of British studies is noteworthy. They are known by their research group title, the Glasgow Media Group. This eight member research team from Scotland analyzed the way television reported industrial affairs during the first half of 1975. Bad News, the book published from the study preceded More Bad News in 1980. Their method drew on "traditional textual analysis, critical insights and the newer techniques of semiology and sociolinguistics." Considerable attention focused on the Glasgow studies. One scholar called them the "only large-scale studies of British television news." Yet, their motivations have become highly suspect. In the book Whose Bias?, Martin Harrison critiques their work:

The need for scholarly standards is by no means the only conclusion to be drawn from this sad affair. It offers further cause for reflection to academics, broadcasters and all who have based intellectual or political castles on the sand of the Glasgow study.

In the American setting, a trio of published studies by social scientist David L. Altheide, looks at the role of media in social life, particularly television news. Creating Reality compares local and national news sources with routines of work to uncover the nature, process and consequences of TV news work. It concludes events become news because of the news perspectives, not due to any objective

\[16\text{Martin Harrison, Whose Bias: A Casebook Analysis of Strikes, Television and Media Studies, (Policy Journals, 1985), 9.}\]

\[17\text{Ibid.}\]

\[18\text{Ibid., p. 133.}\]
characteristics. Altheide's *Media Logic* is a broader examination of the role of media in social life. Of most benefit is his 1985 published study *Media Power*. While its sociological orientation was beyond the scope of this study, his definition toward an analysis of news code is germane.

The news code, or the rules and logic underlying the use of time and space by network personnel, has been suggested as a concept that is basic and invariant to specific news items. The news code consists of the translation of time and emphasis of a topic through visual representations. Stated differently, visuals mean time in the world of news work.¹⁹

Altheide's news code analysis emphasis on the visual aspects lies beyond the scope of this study's research questions. The concern in this study is written content and not visual messages. Still, in Altheide's format techniques, items under the verbal category distinguish types of television stories.

Brigham Young University Broadcasting Professor Dr. Norman Tarbox noted other sociological and political studies in his discussion of professionalism in broadcast journalism. He located a number of studies rooted in the literature of sociology and work of Jack M. McLeod and Searle E. Hawley.²⁰ The McLeod-Hawley professionalism index, although widely applied, does not relate to the present study because it fails to relate professionalism to performance. Tarbox did point out a 1973 study by Weithal and O'Keefe that goes beyond the McLeod-Index to examine responses of news practitioners to words such as objectivity, advocacy and opinion.


formation. They found objectivity is a standard to be maintained by professional journalists but failed to find consensus on professional standards.\(^1\) No agreement could be reached by Weithal and O'Keefe on the nature and extent of allowable editorializing in straight news stories.

The only study Tarbox found relating professionalism to performance came from Karl Idsvoog and James Hoyt. Skills of the practitioner, including grammar, structure, style, editing, pacing, and news judgement, were studied. But as Tarbox concludes, "It did not focus on journalistic values as applied by news personnel. Its focus was on production or skill oriented values."\(^2\) Beyond the summary work on this topic by Tarbox, this author examined other surveys of the research published on the editorial rules topic. Dennis McQuail’s chapter in the research annual, *Studies in Communication* discussed competing paradigms for news analysis.

McQuail reexamines the concept of objectivity, as formulated by Swedish researcher Jorgen Westerstahl. He reviews Westerstahl’s division of objectivity in two components: factuality and impartiality. Truth and relevance are the elements making up factuality. Balance, non-partisanship and a neutral presentation constitute impartially. McQuail believes Westerstahl’s scheme deals with


... the most pressing problems for Western journalists of reconciling the aim or ideal of objective reporting with the practical task of dealing with confusing and conflicting world events.\textsuperscript{23}

McQuail believes beyond objectivity, the researcher should enlarge Westerstahl's framework to account for missing elements. McQuail rejects a rigid dichotomy between objectivity and bias. He argues for the incorporation for two more concepts into the framework, necessity and independence.

One should view journalistic objectivity as necessity rather than as a virtue. The idea behind the introduction of independence into the news scheme is simple enough -- news media often do depart from the rules of objectivity, sometimes deliberately, openly and legitimately and at other times not. News media have a certain area of freedom within which to deviate from the demands of objectivity, and the expectation of or pressure toward objectivity is never total.\textsuperscript{24}

The departure from objectivity McQuail believes is present in various news reporting forms such as "features," "soft news," and "human interest stories." This study sought to understand if the departure was present in coverage of breaking events, "spot news," as well.

Finally, McQuail's paradigm notes necessity factors that put pressure on news performance. McQuail notes components of necessity include news product specification relating to the nature of news. He divides between the nature of news, internal factors, such as time and cost, putting constraints on the coverage. McQuail's external factors include political and institutional power and pressure on the events.


\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 19.
Numerous applications of McQuail's ideas related to the study questions. This was a key article in the literature review process. The publication date of 1986 and the fact McQuail puts forth a new paradigm which has not yet, to this author's knowledge, been tested, strengthens the significance of the present study.

Two years before McQuail's published paradigm, R. A. Hackett argued, in a 1984 essay, several challenges to conventional research on news bias. Hackett argued that rather than dismiss the concepts of bias and objectivity, researchers should make them the objects of investigation, rather than the standards by which other objects are evaluated. The present thesis purports to examine objectivity and bias at their base line level in the text of the news copy.

Just as McQuail's study helped assist in the analysis of objectivity and bias under pressured conditions, Dennis T. Lowry's work on examining news reports by breaking them down into units of analysis proved most beneficial. Lowry tested the construct validity of the Hayakawa-Lowry news bias categories. Hayakawa distinguished sentences in one of three categories:

1) Report sentences are factual and verifiable. 2) Inference sentences are subjective and not immediately verifiable. 3) Judgement sentences contain expressions of the writer's or speaker's favorable or unfavorable opinions about whatever is being described. 26


Support for Hayakawa's categorical division resulted from Lowry's test. What were defined as objective news sentences according to the Hayakawa-Lowry system were perceived such by subjects never having been exposed to the reasoning behind the categories. The Hayakawa-Lowry method of evaluating sentences was helpful in this study.

Lowry's is quick to point out most scholars of "news bias" develop their own categories. This proved true in the present study. Lowry noted his research dealt only with verbal portion of TV news bias and not the visual. Such will be the case for this study. Although many articles on visualization of television news were located in the literature review, they do not relate to the study questions.

This author reviewed numerous articles relating bias media coverage to crisis events. The writer hoped to find parallels to the proposed study of local television news coverage of a breaking, major story. Several studies involving content analysis of network news coverage, such as the Iran-Hostage crisis, the TWA hijacking of 198527 and the U.S. Marine massacre in Beirut28 were reviewed. None were of significant benefit. Much of the literature on television news centers on network coverage.


The literature review sought specific studies focusing on local television news. Richard J. Goedkoop's *Inside Local Television News* proved of some benefit. The only significant study of local television news quality is K. T. Wulfemeyer's 1982 report on a method for assessing local TV newscasts. It is an attempt to develop a quantitative method for assessing quality in local news. It is based on the value judgement of the audience. The concern of the present study was with the news practitioners performance rather than the audience reactions as studied by Wulfemeyer.

Newspaper studies of traditional rules were reviewed, as well as case studies dealing with bias, but nothing of substantial significance could be discovered. Research into the two mediated forms has grown to the point that broadcast news analysis no longer must rely on traditional print analytical methods. The processes are too unique.

Research into time factors as related to news reporting unearthed two interesting studies. The first, again from the field of sociology. Philip Schlesinger demonstrated the importance of the time factor in the production of news. Schlesinger found the broadcast newsman's work is embraced with an acute awareness of time's passage. A newsmen's language displays fine conceptual distinctions regarding time. Concepts such as pace, sequence, and duration are used in framing of news as a cultural form. Mastery of time-pressure is a way of manifesting

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professionalism. These conclusions contribute much to the research into how time affects local television news adherence to the traditional rules when the news practitioners faces deadline pressure.\textsuperscript{31} An experimental study by Mark McElreath found that the impact of time pressure varied according to the complexity of the news event.\textsuperscript{32} Results showed different in the way students put together newscasts under a sixty-second and ninety second deadline. Interestingly, shorter deadlines did not always result in poorer performance.

Beyond the review of sociological studies of news practitioners, detailed studies on news reporting, as related to the codes, and the factors of time in news coverage, two additional areas were researched in the literature. They are the broad topic of journalism ethics and the narrower traditional rules aspect of those ethical codes.

Some twenty books on news ethics topics were reviewed. Two that were most helpful were: \textit{Television and Ethics a Bibliography}\textsuperscript{33} by Thomas W. Cooper and, \textit{Committed Journalism, An Ethic for the Profession}\textsuperscript{34} by Edmund B. Lambeth. Lambeth’s eclectic system of ethics includes five principles; truth telling, justice, freedom, humanness, and stewardship. Additional ethical books reviewed: \textit{Media}


\textsuperscript{34}Edmund W. Lambeth \textit{Committed Journalism: An Ethic for The Profession} (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1986).
Ethics in the Newsroom and Beyond by Conrad Smith, Groping For Ethics in Journalism by H. Eugene Goodwin and The News at Any Cost: How Journalist Compromise Their Ethics to Shape the News by Tom Goldstein. Ethical seminar publications from the Poynter Institute for Mass Media Studies in Florida were studied. The exploration of ethics and television journalism can be summed up by Thomas W. Cooper in the following manner:

Much is published about TV news ethics, but most of the work is skeletal and sketchy. Television and ethics, although constituting an enormous field, have an impoverished literature. In searching for communication studies and contemporary articles by professionals in the field relating directly to this thesis of television news performance adherence to traditional codes under deadline pressure, Cooper’s point has been proven. The literature indeed is impoverished. To that end, the present study entered new territory to discover what happens to traditional journalism tenets caught up in the crisis coverage of a monumental story. The purpose of this thesis is to test Cooper’s pertinent observation:

The implication of this study is that the gods of objectivity and impartiality are not false idols, to be smashed in a revolutionary

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38Thomas W. Cooper, "Ethics, journalism and Television: Bibliographic Constellations, Black Holes" Journalism Quarterly 65 ( Summer 1988): 450-455.
regeneration of news. They are merely labels for sets of rules and routines which are unavoidable in the organization and established practice of broadcast journalism.39

In summary, the literature review produced no published research that directly correlated to this study. There were many links to the research found in both direct and indirect ways. Although no known academic research was produced that examined adherence of television news to traditional journalistic tenets under deadline pressure in an on-going story, several studies located indirectly related to this research's two main components; time and traditional journalism tenets.

Some studies operationalized traditional journalistic tenets into sets of rules. None of these studies looked at the same tenets chosen for this study: objectivity, fairness and bias. Using an experimental research method, Lowry did provide support for the validity of the Hayakawa-Lowry news bias categories.40 Lowry coded sentences into three categories finding, "report sentences (are) seen as more objective than inference sentences which in turn are seen as more objective than judgment sentences." In contrast, the present study did not divide sentences into bias categories but instead used a set of rules based on a pilot study to examine the presence of bias, along with attribution and objectivity. The historical method in this study contrasts with Lowry's experimental method.

39Ibid.

Using the experimental method McElreath tested the theoretical statement that the greater the time pressure on a journalist, the poorer the performance of the journalist. He concluded the impact of the time pressure varied according to the complexity of the news event, finding that a short deadline did not always result in poor performance. McElreath’s experimental method asked students to rank order stories for a newscast under different time constraints. The experiment was repeated by a panel of judges who were journalism professors. The present study uses a qualitative approach to examine the effect of time pressure on performance. It examined actual television news scripts written under time pressure. Adherence to traditional tenets by the professionals were evaluated first by trained coders and second by a professional review panel. Toussaint found that expert opinion is a reliable method of measuring quality in local TV news.

In many ways the methods used in the present study build from those first tested in a 1985 pilot project conducted at the Brigham Young University Communications Research Center. The pilot project methodology used a "Broadcast News Analysis Guide" which was developed by the faculty team and based on educational standards, professional standards and input from a survey of news directors, producers and reporters in the Salt Lake City market. Critiques of the pilot study by twenty working news professionals and modifications of the original

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editorializing rules by a faculty team resulted in a new set of rules used in this study. Many ideas and procedures tested and tried in other research studies also served as catalysts for much of the methods used in this study.

A key term, "editorial rules", used in this study refers to only to this study's definitions of the three traditional tenets of objectivity, fairness and bias. Indeed, no actual set of hard and fast rules exists in the journalism profession. Instead, tenets and traditions have been established by those practicing the profession based loosely on written ethical codes of journalistic organizations. The development of this "intuitive understanding" of the rules of journalism by the news practitioners will be reviewed in the next two chapters.

STUDY ORGANIZATION

This thesis includes six chapters. The following is a description of the content of each.

Chapter One contains a description of the research problem, the research questions, the methods and procedures followed, and a review of the literature of similar studies.

Chapter Two provides a background summary on the nature of television news with special attention paid to its origins and recent industry trends.

Chapter Three examines the recent conflict that has emerged between traditional journalistic ethics and those who espouse the "new" journalism. It traces the development of the journalistic tradition in relation to the tenets of objectivity,
fairness and the elimination of bias. It provides for a definition of those terms as used in this study and the editorial rules related to these tenets.

Chapter Four reports the results of the research.

Chapter Five contains an analysis of the results looking for patterns that could emerge to answer the research questions.

Chapter Six is the summary chapter reviewing the conclusions and pointing out the opportunities for further research with this same material.
Chapter Two

TELEVISION NEWS’ CREDIBILITY CRISIS

THE PROFESSION’S PREDICAMENT

Smoke Signals

A fire smolders in the television news industry. Kindled by a growing crisis in confidence on the part of the American public and fueled by professional media critics, the 1990s find television news at a combustible crossroads. An overarching question rises over the profession: will the broadcast journalism profession douse the flames by increasing credibility and promoting higher ethics, or will it ignore the signals threatening the very foundations on which the profession has been built. The fire has been kindled. Leaders in journalism recognize the need to stamp it out.

Speaking of both broadcast and print journalism at the annual meeting of the Society of Professional Journalist’s, William R. Burleigh, Senior Vice President for Scripps Howard affirmed:

The signs abound that we’re being called to a higher standard. No matter how good we think we are, much of the public doesn’t trust us and some just plain don’t believe us. We have a responsibility to respond to that challenge and not be content to sit on our laurels, even if we are the world’s best newspress. We’re too
good not to be better."

This thesis focuses on specific aspects of broadcast journalism performance, and examines the way television news covers a breaking news story under deadline pressure. The purpose of this study is to examine the performance of television news organizations reporting a single news subject of extraordinary newsworthiness. Additionally, the study examines the news department's output against the accepted canons and codes of journalism, and observes any relationships between these elements. First, some explanations to prepare the reader.

In this background chapter, the nature of news and its interdependence on the concept of truth will be reassessed. A review of news definitions will be presented, including the one to be used in this study. Next, a short history of the growth of television news, as practiced in the United States, will be provided. This will be followed by an examination of the demographics of those who work in the profession, the growth of the industry in the last 50 years, and the nature of the audience which watches the world's most powerful information medium.

**What Is News, What is Truth?**

Truth is the fundamental component in news. Factual elements conscripted into news reports become a historical knowledge base of selected daily events. The selection process is subjective. Television journalists are video "truth senders"

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transmitting verities over the airwaves. In principle, they practice the communication act of truth telling.

"We’re in the truth business," is the job description given by CBS News President Bill Leonard to a new reporter, John Hart, now anchor of the Christian Science Monitor’s daily television news magazine. Hart’s occupation was to "deliver history in daily installments."²

In the 1990s the delivery method and style of television news undergoes continual metamorphosis. A blend of traditional journalism with entertainment aspects creates the new format called "infotainment." Feeding a video appetite spiked by MTV and the home video market, new ventures into "tabloid television" appall traditional broadcast journalists. Of serious concern is their blurring of truth. Past president of the Radio Television News Director’s Association, J. Spencer Kinard notes how the tabloid style news programs look and sound too much like standard journalism. The disclaimer credits especially bother Kinard. "Due to the nature of the material covered by Tabloid TV, the editors hereby disclaim any responsibility for truth, accuracy or ethical journalism." Words such as "covered" and "editors" imply these are real stories.³ Separating truth from fiction is vital to a profession whose very nature is to deal with facts.


John Hart likewise sees a danger in the blurring definitions of television news. From his perspective the business is having an identity crisis arising from a inner conflict between the journalism drive and the marketing drive. "Broadcast journalism, the business," observes Hart, "is becoming a model for blurring the difference."  

For the purposes of this study a clear and distinct definition of television news was essential. A review of the attempts to define news from communication theorists, sociologists, professional broadcast journalists and historians indicated the task is not easy.

Academic attempts to define television news include the oral-aural communication theory model of J. Clark Weaver of Florida State University. Building on the early communication model of Shannon and Weaver, J. Clark Weaver’s explanation of the news communication process unfolds from the perspective of the reporter. His sequence is:

1) You the source 2) encode, write 3) a news message 4) to be channeled, broadcast 5) to the receiver, the listener-viewer 6) who decodes the news story, 7) and reacts with appropriate feedback.  

Weaver believes there are six essential elements that help identify news. They are prominence, proximity, significance, timeliness, human interest and conflict. Despite his models and arguments for understanding the essential elements of broadcast news, Weaver states, "there is no adequate definition of news." This

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^Hart, Monitor Radio Review.


^Ibid.
essential conclusion from the academic discipline is shared by noted professionals, including David Brinkley, who practice the craft on a daily basis.

"News is what I say it is," observes veteran NBC News anchorman David Brinkley who now works for ABC News. For Brinkley, the meaning of news is inseparable from the person reporting it. The central role of the reporter in the news definition process is shared by Ron Harig, News Director for KMOL in San Antonio, Texas. Harig related to this author a definition of news as "the same thing happening over and over again to different people."

The verity of this definition is confirmed by this author's own experience as a television reporter for KIVI (ABC) in Boise, Idaho. Assigned on a "slow day" to cover a Valentine's Day party at a local elementary school, the education reporter, Liz Rodosavich, told this author, "Oh good. I've covered that same story for the last 3 years. I am glad someone else has to do it." In this case Harig's related observation rang true. Each year the same story, "Valentine's Day party at the local school," was being experienced by different reporters. First, Rodosavich and then this author.

As a television anchor/reporter and later producer in three diverse markets across the nation, the writer often observed a similar attitude towards the repetitive nature of news. Harig's definition rang true for stories such as the annual legislative session or fatal car accidents. Once a reporter had covered one, he or she had covered them all. Brinkley and Harig's cynical definitions take into account the role of the reporter in defining news. Parallels to these definitions appear in sociological studies.

British sociological researchers Peter Golding and Philip Elliott studied television news across a broad international spectrum. Their description of the news process based on case studies in Sweden, Ireland and Nigeria defined news as

... a highly regulated and routine process of manufacturing a cultural product on an electronic production line. In stages of planning, gathering, selection and production, broadcast news is molded by the demands of composing order and organization within a daily cycle.⁸

These researchers note that broadcast news builds from a foundation of print journalism. They see a trio of legacies inherited from the printed press. First, a constitutional recognition of the press, guaranteeing its freedom from censorship and granting it licence to comment. Second, this special relationship with the state produced journalists whose job was separate from politics and centered on the manufacture of news. Third, over time these journalists created a set of beliefs about how their job should be done and what characterized its most laudable practices. The researchers concluded that "most important of these beliefs was the discovery of objectivity in reporting."⁹

A detailed history of news by New York University professor Mitchell Stephens pays important tribute to the printed press in shaping much of the philosophical base of broadcast journalism. Stephens notes the English word "news," unlike words such as information and communication which have changed definitions in the last half of this century, has been used the same way for the last five hundred

⁸Golding and Elliott, Making the News, p. 137.

⁹Ibid., p. 21.
years. In reviewing the history of the journalistic method Stephens traces the "veneration of the fact."

In the nineteenth century journalists took the lead in the movement toward realism in literature and art. They developed a reference for facts that was difficult to express in the newswriting forms of the time. Stephens writes:

The essay placed too much emphasis on point of view. ... the narrative style began to seem too subjective and leisurely a vehicle to be trusted with cold, crisp facts ... and the stenographic reports on debates in Parliament or court testimony profaned hallowed facts by ignoring essential distinctions between them.11

The speed and pressure of journalists reporting on the American Civil War compressing critical details for telegraph lines developed the "inverted pyramid" style which, according to the Stephens, is the news style where "facts found their true voice."12 The inverted pyramid style calls for the most important facts to be at the beginning of the story with the less significant items being placed below, enlarging downward like a pyramid.

In 1981 Robin MacNeil argued for the sacred and important role facts must play in the news process. In his critical analysis of ethics in journalism, MacNeil observes:

One of our most difficult task as journalists today is to keep our piece of the media spectrum relatively inviolate, if it is not putting it too pretentiously, an area sacred to the facts and the truth, while remaining

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11 Ibid., p. 253.

12 Ibid.
able to compete for the attention of the public with all the rest, which for the sake of definition we might label the profane."^{13}

For MacNeil, the facts are only "germane to their purposes to help produce an effect of truthfulness -- verisimilitude -- like some ingredients in a collage, some of the brush strokes to create an impression." The developing practices in news coverage, both print and broadcast, puts, in MacNeil's words, "truth at risk." Among the errors he recognizes; quoting people out of context, carelessness with quotations, preconceived ideas, and finally, lack of fairness.^{14}

To answer the challenge, "What is news?" the writer reviewed a model put forth by a communications researcher, summarized the process described by sociologists, traced the foundations seen by historians, and related some practical observations of professionals. Yet, what will be the essential element of news for the definition applied in this thesis? It is defined by returning to the foundation principle, that of truth. News is defined in this thesis as a series of truth told events.

**Television News in America**

The most powerful form of news dissemination is not yet fifty years old. In 1941 a local CBS affiliate in New York City, WCBW, broadcast news reports four times a day.^{15} They were the first. Today, at the nationwide network and local affiliate level, as well as on independent and cable channels, news programming can

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^{14}Ibid.

be viewed non-stop around the clock. Paralleling the growth of television news has been its acceptance as a dominating form of communication. Both broadcasters and audience members recognize television news as "the most pervasive source of public affairs information in western industrialized societies today."\(^\text{16}\)

Despite its powerful, yet youthful appearance, there is a continual, dramatic, change in the face of television news in America by the news gatherers. It can be seen in the types of programs they produce, the technological tools they employ, and in the demographic makeup of the audience that watches. Beyond the mere look of the medium, the message substance undergoes continual transformation all in an effort to attract the news consumer. Television news in America has placed journalism "in the shop window of an entertainment medium of absorbing interest to an enormous public."\(^\text{17}\)

**The News Gatherers**

In attempting to profile broadcast news practitioners, no clear cut studies on reporters and producers could be found. A 1986 study commissioned by the Radio Television News Director's Association profiling the men and women who lead the television news departments, the news directors, provides some insights. Although mostly male, women make up fourteen percent of those who direct news gathering, a significant increase over a similar study in 1972. Five percent come from minorities.


\(^\text{17}\)Ibid., p. 9.
A majority of them have a college education and most of them are in their mid-30s.\textsuperscript{18} Beyond the demographic descriptions, the studies are inconclusive.

Perhaps the most quoted series of studies about the beliefs of journalists comes from the work of three social scientists, Stanley Rothman, S. Robert Lichter and Linda Lichter. In two major reports, published in 1981 and 1982, they interviewed 240 journalists and broadcasters at the most influential print and broadcast outlets. Although their findings did not cover local television news gathers, their conclusions have been widely quoted and published to define the attitudes of those employed in news gathering.

The fundamental finding of the Rothman-Lichter studies is that journalists are dangerously liberal. The conclusion of the first of their published reports noted that:

\begin{quote}
The pointed views of the national media elite are not mere wishes and opinions of those aspiring to power, but the voice of a new leadership group that has arrived as a major force in American society. Cosmopolitan in their origins, liberal in their outlook, they are aware and protective of their collective influence.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

Challenging their findings that journalists are dangerously liberal, a fellow sociological researcher, Hebert J. Gans, sharply criticized the Rothman-Lichter studies in a 1985 Columbia Journalism Review article. Gans charged the researchers with five violations.


1. Hiding a political argument behind a seemingly objective study, highlighting the data which support that argument.

2. Reporting findings about journalists which do not accurately reflect the answers they offered to the survey questions they were asked.

3. Violating basic survey methodology by first inferring people's opinions from answers to single questions, then treating their answers as strongly felt opinions in a way that makes the journalists appear militant and radical.

4. Violating scientific norms by forgetting an explicit promise to their respondents.

5. Perhaps the most serious -- presenting a mass of data on the personal backgrounds and alleged political opinions and values of the journalists without any evidence that these are relevant to how the journalists report the news.20

While the sociologists debate the attitudes and belief systems of the news gatherers, the public continues to demand an increase in the availability of news product. Ratings research for both local and national American television news programs proves the increasing appetite.

MARKET FORCES AT WORK

The Growth In News Programming

The men and women who gather television news in America work for one of two types of work forces. Either a local broadcast station or cable channel employs them; or a national news organization, a network, hires them. Programs produced by

these broadcast journalists account for a growing percentage of the local station or network's total broadcast hours. Interestingly, growth spurts in news programming at both the local and network level is directly attributed to the news gatherers coverage of two significant stories.

The war in Vietnam coupled with campus riots and struggles for civil rights, catapulted a dramatic increase in local television news. A former affiliate vice president for CBS, Peter Herford, believes "What World War II did for network radio news, the Vietnam war did for local television news." In the early 1970s, KNXT, a CBS owned and operated station in Los Angeles carried two hours of local evening news and by the end of the decade programmed a two-and-a-half hour local news block between 4:30 and 7:30 pm. KNXT followed two-and-a-half-hours later with a 30 minute newscast at 11:00 pm. Broader surveys reveal the local news expansion was not just confined to a major market such as Los Angeles.

By 1970, 700 of the 875 television stations in America had operating news departments. Three-quarters of the news watched in the top 50 major markets was locally produced. Writing on local news growth in this decade, Desmond Smith, a senior producer for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation with experience at all three American commercial networks reflects, "Although much of this local news was abominable by network standards, it has become profitable." Network news

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22Ibid.
executives, long seeking an expansion of their programs to increase profitability and profile, discussed expanding the times and dimensions of their traditional offerings. Another shocking news event, the Iran hostage crisis, did for at least one network (ABC) what Viet Nam did for local news. Coverage of the Iran hostage crisis dramatically expanded and redefined ABC's news programming. As Irving Fang reviews in his history of television news:

- There had been some talk of programming more network news directly after prime time shows or after local late night newscasts, an idea whose time came in 1979 when Iranian militants seized the American embassy in Tehran. To more fully cover the taking of American hostages, ABC began expanded news reports at 11:30 pm EST. As the stream of news of Iran waned, the ABC late night "Nightline" covered other topics, one per program. "Nightline" later stretched to a full hour and covered more than one topic nightly. It appeared that one network had found the long sought-for room for expansion. 23

Total network time devoted to news expanded from two and half hours per week in 1950 to over 70 hours per week by the early 1980s, thus increasing from 3 to 21 percent of the total broadcast hours. 24

Not only has the total cumulative hours of air time increased, the lengths of individual programs has doubled and quadrupled. In 1963 CBS was the first to expanded from fifteen minutes to thirty minute nightly broadcast. NBC quickly followed. In the early part of this decade, a nightly hour of national news became

available to the news consumer through the expansion of PBS’s "MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour."

In addition to increasing the lengths of individual broadcasts, total American network news coverage doubled in the early eighties. Barrie Gunter observed:

News gatherers witnessed an unprecedented rate of growth of news on television with the expansion into previously unscheduled late night or very early morning time periods. News growth during this period, however, has not been restricted to the networks. With cable television, subscribers across America gained access to continuous 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week news and weather information services."^25

Local broadcast station time devoted to news programs has seen similar dramatic increases.

America’s largest television news consulting firm, Frank M. Magid Associates, predicted in 1984 an increase in locally produced programs. Their study, commissioned by the Radio Television News Director’s Association, was based on interviews with station managers, news directors, broadcast journalism professors and the public.\^26 Their forecast of news, talk and information programing topping the list of an increasing number of locally produced programs has proved accurate.

In 1988 the Television Information Office released a report showing local stations had expanded the amount of time devoted to news from the traditional "thirty minutes at six and ten pm." Their survey of local news programming patterns by

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stations showed "140 now air thirty minutes of news, both before and after the network news. That's an increase of 19 stations from a year ago, and 32 over 1986." The local stations sandwiching of hour-long newscasts around network news programming demonstrates the blurring lines between local and network news in America. Further examples of this can be found through tracing technological developments in American broadcast journalism.

Innovations in Technology

Network and local television news gatherers squabble like children. Traditionally viewed by local newspeople as the spoiled "big brother," network news was bigger, larger in staff size, and hence better. It had all of the fancy technological toys. Its news gatherers were called correspondents not reporters. Age contributes to this sibling rivalry as network news is older and more experienced. From the network perspective, local news is a ride on the "glitz and glitter machine" where show was more important than substance. A frequent critic of local television news is CBS's Charles Kuralt. Here is his primary observation of local television news:

Hair ... hair neatly parted, hair abundant, and every hair in place. I can't remember much that came out beneath that hair. I don't think much did. I remember the style but not the substance. And I fear the reason may be there wasn't much substance there.  

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Av Westin, veteran network producer for CBS and ABC, where he created "20/20," noted:

There is probably no issue of greater contention between network news and local news than that of the competence of reporters. Local newscasters believe their network colleagues are too often stuffed shirts, "aging giants" who are "transmitting from atop Mount Olympus."²⁹

Two elements, technological innovations and economic downturns, dramatically altered this sibling rivalry in the decade of the 1980s. Innovations in technology brought about by the development of satellite news technology made it possible for local television news to compete on a national and international scale with the network. Creations of new companies and ad hoc networks, such as Stanley Hubbard's Conns corporation, redefined traditional affiliate linkages and geographical boundaries between local and network news. For example, the ABC affiliate in Salt Lake City, KTVX, is not a Conns SNG (satellite news gathering) affiliate. The Salt Lake City NBC affiliate, KUTV, is part of the Conns system. Yet in Denver, a news market that because of geographical proximity has traditionally exchanged video with Salt Lake, the Conns affiliate is KUSA which is part of the ABC system of stations. The challenge arises when both KTVX (ABC) and KUTV (NBC/Conns) want to exchange stories with KUSA which is both ABC and Conns.

Not only could local news, the younger brother, now afford the latest "toys" which redefined relationships with big brother's friends, he could travel farther than "down the block" opening up a whole new world of story possibilities. This became

²⁹Ibid., p. 221.
evident in the coverage of the Mexican earthquake of 1985 where many local stations around the country sent reporters and anchors to cover a story that their network affiliates also covered using the same satellite technologies. Networks called this unnecessary duplication. Local stations said they covered the "home town" elements of the story a nationally oriented newscast could not devote time to. During this same explosion of technological tools, the broadcasting business at all three network levels took on new ownerships. ABC was purchased by Capitol Cities, a broadcasting company which had been successful with locally owned stations. NBC was purchased by General Electric, and CBS came under control of the Lowe's corporation. All these were affected by economic tightening.

The shrinkage of big brother's "piggybank" resulted in major changes in makeup of network news. Budget tightening, the layoffs of hundreds of employees in network news divisions, and the return to local news by such network news "stars" as Steve Bell, former news anchor of ABC's "Good Morning America," Bill Kurtis, who co-anchored the "CBS Morning News" with Diane Sawyer, and Sylvia Chase who appeared on ABC's week night newsmagazine "20/20," forced networks to re-evaluate their relationships with their local affiliates.

A 1986 seminar held in Berkeley, California, on the future of television news, noted local tv news was nipping at the heels of the networks. Panelists representing both local and network viewpoints noted the increased sophistication of local news, some viewing the networks as being threatened while others fearing their increased
technological capability did not translate into a better quality news product for the consumer.\textsuperscript{30}

At this seminar ABC's Jeff Greenfield noted the improvements in local television news. "Technology is changing not just the playing field, but the nature of the game itself. You don't need the networks now to cover the world" observed Greenfield. Despite local news inroads, Greenfield doubts the demise of the networks because local stations simply do not have the budgets to respond to major national and international stories.\textsuperscript{31}

News Director Michael Youngren of Salt Lake City's NBC affiliate, KUTV, disagreed with Greenfield predicting, "the traditional network is probably going to disappear and be replaced by a kind of electronic wire service providing an unending river of news." ABC news Vice President George Watson pointed out neither outlet wanted to disturb a "partnership of convenience and profitability." CBS Producer Peter Herford called for taking three steps back and reflecting on what we are doing believing that the quality of television news has not improved in the last ten years.\textsuperscript{32}

The sometimes rocky relationship between the two sibling rivals, network and local news, mellowed by 1988. Relationships have been strengthened and a new era of co-operation exists between networks and their affiliates. In its 1988 annual report on the status of local TV journalism \textit{Broadcasting} magazine wrote:


\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid.
... local television is fast becoming a misnomer. Local journalism is regional journalism is national journalism, with satellite technology and networking enlarging the reach of local stations by minimizing the constraints of time and distance in the pursuit of a story."

Through increased accommodation and cooperation harmony returned to the local and network "family" of broadcast journalism. Did all of this infighting reach the attention of the audience?

The News Consumer

In 1986, NBC News released a study to determine audience preferences between local and network newscasts. The results, announced by NBC News President Lawrence Grossman, overwhelming revealed the news consumer wanted to continue to have both local and network choices in news. Eighty-four percent of the respondents replied "no" to the question of "should local television expand its coverage and swallow up network newscasts."

Forced to make a preference choice, the survey indicated more television news consumers would select local over network newscasts. Fifty-two percent favored local to 45 percent who favored network. Other news viewing habits that came to light through this research included finding that 45 percent of the dinnertime audience


watches both local and network news, while 24 percent saw only local compared to the
ten percent who watched only network.

News consumers make up a distinct, diversified audience. Several studies give
insights to who watches and why. Many surveys show nearly two thirds of all
Americans get their news from television, but some research challenges these widely
published ideas. Robert L. Steven and Kathryn P. White found that as many as half
of Americans watch no news and only one in six watched on a regular basis.35

Research on the age variable among television news viewers concluded as people age
they watch more TV News.36 One study interestingly revealed that one fourth of all
six-year old’s watch a network newscast every day.37 Low income news consumers
are more likely to get their news from TV than those with higher income, according to
research at the University of Georgia.38 People living in the southern, rural areas;
watch more news than anyone else in the country.39

Two basic types of news consumers exist according to Lawrence Lichty at the
University of Maryland. He finds the first type of basic television news audience is

35Robert L. Stevenson and Kathryn P. White, "The Cumulative Audience of Network

Quarterly, (Fall 1971): 404.

37Charles Atkin and Walter Gantz. "Children’s Response to Broadcast News:
Exposure, Evaluation and Learning," Association for Education in Journalism and Mass

38Paula M. Poindexter, "Non-News Viewers," Journal of Communications (Autumn

39Stevenson and White, p. 479.
made up of the person who watches a lot of television. Retired, older people, non working housewife and young kids make up this group.

Second, there is an audience for television news and serious television programs consisting of news seekers. They really do seek out news programs. They don’t watch a lot of television, but when they do watch they watch news programs, documentaries and interview programs: "Meet The Press," "Face the Nation" and "This Week With David Brinkley." They often are the same people who are heavy users of public broadcasting.40

The news consumer’s product has undergone two major alterations in the decade of the 1980s. The external technological revolution erupted virtually at the same time as internal business alterations began. Although the consumer awareness was only passive at best, the changes have had a profound impact on the news industry.

The Business of News

Local TV news became profit centers in the 1960s.41 The 1970s decade became golden years for the networks as ABC News, once a distant third made money, CBS mined the highly rated "60 Minutes," and NBC's prime-time sixty second news updates proved profitable.42 In contrast to these boom years, the 1980s saw economic downturns which rocked all three networks.


In the decade of the 1980s the bottom line business side of network broadcast news became a headline story. In a two part cover story for *TV Guide* titled, "Network News Today: Which Counts More -- Journalism or Profits," John Weisman noted that television networks were being run by non-broadcasters. Weisman reported their news divisions were headed by men whose reputations were made outside of journalism. Referring first to the technological improvements and then expanding Weisman noted, "There has been another, less visible revolution in television news. It is the revolution caused by profits. And profits affect what you see." Bottom line approaches had a profound effect on local news as well.

A watershed in local TV news came in the mid 1980s according to Gary Cummings, former general manager of WBBM-TV Chicago.

For almost three decades, news and information programs were selected primarily for their importance or interest to the viewer, and commercial time in those broadcasts was sold to advertisers. Now advertisers are beginning to decide what kinds of news segments or information programs they want created as vehicles for their messages, and advertising is encroaching directly into news content. This blurring of the line between the advertiser and news threatens the very credibility of broadcast news and viewers may soon question whether they're being informed or sold.43

Cummings concluded that if the watershed spills into the network and the trend of advertisers influencing content expands, television will become "a mere conduit, not a conscience."44

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44Cummings, p. 40.
Striking to the heart of the profits verses purpose issue, Jeff Greenfield, ABC News media reporter reviewed the change in emphasis by networks and local stations toward the bottom line and concluded:

To measure the productivity of a producer or correspondent by the number of minutes of air time, to treat news as a commodity that can be measured in output, is ultimately self-destructive. What has brought viewers to network news in the past is the sense that they were getting a look at the world impossible to get elsewhere. A network news operation that deprives viewers of that kind of experience will, in the long run, lose both the trust and the loyalty of its viewers. It is hard to imagine a more costly loss for the networks: to its long term profits or its soul.  

At the dawn of the 1990s, two reasons explain why television news is generally profitable. First, news programs are cheaper to produce than dramatic genres hence the profit margin is larger. Second, the popularity of star anchors coupled with the news consumers’ drive to be "in the know" helps insure their ratings success. Local stations have been especially criticized for their "hype" of the ratings by airing controversial news series during the "sweep" periods.

A 1986 study of the ratings "sweeps" revealed, "journalistic values, promotional appeal, and public service all play a part but the creation of the largest audience appears to be the primary concern." 47 A 1984 article on sweeps week journalism in TV Guide similarly noted that "in the fever of ratings periods, many stations stretch the rules of good reporting to catch viewers attention." 48

As we enter the 1990s, the business side of television news, the emphasis on ratings and the seeming lack of concern for content, boldly asserts its power in American television news. Critics call for a return to the rudiments of traditional broadcast journalism ethics. Profits overpower content and the noise is drowning out the news.

As CBS reporter Charles Kuralt has observed:

The best minds in television news are thinking more about packaging and promotion and pace and image and blinking electronics than about thoughtful coverage of the news. I have worked in the field for twenty-five years, and every year I thought we were getting better. Suddenly, I think we’re getting worse. 

Chapter Three

TELEVISION NEWS' CONTENT CRISIS

COLLIDING ETHICS

With a background in the nature of news, how it is structured in America, its practitioners, programs, audiences and business practices, this study's major premise can now be explored.

At The Crossroads

Television news is at the crossroads. A crisis in content, if not already here, seems just around the corner. Several factors helped heat up the boiling point. As sociologists Phillips and Elliott have noted, "The assumed needs and interests of the audience on the one hand, and the truncated supply of information into the newsroom on the other, both exert pressures to which the organization of news production responds."1 In the pressure cooker process do the basic ingredients, the tenets from journalism's past, get tossed aside? What has happened to objectivity, fairness and absence of bias in the television news today? What has happened to tasteful reporting?

Questions such as these are being raised from the courtroom to the classroom, by the "think tanks" and the thought-provoked news consumer, who suddenly through

1Golding and Elliott, Making the News, p. 208.
a personal experience with television news, becomes enraged. As sociologists Golding and Elliott observed:

The expansion of television news has stimulated the debate about news in general. The novelty, and vividness of television news, and the sheer scale of television news audience have made this debate more urgent, more public, and more political.2

The old journalism is colliding head-on with the new news fueled by powerful, profit-driven forces. As the editors of the inaugural journal of the Gannett Media Center note:

The business of news has been conducted almost anonymously, under the watchwords of fairness and objectivity. When the news is dressed in such vestments, the press sets a trap for itself. Fairness and objectivity are the outer sentries of truth, posted to attract advertisers, to reassure Washington politicians, and to protect the guilty conscience of the media owners as much as to inform or enlighten the public. The standards are austere, not instinctual. No one knows what the outcome of this business-driven process will be; whether fairness and objectivity will be jettisoned, diminished or buttressed; or what the public interest yield will be. Part of the change, however, will probably be a new set of standards and expectations both for the news and for its disseminators.3

In order to explore the changing standards in television news, a review of today’s ethical codes for broadcast journalism is needed; examination of the challenges presented to them by those who espouse the so called "new journalism" must be made; and finally the Hofmann study will examine in case study detail how serious the flames are showing. First, a review of the codes.

2Ibid., p. 10.

The Ethical Codes

Codes of ethics are cannons of conduct for members of an organization subscribing to them. Unlike the legal and medical professions, codes of journalism have no binding power. A lawsuit for code violations forced the bankruptcy of a newspaper in the 1920s and set the precedent for the concept that the codes are non-binding. The code in question, the 1923 code of the American Society of Newspapers Editors, served as the foundation for the two main contemporary codes subscribed to by a majority of television newspeople today. The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) and the Radio Television News Director’s Association (RTNDA), America’s most influential news alliances, revised their ethical codes in 1987.

The more fraternal SPJ first adopted their code in 1926. Forty years later, the professionally oriented RTNDA organization created their code in 1966. Although similar in purpose, many differences can be distinguished between the two codes. SPJ’s code covers all news media reports from printed form to broadcast voice. Narrower in scope, RTNDA’s code applies to broadcast mediums only.

A striking difference between the codes relates to the word truth. The term is mentioned four times in SPJ’s ethical code yet not once in RTNDA’s. The first line of the SPJ code sets out the primary “duty of journalists is to serve truth.” It states the purpose of distributing news is to serve the general welfare. The RTNDA’s code shares this belief listing its first responsibility as service to the public.

Ethical issues make up the majority of both codes tenets. Together the two codes agree conflict of interest should be avoided by newspeople and forbid gifts or
favors. SPJ’s states, "nothing of value should be accepted" while RTNDA’s wording urges declining "gifts or favors which would appear to influence their judgements."

Protecting the confidentiality of sources, the prompt acknowledgement of errors, avoiding deception or highlight out of context, and a call to respect the dignity and privacy with those the news media contact, stand out as common threads in both codes. Responsibilities to the news audiences listed include clearly separating news from opinion. RTNDA calls for such reports to be "clearly labeled" and SPJ demands "the writer’s own conclusions and interpretations should be labeled as such." SPJ charges journalists to perform with intelligence, objectivity, accuracy and fairness while RTNDA urges balance, accuracy, and fairness.

Broadcast news writing brevity is evident in RTNDA’s code. It is far shorter than SPJ’s, but the latter’s language is far more colorful and has an aura of tradition and a sense of the nobility of the journalistic method missing in the clipped code of the broadcasters.

The Great Debate

Although these codes might hang on the walls of many television newsrooms and come to light during awards ceremonies or panel discussions on journalism ethics, the average television newsperson while not ignoring them certainly pays little attention to their existence.¹ Working newspeople argue the codes are internal and do

¹This conclusion is based on the readings of over three hundred interviews of television newspeople conducted by broadcast ethics students at Brigham Young University since 1985. Over two hundred of these interviews were non-duplicative. Part of their requirements for Communications 352 had them interview three working
not need to be memorized or checked over each time they rush out of the newsroom to cover a story. Some academics likewise contend codes are powerless as noted below.

John Merrill's 1981 semantic analysis of the SPJ Code of Ethics describe it as "sound and fury that signifies almost nothing." Merrill challenges the code's final pledge that calls for the active censure of code violators.

What does the pledge mean? Are all SDX members pledging what follows? Are they, for instance, promising to actively censure those who violate the SDX standard? We are told that adherence to the Code is intended to preserve the bond of mutual trust and respect between journalists and people. If we already have this mutual trust and respect, why do we need this code of ethics?

Society members eliminated the censure clause, debated for many years at national SPJ conventions, in 1985. Fear of lawsuits prompted this removal. "The most compelling argument against journalistic codes of ethics comes from journalists who fear that judges and the courts will try to universalize them," observed Gene Goodwin in SPJ's 1982 Ethics Report. Goodwin's examination of why many journalists oppose ethical codes cited Abe Rosenthal's defense of the First Amendment for his abhorrence to codes.

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television news professionals about their awareness of the industry ethics codes.


The strength of the American press is its diversity. There are publishers I wouldn't dirty my hands with, but I don't want a code that would exclude them.\(^8\)

The editors of the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* joined the chorus against codes writing an essay in the inaugural edition.

Codes probably should be relegated to a framed wall hanging for any journalists who have advanced beyond their internships. Confusion reigns because codes are often founded on moralistic rather than moral-philosophical bases, and there is a blurring between general precepts and specific practices covered in codes. As individual professionals mature intellectually and ethically, they should transcend socially-approved conventions codified by regulators and begin to become social catalysts in their own rights.\(^9\)

Despite their dismissals from some academic and professional communities, television news organizations as a whole give token acknowledgement, if not out right endorsement, of these standards if for no other reason than to provide the audience with a "comfortable proof" that what their reporting is above reproach. The 1985-86 SPJ Ethics Report notes that "media codes are seen by the general public as a mantle of self-protection and status quo-ism."\(^{10}\) Supporting the case in favor of codes, in the society's most recent Ethics Report, Louis W. Hodges argues:

Codes declare at least some of the standards by which we want to judge ourselves and our peers. They also show those outside the

\(^8\)Ibid.


profession the kinds of actions we applaud and those we condemn. In this way codes help define what we are about.¹¹

Casey Bukro who penned much of the SPJ-SDX code would like to see it enforced. Urging local chapters to hear ethical complaints, he nonetheless realizes the fear "local chapters will go on witch hunts." Still, Bukro believes ethical problems are going to be greater if they are ignored.¹²

The Society of Professional Journalists together with its broadcast twin, The Radio Television News Director’s Association, continually push ethics in their annual meetings and publications. The RTNDA publishes their code monthly in the Communicator magazine to keep the topic forefront in member’s eyes.

While debates continue on the enforcement and emphasis of codes, these two prominent organizations continue to endorse the concept as one of their founding principles. SPJ and RTNDA can be considered defenders of traditional journalistic ethics, supporters of the old school.

The New Journalism

New approaches to traditional journalistic methods emerged in both broadcast and print mediums in the last 20 years. The philosophical approach to news reporting, associated with the trend titled "new journalism," becomes a blur amidst all the


mediated communication channels available to the news consumer. Labels can be misleading.

Historically, the "new journalism " label has been attached to Joseph Pulitzer's innovations as he revitalized the New York World. His mixture was one third sensationalism, one third attention getting campaigns (The World spearheaded lead the drive to erect the Statue of Liberty) and one-third aggressive, intelligent news coverage.¹³

Parallel patterns can be found in the formats of the 1980s newest broadcast news genres the television news magazine. Ironically, "USA Today: The Television Show," patterned after the innovative newspaper of the same name, matched Pulitzer's formula. The use of audience interaction methods such as national telephone polling, including topics such as "should the burning of the American flag be allowed?" seek to unite the audience in the same way Pulitzer's Statue of Liberty campaign did. The mix of news coverage on topics ranging from aggressive reporting to stories bordering on the sensational compare with Pulitzer's formula.

In 1988, Fox Network's "A Current Affair" and the King World production "Inside Edition" expanded the genre even further. Coupled with a host of independently produced but highly publicized talk shows, "Geraldo," "Opra Winfrey," and "Morton Downey Jr.," a new term, "tabloid TV", was born. Pulitzer's "new journalism" has not been directly applied to tabloid TV, although some of the same

elements are present. The term reappeared in the 1970s as a description of a new style of print reporting. As sociologists define it:

New journalism has mainly been associated with the work of magazine writers and novelists, providing news features of unashamed, even aggressive subjectivity, often spilling over into flamboyant egocentricity. As an influence on mainstream journalism the school if such it is, has been marginal, except as instigator of a widespread secondary literature on its significance. In fact, the "new journalism" is less a matter of philosophy than of style.14

Sociologists Golding and Elliott contend the term "new journalism" arose as journalists under attack were forced to articulate previously implicit purposes of their activities.

In the United States this gave rise to the internal debate about "the new journalism," a creed developed as a self-consciously iconoclastic rationale for the subjective reportage of writers like Tom Wolfe and Truman Capote. The quarry they were after was the journalistic faith in objectivity.15

Another of the new journalists, Jeff Newfield, contends the school's disdain for objectivity helped enrich and expand the genre of journalism.

They have exploded the old, impersonal, objective journalism school formulas, to get closer to the human core of reality, to tell more of how it really is after the press agents and ghost-writers go home, to be more than "clerks of fact."

... They set a mood, and experiment with character development, and try wild stabs of intuitive insight. They have a point of view and they are personally involved in whatever they are writing

14Golding and Elliott, p. 214.

15 Ibid., p. 10.
about. And most distinctively, the new journalism challenges the central myth of objectivity.\textsuperscript{16}

Golding and Elliott believe "objectivity claimed by conventional journalism, which though putatively an epistemological neutrality, is no more than a set of rules and procedures governing practice." They note "new journalism’s" predominate concern with character: the freakish, the colorful, the eccentric. They view it weaker than "the old journalism," especially in its ability to deal with the social or historical process. They believe to be almost totally restricted to print media pointing out, "The forms and conceptions of television news would entirely reject any reformulation in terms of news as ‘wild stabs of intuitive insight’ in the form of the short story." They do see an irony:

Both broadcast news and the new journalism share two central traits. They focus on the individual and on character, and they have a love of the bizarre and the unusual.\textsuperscript{17}

Clearly, tabloid television or "trash TV," the label attached to a Newsweek magazine cover story,\textsuperscript{18} focuses on the bizarre and the unusual. The Foundation for American Communications reviewed the new genres in television news. They note a paradox. As public dissatisfaction with the news media rises, the profession itself has raised internal questions about ethics and news quality.\textsuperscript{19}


\textsuperscript{17}Golding and Elliott, p. 215.


\textsuperscript{19}"Technology, Trash and Journalism Ethics," \textit{Journalism Issues and Opportunities} 1:1, February 1989: 2.
For example a 1987 editorial by past RTNDA President J. Spencer Kinard. He warned of the danger these programs can be to credibility:

Credibility is a journalist’s most valued, intangible asset. We damage it enough by ourselves without help from others. Television news already struggles to maintain its journalistic identity in a blurred environment.

Three factors in the environment contribute to the fog. The Foundation for American Communications views them as, first, a change in legal requirements under the Reagan administration loosening the rules governing broadcast news requirements for a station to maintain a license; second, the marketplace changes in ownership and profit concerns that brought emphasis to the business side of broadcast news; finally, the tension between style and substance. As the foundation notes:

Journalists advocating a return to traditional journalism styles are clashing with others that emphasize a more prominent place for drama and entertainment in the news.

Some journalists believe that a wall of separation can be maintained, even if many watch or read the news merely for entertainment. Others draw lines based on personal, corporate or community standards. Still others see no conflict between news and entertainment.

While leaders of professional organizations, such as Kinard, call for strict separation, the wall for others is thin. Mike Wolverton, in a stylebook for

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experienced broadcast newspeople wanting to improve their craft, reviews the old journalism basics.

If we get the data on who, what, when, where, and why we have our story. We then relate these facts in a so-called objective manner. We would, in all cases, work with pieces of information and join them together for our reports.

But Wollverton goes one step further suggesting some may want to try the new style.

In the new journalism (not to be confused with advocacy journalism, a cop-out) the basic reporting unit is the scene. Our problem is to stay with the protagonist long enough for the scene to develop. This is our narrative hook. By now you may be saying "Scene ... protagonist ... narrative hook -- what are we writing, a short story?" You are right. We are writing what has been called a nonfiction short story. More accurately, it is a true story structured and told, or shown, in the form of a drama. We stick to the facts and make nothing up -- we must not -- but we present the story to our audience as human drama, which it is. We look for plot, mood, time, and place. We make the scene and stay with it and record and photograph until the scene plays out.

Wollverton notes for most broadcast newspeople it's easier to go after just the facts. He points out the dangers of stepping into the new school.

... working to develop dramatic aspects of the story often requires asking questions to which we have no right to expect answers, and asking to see things we are not entitled to see. It often leads to a personal involvement with the protagonist that can be emotionally draining and dangerous. The danger is that we get so close to our protagonist that we lose sight of our job as a reporter and become instead a press secretary. 22

Although Wollverton outlines responsibilities and ethical tenets a journalist must always adhere to, the tone of his passages seem to endorse inroads into the "new

school." Wolverter seems to be arguing, "If you violate the rules fully aware you do this it, and can still remain ethical, then go to it."

This review of the term "new journalism" has traced the early definitions of the term in the print world of the late 1800s, and note similarities in the broadcast news world of the late 1900s. The writer has reviewed professional broadcast disdain for the new genres of "infotainment." Beyond the broad labels attached to such programs there appears to be an argument building in some newsrooms to try tenets of the new journalism, to free oneself of the trappings of tradition, and dispel the "myth of objectivity," in order to get to the real essence of the story.

The Myth of Objectivity

One defense often cited by new journalists is the notion that a reporter brings to his keyboard a baggage car full of personal bias. Some argue it can be left at the depot since impartiality is possible. Others picture it as intrinsic in the journalist and even if he tried he couldn’t totally leave his baggage of bias behind since impartiality is a virtual impossibility.

When pieces of the internal baggage show up in news reports in the form of opinion and bias, the public quickly yells, "get him off the train." Yet, because there are no enforced codes of ethics, no conductor to check the passenger, some traditional journalists argue they are getting away with too much. As reporters chose to ignore their internal baggage, an arrogant attitude develops. This insolent image has reached epidemic proportions.
The public image of the press as arrogant is the biggest problem the press has in retaining its First Amendment rights. To preserve the First Amendment, the press must engage in the kind of self-criticism suggested by the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists when print or broadcast performances fails to meet acceptable or legal standards.

Yet journalists and journalistic organizations often defend, or by their silence seem to condone, the performance of colleagues even when they violate ethics codes that stress accuracy, balance and fair play. If ethics codes were more often practiced than ignored, the media would be held in higher regard by the public today.23

Print and broadcast journalists debated the credibility gap with news consumers during a two-day seminar sponsored by the Poynter Institute for Media Studies in 1985. Top professionals in both fields blamed each other. "What the networks call "news" is in fact a mixture of analysis, opinions and speculation," charged Creed Black, past President of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. CBS News President Van Gordon Sauter countered with a poll showing television news in one local community was perceived more fair than newspapers 87 to 84 percent.24 Sauter put forth:

Distrust of the press might be a residual effort of a more cynical, better-educated public that is equally suspicious of big religion, big labor, big government, and a big National Football league.

A willingness to submit to scrutiny by both mediums is the conclusion drawn in a summary of the debate published in The Quill magazine.


Unless newspaper and television networks and stations are willing to submit themselves and their products to the same kind of scrutiny they are honor-bound to apply to government, labor, the auto industry, and college recruiting, the believability of what they have to offer will not rank much higher than that of the institutions they inspect -- and it should be higher.

Warnings from inside the profession about the lack of objectivity hurting news credibility can be traced back to 1970. Veteran broadcast newsman Eric Sevaried viewed Vice President Agnew's assault on the press as not the only danger of the era. Efforts to improve the press in questionable ways come from inside too.

Militant young men and women, in both newspaper and broadcasting argue that even the quest for objectivity is a myth, that the prime purpose of the press is not to report the world but to reform it, and in direction of their ideas. We have all read the learned articles that tell us objective news accounts in the hard news columns or broadcast tend merely to deceive the reader, obscure inner truths that the reporter perceives. He must therefore personalize the hard news, infuse it with his own truth. They would not leave this to the editorial writer.

They believe this will give a true integrity to news columns and news broadcasts. There is nothing new about the idea. In fact, this is the way it was done in the days of the yellow press and the screamers of radio's first faltering years.

The believability crisis, the objectivity challenge, and critical spotlights from such groups as Accuracy in Media, and the press reaction to it, all became the topic of the University of Hawaii's Sixth Annual Carol Burnett Fund Lecture on ethics in Journalism. Elmer Lower, a newsman with 20 years in print and 25 in broadcast,

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\text{Ibid.}
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\text{Ibid.}
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\text{Eric Sevareid, "The Quest For Objectivity," Fourth Annual Elmer Davis Memorial Lecture, Columbia University, New York City, 29 April 1970.}
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including heading ABC News, painted the contemporary picture and offered this defense:

[The] long list of complaints may sound like the American press, radio and television have very low standards of ethics and ill serve the public. I do not believe that is the case at all. There are transgressors, as I have amply pointed out. My experience convinces me that the vast majority of print and broadcast journalists do have high standards. Perhaps the average journeyman reporter can’t quote you a passage from the standards of ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, or of the Radio and Television News Director’s Association. But most of them do have a sense of fairness, strive to be accurate, and do treat the subjects about whom they write the way that they themselves, would like to be treated.  

Criticism of broadcast news, because of perceived bias, runs the spectrum from conservative organizations, such as Accuracy in Media, to the ordinary citizen. A common public complaint comes from a citizen who feels shortchanged after being interviewed for twenty minutes by TV News and watches broadcast only a 30-second portion of the interview. Despite the public and professional critics, Lower’s contention, that television news practitioners are for the most part fair, is upheld by sociologists. Golding and Elliot note:

Criticism of broadcast news often comes from groups or individuals who detect bias in the way they are presented by the news, or who feel their activities are deliberately ignored. That these sins are committed is beyond dispute.

Journalists are as venal; as other men in their pursuits, and as partisan in their judgements about the world. But commitments to

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objectivity, accuracy and honesty in broadcast journalism are usually sincere and serious.  

While some sociologists, coupled with old school traditionalists such as Sevareid and Lower defend, for the most part, contemporary TV news practitioners, they all recognize a rebuilding of trust needs to take place between the news practitioner and the audience.

Credibility, central to the relationship, rests in a delicate balance between objectivity on one end of the seesaw and controlled bias on the other. When objectivity is tossed aside the ride becomes reckless. Likewise, putting too much of the practitioner’s personal bias into the reporting weights the seesaw down on the ground, and credibility poised up in the sky, is in danger of falling.

Sacred Tenets

Traditional codes of broadcast newsgathering are being tossed out in a changing climate of television news practices in the United States. Tenets of objectivity, fairness and elimination of bias, once sacred and still canonized by professionals, are being challenged by some television news practitioners. Amidst this debate, a credibility breach emerges between the reporter and the audience.

The challenge of television news is "to present fact and truth, with clarity, dispassion and neutrality, however inconvenient or dismaying much of that information  

\[29\] Golding and Elliott, p. 17.
may be.″ This viewpoint expressed by Assistant Director General of the British Broadcast Commission, Alan Protheroe, charged with overall responsibility for the standards of journalism throughout the BBC, builds on his belief that "good journalism is responsible journalism." The aim of responsible television news on a daily basis is objectivity and impartiality. Clear definitions of these terms, as applied to TV news practitioners, is critical to the present study's statement of the problem.

This thesis examines three traditional tenets of journalism as practiced in a television news environment. The tenets are objectivity, fairness and the elimination of bias.

In defining objectivity, a distinction is made between it and impartiality. Impartiality implies a disinterested approach to news, lacking in motivation to shape or select material according to a particular view or opinion. Objectivity, however defined, is clearly a broader demand than this. A journalist may well be impartial towards the material on which he works, yet fail to achieve objectivity -- a complete and unrefracted capture of the world -- due to the inherent limitations in news gathering and processing.″

H. Brucker offers a simpler definition:

Objective reporting is nothing more than what good reporting has always been: the work of a disciplined professional who has tried his damnedest to get the whole story and then to present it accurately and honestly without letting his own bias creep into it.″

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30Ibid.

31Golding and Elliott, p. 208.

The antithesis of objectivity is bias. There are two types. Inherent bias refers to internal beliefs that could affect the external report. Three methods can check it; Self-discipline, professional standards of fairness and accuracy, and multiple reporters with knowingly differing views covering the same story.¹³

The notion of bias implies a position of balance from which news can be drafted by the weights of prejudice, intrigue or the malign influence of political and commercial outsiders. It has two crucial limitations. One is the impossibility of establishing quite where that position of balance lies. The other is the temptation to assume that if these various weights can be removed, and the journalist liberated from the conspiratorial chains that bind him, professional autonomy will guarantee the untainted impartiality and completeness of the news.¹⁴

To return to the seesaw analogy, fairness is the supporting rod between objectivity on one end and controlled bias on the other. These two tenets balance on the news practitioners concern for fairness. John Bittner’s Radio Journalism handbook notes the interrelationship of objectivity to fairness but also its unique quality. "Whereas objectivity," Bittner writes, "requires you to be free of emotion, fairness requires you to retain some sensitivity to emotion."¹⁵

Fairness includes subscription to a basic journalistic tenet called attribution. Clear identity to who is saying what, defines attribution for news application. The

³³Golding and Elliott, 208.
³⁴Golding and Elliott, p. 13.
Associated Press requires, "... a strong and clear attribution ... report only the facts -
only what you know to be true. Don’t guess; don’t draw conclusions."³⁶

Television news reporters schooled in these three fundamentals of objectivity, fairness and bias maintain the evidence of their adherence is contained in their broadcast reports.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

After laying the groundwork from the textbook and professional definitions of objectivity, fairness and bias detailed above, what follows are operational definitions of those terms for the context of this study. The list of the seven editorializing rules will be reviewed and examples of violations found in the Hofmann coverage will be noted. In addition, other key terms unique to this study will be defined.

The definitions for the three traditional tenets derive from the coding rules formulated by the Broadcast News Analysis project at Brigham Young University. Subsequent to an initial pilot study project in May 1985, input to these rules were sought from working broadcast journalism professionals. Following the release of the results of the pilot project at the 1985 RTNDA meeting, opinion was sought by the analysis group on the rules. Over the next six months, twenty working news professionals reviewed the rules. Among them were Kenn Venit, Senior Consultant with Primo News Service, Ed Turner, Executive Vice President of Cable News

Network and local station news directors including Bill Lord, KUTV-TV Salt Lake City, Paul Baldridge, Executive Producer, KOVR-TV Sacramento, California and Jay Hilderbrandt the news director of KIFI-TV in Idaho Falls, Idaho. They were paid an honorarium for their work. Modifications made by the BYU faculty team of the rules in the pilot study resulted in seven distinct rules related to editorializing. The Project group experimented with additional rules for measuring accuracy and balance and visual coding elements. This study concerned itself only with editorial elements.

The three tenets of objectivity, fairness and elimination of bias come under the umbrella of editorialization. The seven editorial rules listed below form the operational definitions for these terms as used in this study. Objectivity contains "attribution" (rule 1) and "prediction and prophetic statements" (rule 5). Fairness is made up of three rules titled, "Colorful descriptions" (rule 3), "projecting attitudes" (rule 6), and "projecting feelings" (rule 7). The elimination of bias tenet is operationalized by the rules "drawing conclusions" (rule two) and "reporter interrogatives" (rule four). Appendix B contains samples of the rules coding instructions used by the professional reviewers. The following are definitions of the seven rules used by the coders in this study. They includes examples of sentences professional reviewers felt were in violation of the editorial rules. The code books used by the reviewers contained the entire page of the broadcast script in which the sentence spotted by the research center appears. In this way the reviewer could examine the context of the sentence. The example listed below with the definitions will only contain a sentence or two surrounding the problem sentence, so that the
reader can understand the context. Phrases pertaining to the rule definition will be bolded.

Objectivity Tenet

Rule One, "Attribution" Reporters can narrate factual information without attribution if the facts are independently verifiable by a) being substantiated as universally believed by public at large b) being accessible by any competent observer, including the reporter. Reporters are often expected to share their experience in live question and answer sessions. In this case it is clear we are asking for the reporter's reaction and it should be ruled acceptable without further attribution. Listed below are two sentences that the professional reviewers concurred with the coders were in violation of the attribution rule.

Example One: Friends say Hofmann spent a lot of time recently raising money. The day he was injured in the third bombing, he expected to sign a deal that would net him $185,000. The deal never went through, but a lot of others did. (KUTV, November 13, 1985. Case 108)

Example Two: One source told the Deseret News that the search of Hofmann's home revealed no evidence that bombs were made there. Other leaks to the media indicate there is no proof it is Hofmann's handwriting on the bomb packaging. One investigator said if Hofmann is involved, an associate must have helped or least had knowledge of the crimes. (KSL, November 10, 1985. Case 620)

Rule Five, "Predictions and Prophetic Statements" The use of "it is expected", "will", "shall", and similar words without attribution, indicate the reporter has knowledge of future events, thus overstepping the reporter's duty to report only the established facts. Some professionals may argue that good reporters are paid for being good guessers or predictors. While this may be true, the
predictions or guesses of reporters should not be reported as fact until they have been substantiated. However, if a reporter wants to report his or her predictions, he or she should clarify that they are editorial commentary. Situations where these types of reporter predictions are acceptable would be when the reporter is asked to comment by the anchor or in a question and answer session.

Example One: Despite the errors that have been made, the attorneys on the panel agreed if Mark Hofmann is ever charged he can get a fair trial. But they said it would be impossible to undo the damage already done to Hofmann’s reputation. Many of the questions of right and wrong doing in the Salt Lake bombings case will be answered if and when charges are filed and the case goes to trial. But the case has become so bizarre, has involved so much of the Salt Lake community, and has generated such speculation there’s no doubt but that tougher questions will continue to debated for years to come. (KUTV, December 2, 1985. Case 154)

Example Two: Hofmann could not be convicted on federal charges of killing Steve Christensen and Kathy Sheets. He could receive the death penalty during the penalty phase of any trial. (KTVX, November 17, 1985. Case 188)

**Fairness Tenet**

**Rule Three, "Colorful Description"** Colorful description is acceptable provided it conveys only the observable facts in the situation and does not add an "emotional" spin to the story. Many adjectives or adverbs add editorial, hyperbolic or "emotional spin" to stories. The following "red flag" words should be carefully noted to determine whether they are used editorially or not: outstanding, unique, grisly, crucial, a near miracle, on a rampage, graft and
corruption, appears to be, expected to be, straight-forward, whirlwind, nearly, mostly, absolute, worst, best.

Example One: The documents that have been released detailing the charges against Mark Hofmann paint a portrait of a man on the verge of frenzy in the weeks leading up to the October 15 bombings. (KTVX, February 7, 1986. Case 611)

Example Two: The violence of the last 36 hours is spreading fear and panic across the Salt Lake Valley. (KUTV, October 16, 1985. Case 14)

Rule Six, "Projecting Attitudes" Statements about people's attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, or opinions, constitute editorializing unless those attitudes have been identified by and attributed to someone other than the reporter, or if they have been prefaced by a conditional.

Example One: Mark Hofmann has been formally charged with possession of a machine gun. (Reporter's Name) reports charges seem to point out a weakness in the case against the document dealer. (KTVX, November 1, 1985. Case 232)

Example Two: Behind me, officers continue scouring evidence found inside the car. They found some papers they believe may have belonged to victim Mark Hofmann. Hofmann is talking to officers, we are told, at the LDS Hospital right now. (KUTV, October 16, 1985. Case 10)

Rule Seven, "Projecting Feelings" Statements about people's motives, state of mind, and feelings constitute editorializing unless they have been identified by the person or attributed to someone else's statement as their opinion of the person's feelings.

Example One: Hofmann has been telling friends at first he didn't even know he was injured in a bomb blast. He's told them he opened the car door, put his foot down, and was knocked down. He reportedly thought he may have been hit by a car and wanted to catch the license
plate number. He was told at the hospital he'd been bombed. At that point he worried it might have something to do with the controversial Mormon documents he's been selling. (KUTV, November 19, 1985. Case 117)

Example Two: If Mark Hofmann ever does face murder charges, his lawyers feel he could be driven to the brink of financial ruin without help. (KSL, December 26, 1985. Case 495)

Elimination of Bias Tenet

Rule Two, "Drawing Conclusions" This should not be done by the reporter unless a) he identifies his remarks clearly as personal commentary b) he is an established and known expert on the subject c) he is in a question and answer situation where he is asked to state his opinion. Reporters should deliver the facts without slanting them to favor their own views or those of any interest group. The conclusions stated by reporters should be attributed to experts, eyewitnesses and newsmakers.

Example One: The briefing with reporters was an obvious attempt to tell the faithful their leaders have done nothing wrong. (KUTV, October 23, 1985. Case 57)

Example Two: A local authenticator with the Attorney General's office, George Throckmorton, is credited with the discovery the documents are alleged fakes. He claims to have made the discovery using a brand new test unknown to the rest of the country. But prosecutors may have trouble convincing a jury that Throckmorton is right. A lot of people are convinced the documents are authentic. (KUTV, February 5, 1986. Case 580)

Rule Four, "Reporter Interrogative" While reporters sometimes ask leading questions and make comments during their stories and interviews, if these bias the story or are rhetorical in the sense of being disguised editorial statements,
then they are considered to be editorial. Journalists are allowed to ask leading
questions and play devil's advocate in a question that does itself express a
viewpoint. However, it must be determined whether the question is included to
clarify the answer or to unfairly color the story.

Example One: The police record of the night, hand written by the
reporting officer, used that exact word. I quote. "Hofmann stated that
he wanted his father there. Hofmann's father was called by another
attorney and told, 'his son wanted to make a confession.'" Was the
nurse's presence required in the room when Hofmann talked to his
attorney, or did attorney Yengich simply blow it by not asking her
to leave? Yengich's filings say that the nurses presence was required.
(KSL, December 3, 1985. Case 467)

Example Two: Chief Bud Willoughby, who has had a very busy day,
we thank you for joining us, Chief. First of all, let's try to allay some
fears. Was this a mad bomber or was this a professional hit man?
(KUTV, October 15, 1985. Case 4)

Beyond the definitions of the three tenets, as detailed in the above rules that
this study will matched to them, a clear understanding of other key terms is vital.
These include "external and internal pressures," "internal journalistic codes," and
"responsible journalism."

Television news practitioners thrive in a pressured environment. For many,
this pressure is the yeast that makes the career rise, it is the exhilaration that provides
fulfillment with the field of labor. The newsperson has numerous internal pressures
including her or his own ego drive and the competitive spirit in the race to be first.
External pressure comes from peers wanting to measure up or out perform both those
in the journalist's own newsroom and those at competing stations. The news
practitioner feels pressure from superiors, the watchful eye of the boss, the News
Director. The audience exudes a pressure. Their loyalty to a reporter measured in ratings and discovered in focus groups can mold a reputation for the reporter that reflects back on the employing station. The television news business is full of numerous structural pressures ranging from the nature of the complex electronic equipment used in the news gathering process to the nature of television news itself formulated to meet nightly constraints of time.

A key external pressure at work in the television news process relates to time. There are two categories of time demands electronic journalists face. The first, referred to as "deadline pressure," pertains to the requirement that the story must be ready for air by the 6 pm newscast. It matters not if the story just "broke" at 5:30. Competition and the nature of news required it be told. Although most news organizations will not air stories that are incomplete, have missing facts, or unchecked sources, this is not true in the case of a breaking "spot news story." By its nature the spot news story must be told no matter how incomplete the details. This is because spot news stories are usually those with significant content, are of interest to a large number of people, and often contain dramatic visual elements.

The second category of the external time element is "story length." Television newscasts are fixed in their time lengths. The amount of news is limited to the allocation of time. Each story in the typical twenty-two minute newscast (8 minutes are taken up with commercials) must strictly follow an allotted amount of time dictated by the producer of the newscast. Often complex and detailed stories must be told, with a brush stroke sweeping through the facts and reactions, in the same amount of
time as all the other stories. Typically, in local television news this amounts to one minute and thirty seconds. Although this could seem absurd to the novice, those practicing the art know how to combine these visual elements, the written word and the sound sources to communicate a story within this narrow time allotment.

Key terms have been defined that are used in this thesis. They include operational definitions for the tenets of objectivity, fairness, and the elimination of bias, as composed as seven editorializing rules. These rules represent the "internal journalistic code of ethics" that have come to be accepted as the standard norm of practice in the American local television news system. Their adherence forms the notion of "responsible journalism." Many external pressures can lead a reporter to deviate from the ethical norms. The concern of this present study is to examine the end result, the broadcasted story, after passing through combined external pressures to see if the internal codes of good reporting were violated.
Chapter Four

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

GRAPHIC AND TABULAR ELEMENTS

A key element in reporting the findings, is a series of figures. The figures are a series of timeline charts corresponding to the seventeen weeks which met the study parameters between October 15, 1985 and February 8, 1986 (see Appendix A). Five of the study’s total seventeen weeks contained no violations at the established level. The timeline charts are labeled "Hofmann Coverage Weeks." Depicted on them are the 117 days of the study from October 15, 1985 through January 8, 1986. Bar graphs indicate the number of violations incurred as the rules were broken. These charts also indicate with an asterisk if the day of the study period corresponded to a UPI key-event day.

Frequent reference will be made to UPI key-event days. Ten days were selected by United Press International to contain key events in the Hofmann coverage during this study period. The days were selected and distributed through the wire service September 16, 1988; one day following Mark Hoffman’s attempted suicide at the Utah State Prison. Appendix C contains the complete descriptions of the UPI key-events. A UPI key-event day, as defined in this study, will be day on which one of the ten key events determined by UPI occurred.
In addition to "timeline charts" and "UPI key-event days", a third common term referred to in this chapter is the table of "worst days." This refers to days in the study period containing the most editorial violations (see Table Two).

FINDINGS

Research Question One

The first research question is: In the coverage of the series of stories known as the Mark Hofmann Salt Lake City bombings, did the news reports by the local television stations contain violations of one or more of the editorializing rules as defined in this study?

During the four and a half months, October 15, 1985 through January 8, 1986, of intensive coverage, a total of 425 stories related to the Mark Hofmann bombings were broadcast by KSL, KTVX, and KUTV. In 103 of these stories at least three professional reviewers agreed or strongly agreed with the findings of the coders. Thus, 24 percent of the Hofmann stories contained editorial violations. Many of these stories were broadcast on the same day. The data reveal a total of 39 distinct days in which these 103 stories were televised.

The professional reviewers returned 2,757 responses to the sentences identified as containing violations by the coders. A total of 605 responses by the reviewers noted agreement that editorial violation had occurred. These 605 responses are contained in 103 stories. Many instances of editorial violations found by coders were
agreed to by professional reviewers in television stories broadcast about the Mark Hofmann bombings in Salt Lake City.

**Research Question Two**

The second research question is: If rule breaking occurred, was the distribution balanced or was one rule violated more frequently than another?

The frequency counts of editorial violations depicted on in the timeline figures (see Appendix A) reveal that across the 117-day study, rules were violated unevenly. Table One contains the distribution of the frequency of violations of the five rules. Indisputably, the largest amount of violations fall in the "drawing conclusions" category. It accounts for 46 percent of the total violations. Slightly over one fourth of the violations were in the next largest category, rule three,"colorful description" accounting for 27 percent of the violations. "Projecting attitudes and feelings" was the third largest category with twelve percent of the violations. Rule one, "attribution" accounted for nearly nine percent of the violations. Finally, rule five "predictions" contained the smallest number of judge observed violations. They account for just over six percent of the total study. Clearly, the distribution of the violations is unbalanced.

Conclusively, an uneven balance of the distribution is revealed in Table One. A single editorial rule, "drawing conclusions" accounted for nearly half of the total violations. Nearly three-fourths of all the violations come from the combination of "drawing conclusions" and "colorful description."
Table One
Total Violations of Editorial Rules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Editorial Rule Violated</th>
<th>Number of Violations</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing Conclusions</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorful Descriptions</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projecting Attitudes and Feelings</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictions</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question Three

Research question three stated: The series of Mark Hofmann stories contain ten key events as identified by United Press International. UPI identified ten key events in the Hofmann news coverage occurring between October 15, 1985 and February 8, 1986, the time period studied. If rule violations occurred were more, less, or about the same number of rules violated on a UPI key-event day compared to a non UPI key-event-day?

The data revealed a greater number of violations occurred on UPI key-event days compared to non-key days. As the timeline charts indicate, the number of violations was greatest on key event days. An example is found in week one of the study depicted in Figure One.

Figure One shows the number and kinds of violations during the first week of the Hofmann story. Four UPI key event days occurred during this week. Study day one and two tied for the most number of total violations on any day in the study.
These days each contained a total of 65 violations. A sharp contrast exists between the UPI key-event days and Sunday, October 20, 1985 when no key-events occurred.

All of the first ten days are either a key event or within one or two days of a key event. Half of UPI's ten key-events occur during the first ten "Worst Days." Of the five key-events which do not appear during the first ten "Worst Days," four occur within the top 25 "worst days." One UPI key-event is not found within the first 25 "worst days" of Hofmann coverage. The only exception is with a UPI key-event called "grand jury indicts Hofmann on firearms charges." It falls on study day 23 which does not appear on the "worst days" table.

In order to find out why study day 23, a UPI key-event day, contained few violations, the coding data was scrutinized. It was discovered that study day 23 contained a total of six stories, two each from the KSL, KTVX, and KUTV.
### Table Two

**Days in Which Greatest Number of Editorial Violations Occurred ["Worst Days"]**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Number of Violations</th>
<th>Percent of Total Violations</th>
<th>On/Near/Not Near UPI Key-Event</th>
<th>Selected Events Description (UPI Key-Events in Bold)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>10.74</td>
<td>On</td>
<td><strong>Bombs Kill Two</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>10.74</td>
<td>On</td>
<td><strong>Bomb Injures Hofmann</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>On</td>
<td><strong>Police Suspect Hofmann</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>Near</td>
<td><strong>Victims Funerals Held, Prosecutors Attempt to Question Hofmann's Nurse</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>On</td>
<td><strong>Hofmann Charged with First Degree Murder</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>Near</td>
<td><strong>Hofmann Arraigned on Weapons Charge, Hofmann Links to Library of Congress Regarding Oath of a Freeman</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>Near</td>
<td><strong>Prosecutor and Police Chief Bicker Over News Leaks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>Near</td>
<td><strong>Pinnock (LDS Leader) Details Link with Hofmann Loan</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>Near</td>
<td><strong>Bail Hearing, Throckmorton (Forensics Expert) Says Hofmann Peddling Forgeries Since 1980</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>On</td>
<td><strong>Church Press Conference</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>Near</td>
<td><strong>Rust (Coin Dealer) Loaned Hofmann $150,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>Near</td>
<td><strong>Bail Set at $250,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td><strong>Ruling on Hofmann's Nurse's Testimony Expected, McCellin Collection Background</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>Near</td>
<td><strong>Rendell (Document Appraiser) Says Hofmann Documents are Forgeries</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td><strong>Bill Hofmann Says His Son is Innocent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td><strong>CFS to Close</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td><strong>Police Still Considering Filing Fraud and Forgery Charges Against Hofmann</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>On</td>
<td><strong>Hofmann Posts $250,000 Bail</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td><strong>Police Question Flynn (Hofmann Friend)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>Near</td>
<td><strong>Pinnock Repays Bank Hofmann Loan</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td><strong>Sacramento Bomb may be Tied to Salt Lake</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td><strong>Hofmann Agrees to Court Date on Firearms Charges</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>Near</td>
<td><strong>Polygraph Indicates Hofmann Innocent</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table Two
Days in Which Greatest Number of Editorial Violations Occurred ["Worst Days"] (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Number of Violations</th>
<th>Percent of Total Violations</th>
<th>On/Near/Not Near UPI Key-Event</th>
<th>Selected Events Descriptions (UPI Key-Events in Bold)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>On</td>
<td>Hofmann Home Searched, Evidence Found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Otis Traughber Identified as McLebin Collection Owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Traughber Subpoensed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>On</td>
<td>Hofmann's Bomb Workshop Found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>Near</td>
<td>Rust Testifies Before Grand Jury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Hofmann's Nurse Won't Have to Testify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Sheriff and Prosecutor Disagree Over Hofmann Case Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>Near</td>
<td>Police Report Enough Evidence to Press Charges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Tribune Reports on McLebin Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Hofmann Friends Say Accused Bomber is Innocent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Hofmann Also Suspected of Fraud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>On</td>
<td>Hofmann Charged with Illegal Gun Possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Pinnock Arranged for McLebin Collection Buyer, Still Waiting for Supreme Court Ruling on Nurse's Testimony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Jacobs (Hofmann Associate) Theorized to be Accomplice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Hofmann and Flynn Indicted on Firearms Charges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Policeman Talked with Hofmann Immediately After Bombing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, because of coding errors only two of the six were coded. Of the two stories coded, only one had violations that met the established criteria. The failure of study day 23, a UPI key event day, to not appear on the "worst days" list can be attributed to coding error.
In comparing violations of the three types of days key-event, near key-event and not near key-event, the first ten days on the "worst days" table all occur on or near UPI key-events. The highest ranking day on the "worst days" list, not occurring on or near a key-event, is number twelve corresponding to study day 49. Sixteen violations were agreed to by the professional reviewers as having occurred on this day. It is twelve days following a key-event, study day 37, and more than two months before the next one, study day 113. The second and third highest ranking study days, not occurring on or near key events, make up a tie at positions fourteen. Both study day 44, and study day 59 had 11 violations. Study 69 containing ten violations contained no key-event. It ties with study day 117 which was a key-event day. Only four of the top 15 "worst days" do not occur on or near a key event. Or, to express the corollary relationship, nearly seventy percent of the top 15 "worst days" of editorial violations in the Hofmann coverage occur on or near a UPI key event.

Finally, one other conclusion can be drawn. The stories examined were broadcast by KSL, KTVX and KUTV on 37 days over a period of seventeen weeks. Stories broadcast on days which contained the UPI key events resulted in 250 violations, which computes to an average of 29 editorial violations on a UPI key-event day. The average editorial rate for days that were not key-event or near key-event-days is 6. More editorial rules were violated on or near days when breaking events occurred than on the "normal" days in the study period.
Research Question Four

The fourth research question asked: If violations of the rules took place in key events stories, which rules were violated the most?

Table Three indicates the distribution of the rules violated on the UPI key event days. Two rules account for 75 percent of the total editorial violations. They are of these two rules, "drawing conclusions" and "colorful description." The largest category of violations is "drawing conclusions" with 47 percent. "Colorful descriptions" ranks second with 28 percent. Third ranked is "projecting attitudes and feelings" accounting for 12 percent of the editorial violations. Two remaining rules, "attribution" and "predictions," are close in percentage. "Attribution" violations account for nearly six percent of the violations and "predictions" account for nearly seven percent.

Table Three
Total Editorial Rule Violations on UPI Key-Event Days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Editorial Rule Violated</th>
<th>Number of Violations</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing Conclusions</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorful Descriptions</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projecting Attitudes and Feelings</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictions</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This pattern is similar to the types of rules violated in the overall study reported answered in research question two. Both Table One and Table Three indicate "drawing conclusions" was the most frequently violated rule.

**Research Question Five**

Research questions five states: If violations of the rules took place, were there differences between the types of rules violated on key event days and those violated on non-key event days?

Table Four reports the percentage of violations for each of the five rules in three categories. The three columns indicate rules violated on the key events days, near the key event days, and not near key-event days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Editorial Rule Violated</th>
<th>Key-Event Days</th>
<th>Near Key-Event Days</th>
<th>Not Near Key-Event Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing Conclusions</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorful Descriptions</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projecting Attitudes and Feelings</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictions</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Days</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With the exception of the "attribution" rule, the other percentages are very similar. "Attribution" violations increase on non-key event days as compared to key event days. Thus, some differences can be noted in the types of rules violated between key event and non-key event days.

**Research Question Six**

The sixth research question is: Did possible rule violations differ between key event days, those following key events days, and those Hofmann stories not occurring near a key event day?

This question closely resembles the third research question. Research question three asked, "are more, less, or about the same number of rules violated on a key event day compared to a non-key event day?" The answer concluded that more rules were violated on key-event days. All of the top ten worst violated days were either key event days or near one.

Beyond a simple comparison between key event and non key event days, research question six probes for any sudden rise in the frequency of violations over the 117 days. The thirty nine study days in which stories were broadcast that contain violations includes nine UPI key-event days, twelve near key-event days and eighteen not near them. Near key event days are defined as those occurring one or two days before or after a UPI key event. From the table of "Worst Days," the highest ranking days not occurring on or near a key-event include several that group in a pattern. This begins on study day 44 and ends on study day 52. This pattern can be
seen in Figure Two and Figure Three, representing weeks seven and eight of the study period.

During this nine day-period a rising pattern appears, although there is no UPI key-event day in close proximity (see Figures Two and Three). This is the most visible period of violations on the timeline chart in which no key-event occurs. Nine of the days in this period rank on the "Worst Days" list. They are study days 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, and 52. Those study days which are not part of this cluster group and are not near key events, all contain less than 11 violations per day. Table two indicates these "not near key-event" days individually account for less than two percent of the total violations in the study.

In conclusion, of the 39 study days, 21 occur on or near key event days. There seems to be a link between breaking key-events in the Hofmann coverage and the number of editorial violations contained in the stories broadcast on or near those days. The fact that more violations group around key events does not rule out the possibility that rule violations occur on days isolated from key events. It also did not indicate that all UPI key-event days contained numerous violations. Four UPI key-events rank on the "worst days" table with positions indicating fewer than ten violations per day. However, five UPI key-events occur during with the top ten of the "worst days" table and correspond to a minimum of 21 violations per days. Finally, the three days with the largest majority of violations, study day one, two and three, are all UPI key-event days and combined together account for over 25 percent of the total violations committed on all the 117 days in the study period.
Hofmann Coverage Week 7  
Nov 25-Dec 01, Study Days 42-48

# of Violations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>60</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mon | 1 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
Tue |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
Wed |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
Thu |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
Fri |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
Sat |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
Sun |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

- **Attributes**: Attribution, Colorful Description, Draw Conclusions, Project Attitudes

***Represents UPI Key Event Day***

**Figure Two**  
Editorial Rule Violations During Nine Day Period Without UPI Key-Events (Part 1)

Hofmann Coverage Week 8  
Dec 02-Dec 08, Study Days 49-55

# of Violations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>60</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mon | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
Tue |   |   |   |   |   |   |
Wed |   |   |   |   |   |   |
Thu |   |   |   |   |   |   |
Fri |   |   |   |   |   |   |
Sat |   |   |   |   |   |   |
Sun |   |   |   |   |   |   |

- **Attributes**: Draw Conclusions, Predictions, Colorful Description, Project Attitudes

***Represents UPI Key Event Day***

**Figure Three**  
Editorial Rule Violations During Nine Day Period Without UPI Key-Events (Part 2)
Research Question Seven

The final research question asked: Did any patterns emerge in the overall coverage related to the type of possible rules violations and the relationship of the frequency of their violation to a key event?

Seventy-eight of the 117 study days do not register any rules violations at the established level. Question seven focuses on the 39 days containing editorial violations. In these 39 days, what patterns emerged relating to the types of rules violated and what their proximity is to these study days and to the key event days? Additionally, question seven requires that comparisons be made between clusters in order to detect differences in the extent to which different rules were violated.

A visual examination of the "time-line charts" (Appendix A) reveals five distinct clusters. They are summarized in Table Five. Also noted are any key event days occurring within the cluster group. Table Five indicates all but one of the clusters is related to key events. Figures Four, Five, and Six display the timeline charts for the five clusters groups.

In two groups, clusters A and E, (see Figures Four, Five and Six) key events set the beginning and ending parameters of the cluster. Cluster A has a ten-day duration. It begins on study day one, a key event, and contains four additional key events in the middle of this eleven day period. It ends two days after a key event. This was the breaking week of the coverage. Figure Four and Figure Five correspond to the initial week of coverage. Stories referred to in figures four and five relate to the motive for the murders and the public reaction to them.
Table Five
Five Major Patterns of Editorial Violations
Clustering Around UPI Key-Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Study Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Initial reactions to bombings</td>
<td>1-11 (10/15-10/24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 UPI key events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Hofmann charged with possession of automatic weapon</td>
<td>17-18 (10/31-11/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 UPI key event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Police search home where bombs were believed to have been made</td>
<td>36-38 (11/19-11/21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 UPI key event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>McLellin collection/ Court considers medical privilege for Hofmann's nurse</td>
<td>44-52 (11/27-12/5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 UPI key events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Hofmann charged with murder and released on bail</td>
<td>113-117 (2/4-2/8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 UPI key events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hofmann Coverage Week 1
Oct 14-Oct 20, Study Days 1-6

![Graph showing violations over days](image)

Figure Four
Cluster A, Part I: Editorial Violations
During Initial Bombing Coverage
Figure Five  Cluster A, Part 2: Editorial Violations During Follow-up Coverage

Figure Six  Cluster E: Editorial Rule Violations During Final Coverage Week
Week eighteen (see Figure Six) is the final week of coverage. This cluster has a five-day duration. Although half the size of cluster A, it reveals a similar pattern of beginning and ending with a key event.

An examination of the types of rules violated during cluster group A and cluster group E, shows many similarities. In both, the dominate editorial violations are "drawing conclusions." There is a diverse mixture of the other four rules also being represented. These match a similar pattern to the over all study.

Two middle cluster groups, B and C (see Figures Seven and Eight), are smaller in length. Cluster group B lasts two days. Figure Seven reveals an increase of violations on study day 17 and a dramatic rise on study day 18. This is a clear example of a key event in study day 17 causing an increase in violations on the day of the event and following it. Study day 17 contains seven stories on the "Top 103" list. Six of the seven contain subject matter related to UPI's key event, "Hofmann charged with illegal gun possession."

Similar in structure to cluster group B is cluster group C, displayed in Figure Eight. It is short, occupying three days. However, the rules patterns of the two groups differ. Cluster group B contains major violations of rule two, "drawing conclusions." Cluster group C contains more equal distribution from each of four rules. Although there is a strong indication of rule two violations, it is not as dominate. Study day 38, the last day in cluster group C, contains twelve editorial violations. They are evenly dispersed between "attribution," "drawing conclusions," and "colorful descriptions."
Figure Seven  Cluster B: Editorial Rule Violations
Surrounding a UPI Key-Event

Figure Eight  Cluster C: Editorial Violations
Surrounding a UPI Key-Event
In contrast to all other clusters groups, the fourth cluster, D (see Figure Nine and Figure Ten), contains no UPI key events. Its duration of nine days is similar to clusters A and E. The rules which are violated are not dominated so much by the rule "drawing conclusions." During the nine days in this cluster, "drawing conclusions" is the most frequently violated on only three days. It ties for the most violations on a study day in this cluster on two occasions. Once with "colorful description" and once with "projecting attitudes and feelings." On three days other editorial rules are dominate. Twice "colorful description" dominates. "Predictions" leads the violations on study day number 49. This is also the highest ranked day on the "Worst Days" list that is not on or near a UPI key event.

In summary, five major cluster groups appear over the eighteen weeks of the present study. Two long clusters, A and E, begin and end the Hofmann coverage. The distribution of their rules violations is similar. Two smaller clusters, B and C, found in the middle of the study period, contain a different rule violation distribution. Each of these four clusters is linked to UPI key events. A fifth cluster, referred to as cluster D, has no relationship to UPI key events.
Figure Nine  Cluster D, Part 1: Editorial Rule  
Violations During Nine Day Period  
Without UPI Key-Events

Figure Ten  Cluster D, Part 2: Editorial Rule  
Violations During Nine Day Period  
Without UPI Key-Events
Chapter Five

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

The Hofmann data provided insight as to how strictly the three local Salt Lake City television news departments adhered to traditional journalistic tenets while covering an "on-going" story of extraordinary interest. This chapter will consider the findings of the study. Pertinent observations from the five professional reviewers who reviewed the student coders' work will be reviewed. Finally, any relationships between this study and a May 1985 pilot study will be discussed.

THREE QUERIES

To explore and explain the broad spectrum of relationships between the constructs in this study, the seven research questions were combined into a trio of basic queries. Research questions one and two deal with all of the Hofmann stories. Combining them together, Query A is formed. It reads, "What kind and to what degree were editorializing rules violated in coverage of the Hofmann stories?" Research questions three, four, five, and six focus on those Hofmann stories that occur on the UPI key-event days. These questions reveal any differences between the ten UPI key-event days and the 29 remaining days when Hofmann stories were broadcast.
These four research questions combined to form Query B. It reads, "Were more rules broken on UPI key-event days in the Hofmann coverage than elsewhere? Were there differences in the types of rules violated? Query C matches the seventh and final research question. It reads, "What overall editorial rule violation patterns emerge in the Hofmann coverage?"

Query A

As noted above, Query A asks, "What kind and to what degree were editorializing rules violated in coverage of the Hofmann stories? Serious editorial rule violations were broadcast in the Hofmann stories. One quarter of the Hofmann stories contained editorial violations. Many news practitioners and observers of the medium would state this level is far too great for an industry that espouses strict adherence to the traditional journalistic tenets.

Attribution Editorial Rule Violations

Unanticipated is the distribution of the editorial violations. Ten percent of the stories examined contain "attribution" violation. Many journalists who adhere to traditional journalistic codes would probably find this figure much too high. Others could argue in this highly complex series of stories, ten percent of them containing "attribution" violations does not brand the local news broadcasters as irresponsible. The failure to attribute is a common public criticism of television news. The researcher could suspect this would be the most frequently violated rule. This study
found that three of the five editorial rules were violated more frequently than "attribution."

The "attribution" rule simply meant that the script must attribute the facts to a source. When reporters failed to adhere to this tenet their violations ranged from vague, unnamed and disguised forms of attribution. The sentence "Kathy Sheet was killed by the bomb that was apparently intended for her husband" (KUTV, Case 9) has no directly named source; the reporter assumes the television viewer will concludes the police department is the unnamed source. Another such an example of a vague indication of a law enforcement source is found in this sentence, "The business was in serious financial trouble and it is thought that a disgruntled investor with the firm may be behind today's two murders." (KTVX, Case 175). An example of a disguised source is found in this sentence, "Other leaks to the media indicate there is no proof it is Hofmann's handwriting on the bomb packaging." (KSL, Case 620). A majority of the attribution violations were sentences where the reporter simply failed to attribute his facts and rarely were the terms "court sources" or "sources close to the story" used.

In the Hofmann coverage, a sensational murder case surrounding historical religious documents that turned out to be forgeries, is enough of a scenario to suspect numerous attribution violations, if for no other reasons than the sheer volume of potential sources. Yet, attribution violations were at a minimum level in the Hofmann coverage. Of the 425 Hofmann related stories reported by the stations, 103 of had serious editorial problems. Only nine percent of those problems were related to
attribution. For a majority of the coverage, the common public criticism, "the press makes things up" and "fails to attribute facts," is not present in the Hofmann coverage by the Salt Lake City television journalists. The data indicating nine percent "attribution" violations in the coverage does not mean the news reports were necessarily factually correct. Attribution is a stepping stone to accuracy in reporting. However, its mere presence does not validate the accuracy in the reporting of the facts. The present study made no attempt to examine accuracy. Whether the source was quoted correctly by the reporter, or ever consulted at all, are questions of accuracy and lie beyond the scope of this study.

**Drawing Conclusions Editorial Rule Violations**

Although the amount of "attribution" violation is less than this author first suspected, it comes as no major surprise. The number of "drawing conclusions" violations accounts for the largest share: 45 percent of the editorial rule violations. This correlates with a frequent public clamor against broadcast news. Clearly, in the Hofmann case, the public clamor is correct in noting that television news was guilty of "drawing conclusions."

Television reporters often are criticized for adding too much of their own opinion rather than just reporting the facts. Writing stories that draw conclusions is a violation of the traditional tenets. The SPJ code demands that "the writer's own conclusions and opinions" be labeled as such. Only in one instance in the Hofmann coverage did the television station label, through graphics on the screen, that the delivered report was commentary. Ironically, this "commentary" centered on the need
for the press not to jump to conclusions. It was broadcast Wednesday, October, 1985

the second day of the bombings.

More than any other crimes in memory, these bombings have given rise to speculation, theories and public guessing. (Reporter’s name) is with us right now with a comment on how these cases resemble a murder mystery and how they don’t.

The bombings seem more like something you would expect from Agatha Christie than from Salt Lake City. The crimes have spawned a bewildering profusion of clues and false leads, enough plausible theories to grace any respectable murder mystery. Remember yesterday? The theories revolved around high finance and big losses in the CFS company. There was dark talk of disgruntled investors, hired professional killers, and Las Vegas connections. Today the plot thickened. Theories have become more provocative, involving religious documents. Perhaps the case is connected to religion like the murders by the Lafferty Brothers, or Ervil LeBaron.

The press has rushed all day to bring you every development in an energetic police investigation. And now, just in time for the evening news, there is a suspect. But the rapidity with which things changed from yesterday should give us pause tonight. This isn’t a mystery story with a quick, clear, satisfying ending. We don’t know what happened; we shouldn’t jump to conclusions. And while the complications here are worthy of fiction, the grief and loss felt by families, the pain felt by the injured is all too real. Let us hope that it’s over. (KUTV, 10 pm newscast. October 16, 1985. Case 22)

This story recognized the pressure broadcast journalists face to meet the 6 pm deadline. The reporter notes the tendency to draw conclusions in a breaking news story and observes that the press had been guilty of a "rush to judgment" in the coverage of the initial day of the bombings.
Colorful Description Editorial Rule Violations

The second most frequently violated rule with 26 percent of the violations, "colorful descriptions," corresponds to another common criticism of broadcast news. In the race for ratings, the critics claim, television news often distorts and embellishes the facts or "hypes" the stories in order that they might "sell" better. The reason why certain rules, such as "drawing conclusions" and "colorful descriptions," were violated more frequently than others, such as "attribution," can be explained two ways. First, the nature of the Hofmann stories themselves setup reportorial situations prone to conclusion drawing and dramatic descriptions; second, the sophistication of the Salt Lake City television news market.

The full facts often were unknown as reporters covering the Hofmann stories met their broadcast deadlines. The sensational nature of the story involved murder and religion. The images, car bomb explosions and old letters describing white salamanders, were highly dramatic and visual. Law enforcement officials and defense lawyers often played their case in the public media arena. Television with its instant dramatic power was used to flush new clues or to influence various parties. As CBS Producer David Fitzpatrick, who served as a professional reviewer and who also produced a television report on the Hofmann bombings for "The CBS Evening News With Dan Rather" noted:

Remember in all of this, a half-dozen different law enforcement agencies are trying to play their case in the media while Hofmann’s lawyers are doing the same. 

Analysis

**Competitive Pressure.** The Hofmann story was the talk of the town. The competitive pressure to report something, anything, existed. People thirsted for information, any information, about the subject. Television news fed the appetite for information but in the tussle for competition, often abandoned in the coverage were traditional tenets of good journalism. The competitive factor, knowing the other station might have an exclusive new angle on the Hofmann story, further edged news writers into editorial areas they knew they should have avoided.

**Market Sophistication.** A second possible explanation for the violation of certain rules rather than others relates to the sophistication of the Salt Lake City news market. This explains in part why "attribution" was the least violated rule and "drawing conclusions" the most frequent. Historically, the local television news profession requires the novice reporter to "pay his dues" in smaller towns and then "move up" to the large cities. The profession assumes that as the reporter gains experience the basic principles of quality television news, like attribution, are molded into the news person. "Attribution" is a practice of the craft insisted upon by educators from whom the reporter learns his craft. He practices the principle as he begins his professional career. It is similar to a doctor coming out of medical school or a lawyer beginning his practice. The fundamentals have been learned, but only experience and time increase their performance. Similarly, the news novice learns the tenets of the trade in journalism school and puts them into practice as he starts out in the small market.
Salt Lake City is a sophisticated television news market. The broadcast industry ranks it as the 42nd largest market in the country. Television news practitioners often quip "I've made it" when they obtain a position in a station in one of the top 50 television news markets. Salt Lake City's rank of 42, according to some industry observers, is deceiving. Staff size and the amount of money budgeted for the news departments compares to major markets that rank much higher. This author has heard many television news professionals say that Salt Lake City broadcasts a news product as good as those stations in the top ten news markets.

The news product produced by Salt Lake City stations has garnered national recognition. Prestigious awards have come to all three stations. Both KTVX and KUTV have won regional Emmy awards for their news coverage. KSL, twice was awarded the most outstanding local television news operation in the country by the Radio-Television News Director's Association.

Salt Lake City's market size and sophistication help explain why "attribution" rules were the least violated in the Hofmann coverage. By the time reporters worked their way up to Salt Lake City from smaller markets, the standard of always attributing facts has become second nature to them. It is an experience level that is required by news writers to work and thrive in the competitive 42nd market. This experience level not only explains the small number of "attribution" violations, but also the high number of "drawing conclusions" violations.

Network Archetype. Traditionally, local news reporters take their cues from the networks. One explanation for the tendency of television news people who compete in
local news settings to "draw conclusions," could be due much in part to the examples set by their network counterparts. Network newspeople practice a more subtle, sophisticated style of editorializing in their broadcast reports. Sometimes its been "groomed" into them by their agents and news consultants wanting the reporters to appear more knowledgeable. Sometimes this unlabeled editorializing is deliberate.

This practice of "drawing conclusions" exemplified in network news can be illustrated as follows. One of the most visible network beats is the White House. The reporters as well as the audience, have come to expect a White House reporter to tell us what "really is going on" inside the Oval office. The control of the television news, pre-selected photo opportunities, speech writers creating sentences for their ability to become good "soundbites" -- exemplified by the Reagan White House -- forced reporters, most notably, Sam Donaldson to often conclude a live report with his opinion of what was "really going on." Over time, these opinions, never labeled as such, became the norm. This is despite the fact that they clearly violate the traditional codes of journalism espoused by SPJ and RTNDA and supported by the networks. Although this has become a common practice for some correspondents, it would be incorrect to paint all networks and their distinctly individual reporters with a broad brush. Yet, as CBS reporter Charles Kuralt has observed about television news, "This is a notoriously copycat kind of business. If something works in one community, you
can be sure other communities will try it tomorrow. Maybe they will try journalism for a change."

The network practice of editorializing is often duplicated in local television news markets. The subculture sustains this practice. For the local newsperson the ultimate career goal often is to work for the network. Network news practitioners represent superior power, more financial reward, and national recognition; all factors attractive to a reporter’s ego. A common view in the local news environment is that networks perform their broadcast journalism functions with superiority. Hence, there is a clear attraction and strong desire to copy the performance and practice of network TV news. For some traditionalists, the examples of some network and national news broadcasting outlets should be shunned rather than copied. Clear examples of reporter’s drawing conclusions are evident in the Hofmann coverage. This author believes that the examples of network news practice, related to the professional codes, had a subtle yet profound influence on the news people covering these stories.

Query A Summary

Nearly one fourth of the Hofmann stories contained editorial violations. A large amount of editorializing took place when news writers drew conclusions and added colorful description to their reports of the Hofmann events. Surprisingly, they rarely failed to attribute their facts to a source. The accuracy of the attribution was beyond the scope of this study. An explanation as to why certain rules were violated

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more than others include the nature of the Hofmann stories themselves and the sophistication of the Salt Lake news market. A third factor was competition present in the local news performance, yet its specific measurement is beyond the scope of the present study. Similarly, two other factors, station ownership and any individual reporter’s prejudices against the Mormon Church, are likewise beyond the scope of the present study.

This study has treated the three Salt Lake City stations collectively as one body of performance. The purpose of this study was not to test individual station performance under deadline pressure. It seeks answers to the adherence of the entire group of local television news practitioners to traditional journalism tenets. It is interesting to note, however, that of the "Top 103" set of stories containing editorial problems, the professional reviewers found 58 percent of the violations were made by station A, 32 percent by station B, and nine percent by station C. It is important to point out that the reviewers found examples of serious violations of the traditional tenets by each station.

Query B

Query B asks, "Are more rules broken during key events in the Hofmann coverage than elsewhere? What kinds of rules are broken on key-event days compared to non-key event days?" To respond to the second portion of this query, it is useful to reiterate the nature of a major on-going story.
**Ebb and Flow Pattern**

No specific criteria exists, no rules are listed, for what will be a major television news story and what will not. News by its nature is volatile. Sometimes an investigative type of story, such as the Iran-Contra scandal or Watergate, develops into a major on-going story. More often however, on-going stories key off of a spot news event. The Iran-hostage crisis exemplifies this. It is the nature of any on-going story, whether it originates from a spot news event or a lengthy investigation, to have a rise and fall, ebb and flow pattern of coverage over time. San Francisco’s October 1989 earthquake serves as a striking example.

What began as a breaking spot news story of a devastating earthquake with hours of live network coverage rising to the top of the newscasts, fell within two or three days to a less prominent position, as it settled into a routine story. The after shocks and the resulting damage were still present, especially to those living in America’s fourth largest city. Yet, as is the nature of news, after a few days the story’s interest level dropped and the gatekeepers, the producers and network news decision makers, pulled their anchormen from the "on location" live reporting back to studios in New York. The quake was old news but it did not disappear entirely from the nightly 22 minutes. Coverage of the quake would rise and fall, ebb and flow as new developments unfolded. The miraculous discovery of a live survivor of a collapsed highway, or bad weather hampering commuters, and cleanup efforts, would suddenly put the story once again in the forefront.
In the process of refining the rules for this study, from the initial pilot project in 1985, ten professional opinions were sought. One of those came from Paul Baldridge Executive Producer for KOVR-TV in Sacramento, California. Excerpts from his letter further illustrate this "ebb and flow" concept.

Today’s murder and tomorrow’s arraignment may make the news but next week’s innocent plea won’t be reported because another homicide or earthquake will have pushed interest in the previous crime to the level of insignificance.3

In the subject matter of this study, murder and forged documents, the ebb and flow pattern in the coverage is clearly found.

Ebb and Flow Pattern in Hofmann Coverage. Illustrated in Appendix A are the coverage patterns of the Hofmann on-going story. The ten key events depicted over time, display the coverage according to subject matter. The bar graphs on the chart indicate the rise and fall of the amount of violations according to the established rules. What is highly significant in the findings is how closely paralleled the frequency of rules violations are to UPI key-events in the coverage. Table Two revealed a strong pattern relating to UPI key-events. Nine of the top ten worst days occurred on either a key day or within a day or two. There is a preponderance of support that more rules were broken on UPI key-event days than non key-event days except in three instances.

One major exception to this finding is the ebb and flow pattern that begins with study day 43 and continues until day 52. In this cluster group number four, no UPI

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3Paul Baldridge, letter to Dr. R. Irwin Goodman, 17 January 1986, Brigham Young University Communications Research Center.
key event occurs. These nine days include the twelfth ranked worst day of the period, study day 49. What happened during these nine days that caused the rules violations to rise? Why is there not a key event within this period? Some answers can be gleaned from reviewing the violated stories between study day 43 and study day 52. This has been identified as Cluster D, Figure 9 and 10.

Twelve stories broadcast during this cluster group contained sufficient violations to include them in the "Top 103" list. Five of the twelve stories subject matter centers on the McLellin collection, a series of alleged historical documents potentially damaging to the LDS Church. UPI listed the McLellin collection as a secondary portion of their description of the 5th key event, the October 23, 1985 LDS Church press conference. UPI wrote, "Hugh W. Pinnock admitted he helped arranged a $185,000 loan for Hofmann for the purchase of the so called McLellin collection."

References to the McLellin collection were contained in numerous stories as a potential motive for murder. One explanation as to why this never became a primary key event is because it was not an event, an act, or an occurrence such as a car bombing or a press conference. It was a motive. Even though Hofmann claimed the McLellin Collection was in his possession, it was an intangible since its existence was never proved. Although always present in the background of many stories, the McLellin Collection was clearly never tied to a single date. Hence, it can be understood why the UPI editor, compiling a chronology of key events, might overlook its inclusion.

Of the remaining seven stories in this cluster, three are unrelated to each other but four deal with two separate subject matters. Two center on a Supreme Court
ruling, as to whether the police could question Hofmann's hospital room nurse who was present when he conferred with his attorney. Several stories related to this occurrence appear in the nine cluster. Only two of the stories contained violation sufficient to rank on the "Top 103" list. Two stories found to contain violations on study day 49, the highest ranking non-UPI key event day, dealt with coverage of a panel discussion between attorneys, law enforcement officials, and the press, about the Hofmann case.

An interview segment with a law official on KUTV's 10 pm newscast reveals much about the nature of the news environment during the Hofmann coverage from a public official's perspective:

I think the press has been the victim of sort of Hofmann mania, where they want to have a story every single day. It doesn't matter whether there's a new angle or a new substance. There's just a whole lot that's been in the press that I don't think should have been there. To be quite truthful with you, most of the departments leak like a sieve, and most of the people out there want to talk about this thing. (KUTV, December 2, 1985. 10 pm newscast. Case 150)

In KSL's report on the panel discussion of the Hofmann case, the reporter emphasized the challenging situation reporters experienced in the first two days of the Hofmann coverage. KSL called the period the media's Hofmann mania. One interview segment of the panel discussion, which KSL selected to include in its story, came from a reporter defending the media's performance:

To identify someone as a prime suspect is in a sense to give an opinion as to the guilt or innocence of a person.... You cannot expect a reporter not to accurately quote a law enforcement official, say the highest law enforcement official in Salt Lake City, when that person is making statements, even if they are inappropriate statements. The reporter's gonna print that and probably should. We're unfortunately
very competitive. And if somebody has something the other media want (they want) to have it also. (KSL, December 2, 1986. 6 pm newscast. Case 479)

This media and law panel discussion reflected much on the interplay between the press and the media in a murder investigation.

**Ebb and Flow Summary.** Two reasons emerge as to why the nine-day period does not contain a UPI key-event. First, UPI failed to recognize the Supreme Court ruling that the nurse did not have to testify what she heard in Hofmann’s hospital room as significant enough to warrant inclusion on their summary of key events. Second, a series of smaller stories, the McLellin collection, the Supreme Court ruling about the nurse’s testimony, and the panel discussion, all contain violations, yet none was large enough to make a significant impression in the UPI editor’s mind. To return to the ebb and flow analogy, during this period of coverage, the argument can be made that a series of stories swirled around and around, as if they were in a tide pool, fascinating to look at in detail, but overall not significant enough to make a big splash.

**Distinctions in Editorial Rule Violations**

The first part of query B seeks to understand the number of rules violations in relations to the ebb and flow, the key events, in this on-going story. The major finding is that more rules violations occurred on UPI key-event days. The second part of the query is concerned with the types of the editorial rules violated.

The findings revealed there are no differences between the rules violated on key-event days and on non-key-event days in examining four of the five rules. For
example, the highest violated rule "drawing conclusions," is virtually unchanged whether the study day is a key event or not. The same is true for the smallest amount of violations, rule four, "predictions."

**Attribution and UPI Key-Events.** Perhaps the most striking difference between UPI and non-UPI key-event days in the types of violations committed by reporters occurs in the area of "attribution." On key event days it accounts for nearly five percent of the violations. However, it climbs to thirteen percent on non-key event days. The nature of the key event story can help explain this.

Key events are triggered by an action. They are a tangible action occurring on a specific date. To use UPI's Hofmann list as an example, either a bomb exploded, a visible action took place, or court ruling was handed down, an invisible action. Although the newsperson would not show video in his report of the grand jury indictment or county attorney charges, they still are "acts" that took place and can be reported. All the ten UPI key events were such acts as reviewed in the following summary.

UPI key-events one and two were the explosions of pipe bombs that killed Steve Christensen and Kathleen Sheets and injured Mark Hofmann. UPI key-event three was the police naming of Hofmann as their prime suspect. Detective searches at the Hofmann's home is the fourth UPI key-event. UPI key-event five was the LDS Church press conference. Legal charges describe the next two UPI key-events. The sixth was a federal firearms charge against Hofmann and the seventh were grand jury indictments on firearms charges. The eighth UPI key-event was the search of a home
suspected of being the bomb factory. The final two UPI key-events, nine and ten, were the formal murder charges and the posting of bail by Mark Hofmann.

Attribution is clear and precise in reporting such spot news and action stories. When reporters covering the Hofmann case, branched away from event-oriented stories and entered the genres of background, sidebar, or speculation stories, the amount of attribution violation increased. Typically, the violations rise for two reasons. One, the sources for many such stories wanted to remain hidden or "off the record." Two, the reporter is on "soft ground" writing about opinions, hunches, and ideas that are not clear, concise acts.

An example of a story with high attribution violation occurring on or near a key event is found on study day 38, Thursday, November 21, 1985. This story relates to UPI's key-event where police searched a home in Emigration Canyon, outside of Salt Lake City, and identified it as the factory where Hofmann made the bombs. The example selected on study-day 38 is unrelated to the next day's key event, yet it is related to a previous key event, the grand jury investigation. This is illustrative of the nature of an on-going story where throughout the study period references and new insights are made with respect to previous events. On study day 23, November 6, 1985, UPI cited as a key event the grand jury indictment of Hofmann on federal firearms charges. Fifteen days later, Thursday November 21, 1985 a story was broadcast with high attribution violation.

By law Grand Jury proceedings are closed to the public and the media. But we do know ... the Jury's first day of investigating the Salt Lake bombings has centered around Mark Hofmann...the man police have called their prime suspect. The jury called several witnesses today to find out more
about Hofmann's dealings with rare Mormon documents. (KUTV, November 21, 1985. 6pm newscast. Case 558)

One of the reviewers, Brink Chipman, a local News Director at KVOA in Tucson, Arizona commented on his evaluation, "How do they know?" Elmer Lower, retired ABC Network News President asked in relation to this sentence, "What is the source?" An example of a story with high attribution violation occurring nowhere near a UPI key event day is found on day 69, Sunday, December 22, 1985. The story is known in broadcast news as a "follow-up." A "follow-up" story reports on a previously broadcast report updating the audience on any new developments. There were numerous "follow-up" stories in the Hofmann coverage as there are in any on-going story. The problem sentence needing attribution reads:

(Reporter's Name) reports....many of those who've provided key information in the case have changed their minds about Hofmann's involvement...and do not believe he is guilty of the crimes. (KTVX, December 22, 1985. 10 pm newscast. Case 600)

One unique discovery of this study is the increase in attribution violations on non-key-event days. Only in the case of "attribution" does the number of violations rise from key-event to non-key event days.

Other Editorial Rules and UPI Key-Events. In addition to attribution, two other rules reveal a frequency of violations strikingly different between UPI key event days and non-key days. They are rule three, "colorful descriptions" and rule five, "projecting attitudes and feelings." A rise in these rules on key event days can be explained by the intense pressure of covering breaking stories. The nature of such days, with reporters fighting the clock to obtain all of the facts while worrying about
the competing stations having something they do not, contributes to these types of rules violations. When facts were unknown, broadcast newspeople in the Hofmann coverage were guilty of projecting an attitude. Latitudes with language were often taken as the reporters described the events in colorful terms.

**Query B Summary**

In summary for query B, Salt Lake City television stations committed many more violations covering the key-event stories than the non-key-event stories. The largest type of violations does not change between key-event or non-key-event days. However, there is a difference in attribution violations. More violations were committed on non-key days than key days. Differences in the types of story's help explain this rise on non-key days. Key days contained action events with easy attribution. Non-key event days often contained reports that were background, speculative or investigative in nature, where attribution standards were not as closely adhered to by the local television journalists.

This author believes internal and external newsroom pressures contribute the increase of attribution violations on non-key event days. During the entire eighteen weeks of this coverage period, each station and its reporters felt a competitive drive to come up with new, fresh angles to the story. On days when no UPI key-event related to Hofmann occurred, when there was no action story with clear events around which to build a television news story, the reporters had to "dig out" new angles and facts. To do this they chose investigative or speculative reporting styles. These genres often involve background and off-the-record sources. Hence, the increase in attribution
violations can more easily occur. Sometimes the attribution deliberately is left out of a story to protect the source or prevent the competing media from also reporting the source. Ironically, it is on the "slow days" when the time pressure factors are not a concern, that these attribution violations occurred. Competition, the desire to scoop the opposing station with a new or fresh angle on an on-going story, could have played a factor in prompting the reporter to violate this traditional tenet.

**Query C**

The final query in the discussion of the findings centers on overall patterns in the coverage. It reads, "What overall editorial rule violation patterns emerge in the Hofmann coverage?" As noted in Chapter Four, there are five clusters, four of which group around UPI key-events. A fifth does not. As discussed earlier in this chapter, two reasons emerge as to why the nine-day period beginning with day 43 has high violations and not a UPI key event.

**Editorial Rule Violation Clusters with No UPI Key-Events**

First, UPI failed to recognize stories about the nurse’s testimony as sufficient to warrant a key point in their history of the coverage. Second, a series of less significant stories, the McLellin collection, the nurse’s testimony, the panel discussion, contained no clear action. Either of these factors may have been the reason why the UPI editor excluded them from the wire service’s chronology.

It is easy to understand why UPI might have overlooked key events in this cluster group. Only one was tied to a specific date, the panel discussion. The other
two stories, the nurse's testimony and the McLellin collection, had been on-going in the background for many weeks. There is no clear day when an action occurred related to the nurse's testimony. The closest is study day 52, Thursday, December, 5 1985, when the Supreme Court ruled the nurse would not have to testify. This event climaxed a series of stories about the nurse that began as early as study day four, Friday, October 18. The nurse's testimony was a story that ebbed and flowed throughout the eighteen weeks of Hofmann coverage. It appeared and reappeared and finally disappeared as the court ruled. For whatever reason, UPI did not selected this as a key event.

In a similar way, UPI did not selected stories related to the McLellin collection as a specific key event. The wire service lists it in the description of their key event on October 23, 1985. However, it is only mentioned as secondary information related to the main event of this day, the LDS Church press conference. Like the nurse stories, the McLellin collection was never in front of the television camera's eye. The nurse's alleged interference with police, as Hofmann wanted to make a confession when hospitalized, was only reported through interviews with the defense attorney. Later, it would reach court document status but it was never a visual element with the impact of a bombed car, or LDS Church leaders appearing before an unprecedented press conference. Likewise, the McLellin collection was a set of historic documents allegedly located by Hofmann, yet they could not be photographed.
UPI Key-Events and Visual Images

It is unknown what criteria UPI used in their selection of key events. Certainly, the editor was influenced by the television images he remembered of the story as he compiled the events. This compilation was released through the wire service on September 16, 1988, nearly three years after the events. Clearly what was compiled was focused towards events that occurred on specific days. However, a secondary consideration in the criteria of the compiler would be the images that were recalled.

The stories broadcast during this cluster period do not have strong, compelling images. They did not lend themselves easily to television. They lacked dramatic video elements, so crucial in producing a television news report. If UPI had recognized the nurse story or the McLellin collection stories as key events and listed them during this nine-day period, then all five of the clusters groups would occur around key events.

It is important to point out that the key-event standard, the UPI summary of the significant developments in the Hofmann coverage, is not without some omissions. Important developments in the Hofmann case, such as the arrest of Shannon Flynn as a bombing suspect Saturday, October 19, study day 5, or Mark Hofmann passing a lie detector test announced on Thursday, November 19, 1985, study day 36, were not found in the wire service's chronology. History, like reporting, is subjective to the writer or editor describing the events.
Query C Summary

Despite any UPI shortcomings, the evidence is clear from the overall patterns, that higher editorializing took place on the major event days of the Hofmann coverage. An increase in the amount of stories on these days could account for the increase in violations. The overwhelming evidence, however, seems to indicate that the television journalists made more mistakes on these major days than on the less important days of this on-going story. Some possible reasons for why more violation occurred on UPI key-event days include time pressure factors, competitive factors and the gate keeping processes at work.

PROFESSIONAL REVIEWERS' OBSERVATIONS

The professional reviewers noted the need for more active gate keepers, specifically more copy editing. In a television newsroom the copy editing function can be performed by persons holding various titles. In the case of the three Salt Lake City newsrooms those titles were Executive Producers at KUTV and KTVX. At KSL the function was performed by a Managing Editor. Sometimes the News Director will take on a copy editing role, especially on hectic days when all the staff is needed to cover breaking stories.

The first line gatekeeper in any television news setting is the producer who is responsible for the content of the newscast. Sometimes, especially on tense days such as those that took place in the Hofmann coverage, the producer does not review each story before it airs. That function is left to his superiors, if it happens at all. It might
I have to believe I found the reporting on the Hofmann case not terribly out of bounds with basic sound reporting. To be sure, there were some wild instances of attribution being absent or theories thrown around with no basis in fact. But the entirety of the reporting I read seems to be pretty decent. There's nothing like a good, tough editor.

As reviewers returned their evaluations, they noted the lack of good copy editing in the Hofmann coverage. Elmer Lower, former President of ABC News wrote:

I found this an interesting assignment, but a lot of work.

I do not have a very high opinion of the "journalists" on Salt Lake City television stations. All of them need a good copyreader to review their copy before it goes on the air.¹

Sharing Lower's conclusions for the need of copy editing is the other network reviewer, Dave Fitzpatrick, producer with the "CBS Evening News With Dan Rather."

I have to believe I found the reporting on the Hofmann case not terribly out of bounds with basic sound reporting. To be sure, there were some wild instances of attribution being absent or theories thrown around with no basis in fact. But the entirety of the reporting I read seems to be pretty decent. There's nothing like a good, tough editor,

however and that’s what seems to be missing from some of the copy I read.\footnote{David Fitzpatrick, letters to author, 16 June 1987.}

Each of the five reviewers returned their material with comments on individual stories as well as the overall study. Fitzpatrick reacted to the overall study’s editorial rules. Below are highlights from his observations. On the attribution rule, Fitzpatrick observes:

Of this particular rule attribution -- your checkers have done a good job of point out what seems to be broadly based errors of omission. In my view, a basic word or two would have cleared up most of these problems for me. Case 9 for example: "Kathy Sheets was killed, police say, by the bomb investigators believe was apparently intended for her husband Gary. That would have been the more correct way of handling this sentence. Overall, the reporter’s work...is pretty good but sloppy in many cases. The use of the words "other people" in your highlighted Case 142 is terrible. In Case 586 a sentence that reads: "The case against Mark Hofmann is circumstantial" is wildly out of bounds in my opinion. "Defense attorneys categorize the case against...etc, etc." is the farthest I would go on this.\footnote{David Fitzpatrick, letter to author, 8 June 8, 1987.}

Fitzpatrick’s observations on the "Drawing Conclusions Rule" shows a basic disagreement with the coders.

This particular section seems to suffer from the heavy pencil of a zealous checker. Most of the numbers I wrote down are “2s” because I disagree with the checker’s judgement. Some of the items I did agree with, again, seem to cry out for better editing and script supervision.\footnote{David Fitzpatrick, letter to Author, 15 June 1987.}

On rule three, "Colorful Descriptions," Fitzpatrick found he agreed with the coders much of the time.
On rule 3, I came down, I suspect, more on the side of your checkers than on the journalists. Wild adverbs, adjectives and verbs are the worst kinds of things to catch...they are let through on the basis of good writing when they of course are examples of bad writing and are the things that tend to make viewers and listeners distrust newscasts. The flaws cited here, especially some real beauts, remind me of the nursery rhyme: When they were good, they were very good ... but when they were bad, they were horrid. A man "operating on the verge of frenzy ..." What in the world could that possibly mean to those who heard and saw it?*

For the "Predictions" rule, Fitzpatrick found the coders too strict.

In most of the cases, I came down on the side of the reporter. The sentences ticked off by your checkers are mostly bland and I believe it's the job of the reporter to say for example: "The defense will argue," That information is valuable and not, in my view, prejudicial to anything. A few cases seem to cry out for simple tight editing. "The real motive," a reporter says, "will become known as investigators sift, etc." A simple attribution could have solved that: "The real motive, one police investigator said, will only become ...." That takes the onus off the reporter and onto where it belongs, a public official. I am always leery of language by a reporter that says investigators are "convinced" that such and such is true, or that such and such will happen. The only outrageous example of terrible reporting and editorializing I came upon in this packet was the sentence where the reporter concluded, "... the persecution of Mark Hofmann will continue." If that reporter had been on my staff, he wouldn't have been the next day.  

The fifth and final rule, "Projecting Feelings," was for Fitzpatrick the most unfair.

This particular batch is the one that gave me the most problem--in agreeing with your checkers, that is. By and large, they seemed to take a far too literal interpretation of the overall rule about editorializing with regards to somebody's beliefs. At least two dozen sentences were marked because the sentence read: "Police believe or prosecutors

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*Fitzpatrick, 8 June 1987.
believe". Those are common, accepted broadcast journalism sentences and at CBS News, we would have no problem with them. Your checkers seem to be too zealous highlighting almost routine sentences: "Police hope that..." Well, of course police hope they will find out what happened. It's perhaps not exceptionally wonderful writing but it doesn't meet the test of your rule.¹⁰

In addition to Lower and Fitzpatrick, pertinent observations on the study were also received by Brink Chipman. His insights will be shared in the recommendations for future studies chapter.

PILOT STUDY COMPARISON

As noted in the introduction to Chapter One, this study's genesis is a May 1985 pilot project conducted by the Communications Research Center at Brigham Young University. The methodology used in the pilot project was similar to the one in this Hofmann study with some notable exceptions.

The May 1985 Pilot Study had coders evaluate transcripts of newscasts according to a set of editorial rules devised by a faculty committee. The chief finding of this pilot study was that overall there was a high level of editorial violations.

Perhaps the most significant result of the study is the overall high level of editorializing in television news—both local and network. The local stations combined for a total 19.4 percent editorial rate. And the commercial networks, albeit with a much smaller sample, were even higher with almost one sentence in four judged editorial.¹¹


If the two studies' findings, 19.5 percent editorializing in the pilot project and 24 percent in the Hofmann study, can be compared at all then this data elicits an important concept. Namely, greater editorializing occurs in the coverage of breaking on-going stories compared to a period of time that includes the entire spectrum of stories. The difference would be even greater between the editorial rate of the pilot study and Hofmann study if only coders did the evaluations. As the letters from judge Dave Fitzpatrick observed, in his opinion, student coders were overzealous in what they marked as violations. If only coders had evaluated the Hofmann material, it is obvious the percentage of stories containing violations reported in this study would be larger. Hence, it is highly probable the overall editorial rate would have been higher between the Hofmann coverage and the pilot study.

There are some fundamental differences between the studies that makes such a comparison circumspect. First, the Pilot Study occurred over a two-week period, Hofmann took place over eighteen weeks. The studies occurred at different times of the year, May and November respectively. By far the most critical difference deals with the coding process itself. The potential of a discrepancy between coders in an academic environment and those professionals in the work place is exactly what the Hofmann study hoped to eliminate. Before any stories have been labeled as containing editorial violations in this study, coders first identified them and then a majority of professional reviewers had to agree with their evaluations. This process was used for two reasons.
First, fatigue and novice factors can bias any coding done by coders no matter how well trained they are. Second, one of the purposes of this study was to further test the editorial rules. The professionals who evaluated this work offered some valuable opinions on the rules themselves that can help in future studies.

The rule definitions are the most obvious clear difference between the 1985 Pilot project and the present study. The guidelines given coders were modified several times during the pilot study. The rules were never modified in this study. After the pilot project’s release at the 1985 educators’ meeting at the annual RTNDA convention, the rules were sent to ten professional television journalists across the country. The input from these ten professionals helped generate the modified set of coding rules used in the present study.

Although similar in intent, the difference in the rules coupled with the two levels of coding makes any significant comparison between the pilot study and the Hofmann study circumspect. The only valid comparison that can be made is that the pilot study showed nearly 20 percent of the stories had editorial violations according to one set of rules and the Hofmann study found 24 percent of the stories contained violations according to its own editorial rules.

12Ibid., p. 6.
Chapter Six

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

The broad traditional tenets of objectivity, fairness and the elimination of bias were operationalized into seven editorial rules which were modified to five rules for purposes of reporting. These editorial rules are "attribution," "drawing conclusions," "colorful description," "predictions" and "projecting attitudes and feelings."

Transcriptions were made of news reports related to the Hofmann case broadcast by KSL, Channel 5, KTVX, Channel 4 and KUTV, Channel 2 on their early and late evening newscasts, seven days a week from October 12, 1985, through January 8, 1986. During these seventeen weeks 425 Hofmann stories were broadcast. Initially coded by the staff of the Brigham Young University Communications Research Center using the set of editorial rules, five professional newspeople reviewed the initial coding. These professional reviewers on a Likert type scale marked their level of agreement that editorial violations, according to the rules, indeed transpired.

One hundred-three Hofmann stories were found to contain at least one editorial violation agreed or strongly agreed to by at least three of the five professional reviewers. This set of 103 stories was analyzed. The findings of this analysis and the
review process undertaken resulted in the following conclusions. Seven distinct conclusions can be reached from the study of the local Salt Lake City television news coverage of the Mark Hofmann bombings related to the adherence to the traditional tenets of good journalism.

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSION ONE: Local television journalists in the Salt Lake City market violated traditional editorial rules, as defined in this study, in their coverage of the Mark Hofmann bombings in 24 percent of their reports.

CONCLUSION TWO: The editorial rule violations were greater on the nine UPI key-event days during the study period than on non-UPI key-event days. The average editorial violation rate on UPI key-event days was 28 a day compared to a rate of seven violations a day on days not on or near key-events. One explanation for the increase in editorializing on key-event days relates to time pressure in the newsroom on these days. Major event stories consume the attention of the news managers, the editors and the producers. Less of their time is available to perform their proofreading functions. While these gatekeepers are focusing on other elements of the newscast the reporter is left to write a difficult, complex story by himself under deadline pressure. Less time to write and edit, coupled with a breakdown in the editing of the news copy, can result in an increase of editorial violations.

CONCLUSION THREE: "Drawing conclusions" was the category of editorial rules violated most frequently. "Colorful descriptions" accounted for the
second most frequent violations. These two rules ranked as the highest on both UPI key event and non-key event days. The sophistication of the news reporters in the Salt Lake City market, following the practice of some network reporters to include their own opinions and draw conclusions about the events, is one possible explanation for "drawing conclusions" violations to be the highest. The amount of "colorful description" violations could be the result of some reporters writing style of using "wild adverbs, adjectives and verbs" to communicate the facts. This writing style is at odds with traditional journalistic tenets.

CONCLUSION FOUR: A comparison of the types of rules violated on UPI key days and non-key days show similar violation rates in connection with four rules; "drawing conclusions," "colorful descriptions," "predictions," "projecting attitudes and feelings." On the other hand, the editorial rule "attribution" accounted for 5.6 percent of the violations on UPI key-event days and 13.1 percent on days not on or near key events.

CONCLUSION FIVE: "Attribution" violations appeared to be greater on non-key-event days then on UPI key-event days. The nature of stories on non-key-event days being investigative, background, or of speculative genre, is one possible explanation for the increase in "attribution" violations on non-key days.

CONCLUSION SIX: A clear ebb-and-flow pattern in the violations can be viewed on the timeline charts depicting the 117 days of coverage. Higher frequencies of editorial violations cluster in distinct patterns around UPI key events in the Hofmann coverage.
CONCLUSION SEVEN: Two of the five professional reviewers cited poor editing -- a breakdown in the gate keeping function in television news writing -- as a chief reason for the number of editorial violations in the Hofmann stories. Lower and Fitzpatrick believed many of the editorial mistakes made would have been eliminated had stiffer, stronger copy editing taken place.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

The material gathered by the Communications Research Center and this author on the local television news coverage of the Mark Hofmann bombings is data rich. In the process of this study numerous ideas emerged for future studies within the same data set. The topic is ripe for exploration and study by the communications researcher.

A descriptive study on the competitive nature of local television news could be undertaken to reveal which station violated the most rules in the Hofmann coverage. Details could be factored out to discover why the violations took place to the degree that they did. Does an anti-Mormon bias exist at KUTV or KTVX? Does a Pro-Mormon bias exists at KSL, owned by Bonneville International Communications which is owned by the LDS Church? Through a method involving personal interviews with the reporters, producers and news managers such a descriptive study would reveal any real or perceived biases that were present in the news environments and transferred in the on-the-air broadcast Hofmann stories.
The influence of ownership could be explored. The Hofmann stories center on the historical beliefs of the LDS Church. What part did ownership play in influencing how KSL covered the Hofmann stories? Through personal interviews with both newsroom employees, station owners, and Church leaders one could determine what if any influence the owner of the station, in this case the LDS Church, had on the outcome of the news report broadcast on its station.

A descriptive performance study of the three stations would shed light on the competition factor present in local television news. Did the station that was first to broadcast a development in a story violate more or fewer rules than then ones who broadcast it later? How does "beating the competition" correlate with editorial performance? In the rush to beat the competition are more rules violated?

Checking on the validity of the prestigious RTNDA Edward R. Murrow award would be an additional study. KSL won this award twice. Did they consistently follow the traditional tenets upheld by RTNDA and exemplified by Edward R. Murrow?

Numerous additional studies could be undertaken to shed light on the reportorial and gate keeping processes at work in local television news. Interviews with the three main gatekeepers, Ernie Ford, KSL Managing Editor, Ron Harig, KTVX Executive Producer, and Bill Lord, KUTV Executive Producer, would reveal how closely the copy was reviewed before airing. All three of these broadcasters work now in different markets and therefore could be free of job related bias to speak openly, in retrospect, about how the news gathering process on-going story took place.
Such a study would confirm or disprove the theory of two of the five professional reviewers evaluating this study that the major cause of mistakes was due a breakdown in the gate keeping process.

Do distinct types of news reports result in differences in the amount and types of editorializing taking place? The data could be re-examined to compare which stories were read by the news anchors, which were "pre-packaged reports" put together by reporters which were delivered "live" from the scene. Are there significant differences? Commenting on the possibility of differences between live reporting and pre-packaged material KUTV Executive Producer, Bill Lord noted:

I think the coding rules should provide some leeway for reporters covering events live on television. We often expect reporters to share their experiences or reactions in a live question and answer session.¹

Noting any differences between the 6 pm and 10 pm version of the same subject matter would be interesting. Do the stories improve and contain fewer rules violations over time, in their second broadcast airing?

Numerous comparison studies could be developed between the data from the Hofmann television news coverage and news reports in other media. Brigham Young University Professor Alf Pratte reviewed the printed newspaper versions of the Hofmann coverage. Did a similar amount of editorial violations on television occur also in newspaper coverage? Which medium broke the most stories and which followed the traditional tenets most closely?

¹Bill Lord, letter to Dr. R. Irwin Goodman, Communications Research Center, Brigham Young University, 1986.
Three books have been published on the Hofmann case. They are: **Salamander** by Linda Sillitoe and Allen D. Roberts; **The Mormon Murders: A True Story of Greed, Forgery, Deceit and Death** by Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith; and **A Gathering of Saints: A True Story of Murder and Deceit** by Robert Lindsey. A study could be undertaken to examine the factual details revealed in the books as compared with television reports. Two of the book titles contain the word "true." How "true" are these books in relation to what happened as reported by the medium of record television news?

At least one television network is reported to be producing a mini-series on the Hofmann bombings. CBS was considering basing its television movie on the book **Mormon Murders**. Twentieth Century Fox corporation reportedly has the rights to the book **A Gathering Of Saints** for theatrical release. An intriguing multi-media communication research study could be undertaken to compare the three mediums, the television news story, the book account and the television movie in the areas of accuracy, fairness and balance. Audience surveys could be administered before the television movies are broadcast and after, to see how they impact and influence the viewers' opinions of the events. Such accuracy related studies would be most engaging.

Additional accuracy studies of the Hofmann coverage could reveal findings about the television news process. Which of the stations was most accurate in its coverage, having the hindsight of factual history to now know what really took place? Did the station that was the most accurate also adhere more closely to traditional
journalistic tenets? A different study focusing on accuracy could compare what television news reported with personal interviews of those newsmakers quoted in the stories. Interview segments (soundbites) and story scripts could be submitted to the principles in the case, the police detectives, the lawyers, the historians, the LDS Church leaders, for their opinion on how well their interviews were summarized by the news reporter. It would reveal more about the process of how television news summarizes highly complex, and in this case controversial, stories to a typical one minute and thirty second or two minute report.

The present study has been qualitative in nature with a minimal use of descriptive statistics. The same coded set of data lends itself for numerous quantitative studies, including analysis of variance to see if the differences in the rules violated over the period of the study are statistically significant.

Besides additional historical studies, survey methods, and quantitative analysis, some experimental type of studies in the areas of visual coding could be undertaken.

Television news often is event oriented. An event usually signals an action, which can be captured by the camera. A visual medium such as television relies on action video opportunities to produce the product. Producers, and those in decision making power, often include the dramatic elements of the action contained in the video in their selection process. This frequently determines which stories to include in a newscast and where they should be placed. A study could be undertaken to note the part visual elements played in television news coverage of the Hofmann events.
One of the professional reviewers, Brink Chipman, News Director of KVOA-TV in Tucson, Arizona, noted the need for this type of study when he summarized his feelings about the rules evaluation process he participated in:

To more fairly examine and evaluate broadcast news stories, it is obvious that the actual stories (videotapes) should be used. I realize this could cause all sorts of financial and logistics problems, but, if you want a more valid evaluation based on the reality and totality of the broadcast news coverage, that would be the best possible way to approach it.

This dilemma was most evident in dealing with rule #3 (colorful description). A lot of the rule is based on appearance. Obviously, that cannot be judged by written words alone.\(^2\)

Finally, two additional areas of research would contribute to the understanding of the on-going television news story process as discussed in the present study. Both of these additional areas center on the concept of perspective in relation to the Hofmann coverage.

The results from this study could be submitted to the news directors at the Salt Lake City stations to garner their reactions and their staffs opinions of the findings. Do the reporters feel their copy was reviewed enough before it aired? Do the news directors feel any need to tighten the gate keeping process? Should the news management institute special procedures to insure that in breaking news events editorial rules are strictly adhered to and not dismissed in the rush of competition or overlooked in the hectic pace of deadlines? Their assessment of the processes at work

in this coverage period, brought forth in this study, would help validate the findings or point up areas for further inquiry.

What does Mark Hofmann, the master mind behind this extraordinary story, think of the television news process that covered him, captured him, and catapulted him into the annals of history. A series of interviews with him on the role television news played, from his perspective, in helping to unravel the complicated web of forgery, deceit, and murder would bring new light on the relevance local television news plays in the process of revealing truth.
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Letters


APPENDIX A

HOFMANN COVERAGE WEEK TIMELINE CHARTS
Hofmann Coverage Week 7
Nov 25-Dec 01, Study Days 42-48

# of Violations

- Attribution
- Draw Conclusions
- Colorful Description
- Project Attitudes

*** represents UPI Key Event Day

Hofmann Coverage Week 8
Dec 02-Dec 08, Study Days 49-55

# of Violations

- Draw Conclusions
- Colorful Description
- Predictions
- Project Attitudes

*** Represents UPI Key Event Day

Hofmann Coverage Week 9
Dec 09-Dec 15, Study Days 56-62

# of Violations

- Attribution
- Draw Conclusions
- Colorful Description
- Project Attitudes

*** Represents UPI Key Event Day
Hofmann Coverage Week 10  
Dec 16-Dec 22, Study Days 63-69

Hofmann Coverage Week 11  
Dec 23-Dec 29, Study Days 70-76

Hofmann Coverage Week 12  
Dec 30-Jan 05, Study Days 77-83
APPENDIX B

PROFESSIONAL REVIEWERS INSTRUCTION MATERIALS
Dear Reader:

Thank you for your willingness to assist us with a landmark study on objectivity in local television news reporting. Our project looks at how well Salt Lake City's three local television stations followed two basic principles of broadcast journalism: fair reporting and unbiased narrative. The time period and case we chose to study was from October 15, 1985 through February 8, 1986—the “Salt Lake City Bombings.”

Enclosed are notebooks containing material we would like you to evaluate. Each notebook introduces you to a different editorialization rule used in this project. These rules, initially developed for a pilot project in 1985, have come together through an extensive process designed to define editorialization from a professional perspective. The process included having our rules reviewed by news directors across the country. Revisions were then made and the revised rules were used in this study.

Our coders have gone through the material in each notebook. The sentences they found in violation of the coding rule have been marked with a dot. Please review their work and, using the scale on the front cover of each booklet, indicate your agreement or disagreement with the judgement made by our coders. Simply write the numbers one, two, three, four, or five near the sentence in question. If you want to make a comment on your answer or the coding rule itself, please feel free to do so.

When the material is ready to return simply send it back by the most convenient express carrier (Federal Express, Emery). On the order form mark the box that says "Bill Recipient." That will allow you to send the material without having to pay mailing costs. Please send the transcripts to Communications Research Center, F-276 HFAC, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602. Upon receiving the returned material, we will forward to you an honorarium of $250.

Joining you in this professional review will be Elmer Lover, former ABC News President, Ed Turner, Executive Vice President at Cable News Network, David Fitzpatrick, head of the investigative unit at CBS News and Thom Spencer, KEPR-TV, Pasco, Washington.

If you have any questions concerning this procedure, please call me collect at (801) 378-3551 (KBYU) or at home (801) 373-3768. You can also contact the Director of Communications Research Center, Dr. Irwin Goodman, (801) 378-2342.

Sincerely,

Bill Silcock
Project Director
The Editorializing Rule

**ATTRIBUTION—INDEPENDENTLY VERIFIABLE**

Reporters can narrate factual information without attribution if the facts are independently verifiable by:

a) being substantiated as universally believed by public at large.

b) being accessible by any competent observer, including the reporter. Reporters are often expected to share their experiences in live question and answer sessions. In this case it is clear we are asking for the reporter's reaction and it should be ruled acceptable without further attribution.

**Rating Procedure**

The following pages are transcripts of the audio from actual newscasts. The sentence or phrase highlighted with a dot is thought to be a violation of the above rule.

This is our question of you: To what extent do you agree or disagree that each of the sentences indicated is a violation of this rule? Please indicate your opinion by writing one of the following numbers directly on the transcript next to the sentence in question. (On some pages you will find more than one sentence that is in question. Please rate each of the sentences indicated.)

If you STRONGLY AGREE that this sentence is violation of the above rule, write a 5 next to the sentence.
If you AGREE, write a....... 4
If you are UNDECIDED........3
If you DISAGREE...............2
If you STRONGLY DISAGREE....1
The Editorializing Rule

PREDICTIONS AND PROPHETIC STATEMENTS

Use of "it is expected", "will", "shall", and similar words without attribution indicate the reporter has knowledge of future events, thus overstepping the reporters duty to report only established facts unless these phrases are used to describe a scheduled event.

Some professionals may argue that good reporters are paid for being good guessers or predictors. While this may be true, the predictions or guesses of reporters should not be reported as fact until they have been substantiated. However, if a reporter wants to report his predictions, he should clarify that they are editorial commentary. Situations where these types of reporter predictions are acceptable would be when the reporter is asked to comment by the anchor or in a question and answer session.

Rating Procedure

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Irwin Goodman (801) 378-2342
The Editorializing Rule

PROJECTING FEELINGS

Statements about people's motives, state of mind, and feelings constitute editorializing unless they have been identified by the person or attributed to someone else's statement as their opinion of the person's feelings.

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The Editorializing Rule

PROJECTING ATTITUDES

Statements about people's attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, or opinions, constitute editorializing unless those attitudes have been identified by and attributed to someone other than the reporter, or if they have been prefaced by a conditional.

"News reports should be free of opinion or bias. . . ."  
Code of Ethics  
Society of Professional Journalists

"Opinion has no place in a news story unless it is a part of a direct quote. . . . Reporter opinion must never enter a news story."

Introduction to Reporting  
Judith Burkin

Rating Procedure

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The Editorializing Rule

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS AND MAKING PERSONAL COMMENTARY

Should not be done by reporters, unless

1. He identifies his remarks clearly as personal commentary.
2. If he is an established and known expert on the subject.
3. If he is in a question and answer situation where he is asked to state his opinion.

Reporters should deliver the facts without slanting them to favor their own views or those of any interest group. Conclusions stated by reporters should be attributed to experts, eyewitnesses, and newsmakers.

Rating Procedure

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The Editorializing Rule

COLORFUL DESCRIPTION, HYPED WORDS, SARCASM AND INMUENDO

Colorful description is acceptable provided it conveys only the observable facts in the situation and does not add emotional spin to the story.

Many adjectives or adverbs add editorial, hyperbolic or emotional spin to stories. Facial expressions, laughing, coughing, etc. are included in this category. The following flag words and similar terms should be carefully noted to determine individually whether they are used editorially or not:

outstanding, unique, grisly, crucial, a near miracle, on a rampage, graft and corruption, appears to be, expected to be, straight-forward, whirlwind, nearly, mostly, absolute, worst, best.

Rating Procedure

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APPENDIX C

UPI KEY-EVENTS
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D U BC-BOOBYTRAP-CHRONOLOGY 2TAKES 9·15 0906
SALT LAKE CITY (UPI) - CONFESSIONED BOOBY-TRAP BOMBER AND MURDERER
MARK HOFMANN, 32, OVERDOSED THURSDAY AT THE UTAH STATE PRISON,
WHERE HE WAS SERVING LIFE IN PRISON FOR TWO MURDERS HE COMMITTED TO HIDE
HIS FRAUDULENT DOCUMENT DEALS.

THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF EVENTS, FROM THE FATAL BOMBINGS TO
THE KILLER'S APPARENT ATTEMPT TO "TAKE HIS OWN LIFE":

- OCT. 15, 1985, SEPARATE MOTION-SENSITIVE PIPEBOMBS, HIDDEN INSIDE
  BROWN PAPER-WRAPPED PACKAGES, KILLED BUSINESSMAN STEVEN L. CHRISTENSEN,
  71, AND KATHLEEN SHEETS, 50, THE WIFE OF CHRISTENSEN'S FORMER BUSINESS
  PARTNER.

  POLICE AT FIRST BELIEVED DISGRUNTLED INVESTORS IN FINANCIALLY
  TROUBLED CPS FINANCIAL, THE COMPANY CHRISTENSEN ONCE PAID WITH, GARY
  SHEETS, ARE RESPONSIBLE.

- OCT. 16, 1985, A THIRD PIPEBOMB EXPLODES INSIDE A SPORTS CAR,
  CRITICALLY INJURING MARK HOFMANN, A DEALER IN HISTORIC DOCUMENTS WHO HAD
  SOLD OR TRADED 19TH CENTURY PAPERS RELATED TO THE MORMON CHURCH TO
  CHRISTENSEN, AND GARY SHEETS, AFTER FINDING BOMB-MAKING EQUIPMENT IN
  HOFMANN'S GUTTED AUTO, POLICE IDENTIFY HIM AS A SUSPECT IN THE FATAL
  BOMBINGS.

- OCT. 17, 1985, SALT LAKE CITY POLICE CHIEF BILLY WILLIAMS SAID
  HOFMANN "FIT THE DESCRIPTION" OF A MAN BELIEVED TO HAVE DELIVERED
  A BOOBY-TRAPPED PACKAGE TO STEVEN CHRISTENSEN'S DOWNTOWN OFFICE.

- OCT. 19, 1985, SALT LAKE CITY POLICE CHIEF BILLY WILLIAMS SAID
  DETECTIVES FOUND "VERY REVEALING AND INCORPORATING EVIDENCE" AT MARK
  HOFMANN'S HOME, INCLUDING MATERIALS THAT COULD BE USED TO PRODUCE BOGUS
  HISTORIC DOCUMENTS.

- OCT. 23, 1985, GORDON B. HINCHCLIFFE, A COUNSELOR TO THEN-MORMON
  CHURCH PRESIDENT SPENCER W. KIMBALL, AND CHURCH LEADERS DALLIN H. OAKS
  AND MUGL W. PIPPIN, HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE TO DISCUSS THE CHURCH'S
  DOCUMENT DEALINGS WITH HOFMANN.

  PINNELL, A DIRECTOR OF FIRST INTERSTATE BANK, ALSO ADMITTED HE
  HELD ARRANGED A $185,000 LOAN FOR HOFMANN FOR THE PURCHASE OF THE
  SO-CALLED MLELLIN COLLECTION, PAPERS EXCOMMUNICATED MORMON APOSTLE
  WILLIAM E. MLLELLIN REPORTEDLY OBTAINED DURING THE 15TH-CENTURY TO

- OCT. 31, 1985, POLICE PROSECUTORS CHARGED HOFMANN WITH
  POSSESSION OF AN UNREGISTERED UZI MACHINE GUN, WHICH HOFMANN IS RELEASED
  FROM LDS HOSPITAL, WHERE HE HAD BEEN TREATED FOR TWO WEEKS FOR BOMB
  INJURIES.
NOV. 6, 1985, A FEDERAL GRAND JURY INDICTED MARK HOFMANN ON FEDERAL FIREARM CHARGES THAT HAD BEEN FILED ONE WEEK EARLIER.

NOV. 20, 1985, POLICE SEARCHED A HOME IN EMIGRATION CANYON, JUST EAST OF SALT LAKE CITY, AND IDENTIFIED THE HOUSE AS THE FACTORY WHERE THE BOBBY-TRAP BOMB THAT APPARENTLY KILLED STEVEN CHRISTENSEN AND KATHLEEN SHEETS WERE MANUFACTURED.

FEB. 4, 1986, THE SALT LAKE COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE CHARGED MARK HOFMANN WITH TWO COUNTS OF FIRST-DEGREE MURDER, MORE THAN 1 1/2 MONTHS AFTER THE BOMBING DEATHS OF STEVEN CHRISTENSEN AND KATHLEEN SHEETS. THE COMPLAINT ALSO IDENTIFIED THEFT AND FRAUD CHARGES INVOLVING MORE THAN $540,000 IN HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS AND INVESTMENTS.

FEB. 6, 1986, MARK HOFMANN POSTED $250,000 BAIL TO GAIN HIS RELEASE FROM THE SALT LAKE COUNTY JAIL. HIS PARENTS AND AUNT PUT UP THEIR HOMES TO SECURE THE BOND ON THE STATE CHARGES OF CAPITAL HOMICIDE, FRAUD AND THEFT.

MARCH 4, 1986, BARRY SHEETS FILED FOR FEDERAL BANKRUPTCY PROTECTION FOR HIS CFS REAL ESTATE CORPORATION, CLAIMING LESS THAN $10 MILLION IN ASSETS AND NEARLY $175 MILLION IN DEBTS.


A KEY PROSECUTION WITNESS, JEWELER BRUCE PASSEY, TESTIFIED HE SAW MARK HOFMANN CARRY A PARCEL ADDRESSED TO STEVEN CHRISTENSEN INTO THE JUDGE BUILDING, ONE HOUR BEFORE CHRISTENSEN WAS KILLED BY A PIPEBOMB SURROUNDED BY ROOFING NAILS AND HIDDEN INSIDE A PACKAGE. BOTH CHRISTENSEN AND PASSEY HAD OFFICES IN THE JUDGE BUILDING.

APRIL 22, 1986, MARK HOFMANN SWIPPED ON HIS CRUTCHES, BREAKING HIS ALREADY INJURED RIGHT KNEE. SURGERY TO REPAIR THE INJURY IS DISCUSSED ON THE 5TH CIRCUIT COURT PRELIMINARY HEARING FOR TWO WEEKS.

MAY 11, 1986, DURING MARK HOFMANN'S PRELIMINARY HEARING, DOCUMENTS EXPERT GEORGE THROCKMORTON TESTIFIED MORE THAN 40 LETTERS, BOOKS, PAMPHLETS OR 19TH CENTURY PAPER MONEY PURPORTEDLY UNCOVERED BY HOFMANN WERE ENTIRELY OR PARTIALLY FORGED.

MAY 13, 1986, DURING MARK HOFMANN'S PRELIMINARY HEARING, SALT LAKE CITY POLICE OFFICER JIM BELL TESTIFIED DETECTIVES BELIEVED HOFMANN KILLED STEVEN CHRISTENSEN BECAUSE HE WAS CONSIDERING SEEKING HOFMANN'S EXCOMMUNICATION FROM THE MORMON CHURCH AND THAT KATHLEEN SHEETS WAS KILLED AS A "DIVERSION" TO THROW SUSPICION ON DISGRUNTLED CFS INVESTORS.

MAY 22, 1986, FOLLOWING THE 13-DAY PRELIMINARY HEARING, 5TH CIRCUIT JUDGE PAUL GRANT ORDERED MARK HOFMANN BOUND OVER TO 3RD DISTRICT COURT TO STAND TRIAL ON TWO COUNTS OF FIRST-DEGREE MURDER AND 23 OTHER CHARGES OF BOMB MAKING, FRAUD AND THEFT.

MORE-MORE

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D U EC-BOOBYTRAP-CHRONOLOGY 1STADD 9-15 0865
XXX AND THEFT.
JUNE 4, 1986. THE 40 CHARGES AGAINST HOFMANN ARE DIVIDED INTO
FIVE SEPARATE 3RD DISTRICT COURT TRIALS. THE CASES ARE ASSIGNED TO
JUDGES KENNETH RIGTRUP, TIMOTHY HANSON, JAMES SAHAYA AND RAYMOND UND.
JUNE 6, 1986, MARK HOFMANN PLEADS INNOCENT TO 12 COUNTS OF
FIRST-DEGREE MURDER, BOMB MAKING, FRAUD AND THEFT CHARGES. HIS TRIAL
DATE ON THOSE CHARGES WAS SET FOR MARCH 1, 1987. THE CHARGES WERE AMONG
30 AGAINST THE HISTORIC DOCUMENTS DEALER FACES IN SEPARATE TRIALS.
JUNE 25, 1986, DOCUMENTS COLLECTOR BRENT ASHWORTH, PROVO, UTAH,
FILED SUIT AGAINST MARK HOFMANN FOR $225,000, CLAIMING 15 HISTORICAL
ITEMS HE OBTAINED FROM HOFMANN WERE BOGUS.
SEPT. 12, 1986, JUDGE KENNETH RIGTRUP DENIED A PROSECUTION MOTION
TO CONSOLIDATE MARK HOFMANN'S FIVE SEPARATE HOMICIDE, FRAUD AND THEFT
TRIALS, RULING 'THERE SIMPLY IS NOT A SINGLE EPISODE INVOLVED IN THE
VARIOUS CASES.'
DEC. 5, 1986, JUDGE KENNETH RIGTRUP RULED DEFENSE POLYGRAPH
EXAMINATION OF MARK HOFMANN AND HIS WIFE, DORALEE, COULD BE USED IN
EVIDENCE DURING THE SCHEDULED MARCH 2, 1987, HOMICIDE TRIAL.
DEC. 29, 1986, JUDGE KENNETH RIGTRUP RULED PROSECUTORS CAN HAVE
ACCESS TO DEFENSE POLYGRAPH TESTS ON MARK HOFMANN AND HIS WIFE, DORALEE,
THAT DEFENSE ATTORNEYS CLAIMED PROVED THE DEFENDANT WAS INNOCENT OF THE
FATAL BOMBINGS.
SALT LAKE COUNTY SHERIFF PETE HAYWARD CONFIRMED PROSECUTORS AND
DEFENSE ATTORNEYS HAVE BEEN NEGOTIATING A PLEA BARGAIN AGREEMENT 'FOR A
NUMBER OF MONTHS.'
JAN. 22, 1987, SALT LAKE COUNTY ATTORNEY DAVID VOCOM SAID A
HEARING DURING WHICH HOFMANN WAS TO PLEAD GUILTY TO REDUCED MURDER
AND FORGERY CHARGES WAS CANCELED, APPARENTLY BECAUSE THE NEWS MEDIA
REPORTED THE DEAL.
JAN. 23, 1987, MARK HOFMANN PLEADS GUILTY TO TWO REDUCED CHARGES
OF SECOND-DEGREE HOMICIDE AND TWO FRAUD COUNTS. THE OTHER 26
BOMB-MAKING, FRAUD AND THEFT COUNTS ARE DISMISSED IN EXCHANGE FOR
HOFMANN'S AGREEMENT TO "CANDIDLY" ANSWER ALL PROSECUTOR'S QUESTIONS
ABOUT THE DEADLY BOMBINGS AND DOCUMENTS FORGING.
JUDGE KENNETH RIGTRUP THEN SENTENCED HOFMANN TO 15 TO LIFE IN
PRISON, SAYING, "DUE TO THE DISCRIMINATE NATURE OF THE KILLINGS AND
THE TYPE OF DEVICES EMPLOYED, I WANT YOU TO SERVE THE REST OF YOUR
NATURAL LIFE IN THE UTAH STATE PRISON.''
FEB. 11, 1987, SALT LAKE COUNTY INVESTIGATORS AND PROSECUTORS
BEGAN THEIR MEETINGS WITH MARK HOFMANN AT THE UTAH STATE PRISON, TO
LEARN HOW HE FORGED OR ALTERED DOZENS OF DOCUMENTS.
BUT HOFMANN REFUSED TO DISCUSS DETAILS OF THE MURDERS. DEFENSE
ATTORNEYS SAID HOFMANN HAD ALREADY GUILTY TO TWO CHARGES AND
WAS INNOCENT OF THE REST.
MAY 27, 1987, THE MARK HOFMANN INTERVIEWS WITH MEMBERS OF THE SALT LAKE COUNTY ATTORNEY'S STAFF ARE CONCLUDED. THE PROSECUTORS INCLUDED A SUMMARY OF THEIR EARLIER DISCUSSIONS WITH HOFMANN ABOUT THE TWO MURDERS IN THEIR DRAFT, WHICH RUNS ABOUT 1,000 TYPED PAGES.

JUNE 11, 1987, SALT LAKE CITY BOOKSTORE OWNER SAM WELLER SAID HE WOULD AUCTION OFF THE LITERARY RIGHTS TO THE MARK HOFMANN TRANSCRIPTS, TO RECOVER A $14,000 COURT JUDGMENT HE WON IN CONNECTION WITH MONEY LOANED TO HOFMANN.

JUNE 17, 1987, SALT LAKE COUNTY ATTORNEY DAVID YOCOM OBTAINED A TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER BARRING BOOKSTORE OWNER SAM WELLER FROM ATTEMPTING TO SELL THE LITERARY RIGHTS TO MARK HOFMANN'S INTERVIEWS WITH PROSECUTORS.

JUNE 30, 1987, THIRD DISTRICT JUDGE RAYMOND UNO ISSUED AN ORDER PROHIBITING BOOKSTORE OWNER SAM WELLER FROM ATTEMPTING TO SELL THE LITERARY RIGHTS TO MARK HOFMANN'S INTERVIEWS WITH PROSECUTORS IN WELLER'S EFFORT TO COLLECT A $14,000 COURT JUDGMENT.

JULY 5, 1987, SALT LAKE COUNTY COMMISSIONER MAKE STEWART SAID ANY PROFITS FROM THE LIFE STORY OR CONFESSION OF MARK HOFMANN SHOULD FIRST BE USED TO COMPENSATE HIS VICTIMS AND THEN TO PAY THE COUNTY'S $200,000 LEGAL BILL FOR PROSECUTING HOFMANN.

JULY 8, 1987, SALT LAKE COUNTY DAVID YOCOM SAID THE COUNTY CANNOT SELL THE RIGHTS TO MARK HOFMANN'S CONFESSION. YOCOM SAID THAT WOULD VIOLATE HOFMANN'S PLEA BARGAIN DEAL THAT TRANSCRIPTS BE MADE PUBLIC.

JULY 31, 1987, THE 600-PAGE TRANSCRIPTS OF THE MARK HOFMANN INTERVIEWS, EDITED DOWN FROM ABOUT 1,000 PAGES, IS RELEASED.

JAN. 29, 1988, THE UTAH BOARD OF PARDONS RECOMMENDS MARK HOFMANN SPEND THE REST OF HIS LIFE IN PRISON BECAUSE OF HIS 'CALLOUS DISREGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE.'

"JULY 7, 1988, "MARK HOFMANN'S WIFE OF "NINE YEARS, DORALEE, FILES" FOR DISSOLUTION IN 3RD DISTRICT COURT, CITING "IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES."

AUG. 4, 1988, DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS INVESTIGATORS SAID MARK HOFMANN HAD BEEN MAILING CODED LETTERS CONTAINING VEILED THREATS AGAINST TWO BOARD OF PARDONS MEMBERS AND A PROSECUTION WITNESS.

SEPT. 15, 1988, MARK HOFFMAN WAS FOUND UNCONSCIOUS IN HIS CELL FROM WHAT UTAH STATE PRISON OFFICIALS SAID WAS AN APPARENT SUICIDE OVERDOSE ATTEMPT.
COMPETITIVE FIRE: AN HISTORICAL DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF
ADHERENCE TO TRADITIONAL JOURNALISTIC TENETS IN
TELEVISION NEWS COVERAGE OF THE MARK HOFMANN
SALT LAKE CITY BOMBINGS

B. William Silcock

Department of Communications

M. A. Degree, December 1989

ABSTRACT

This study observed three television news departments’ adherence to tenets of
objectivity, fairness, and the elimination of bias in their four months of coverage of an
extraordinary news story; the Mark Hofmann Salt Lake City bombings. Using
historical descriptive methods, concepts of traditional journalistic ethics were
operationalized into a set of seven editorial rules. Coders evaluated the news scripts
for rule compliance. Five professional reviewers validated the coding.

Violations of the editorial rules clustered around key events in the Hofmann
story as identified by United Press International (UPI). Of the 425 Hofmann stories
broadcast, 24 percent of them contained editorializing violations. Two rules, "drawing
conclusions" and "colorful descriptions" accounted for a majority of the editorial
violations. "Attribution" editorial violations appeared to increase on non-UPI key-
event days. Professional reviewers suggested a lack of copy editing as one cause for
the number of editorializing violations.

COMMITTEE APPROVAL:

Norman C. Tarbox, Committee Chairman

R. Irwin Goodman, Committee Member

Gordon C. Whiting, Department Chairman