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Statewide public affairs television: expanding the C-SPAN model to the state level and achieving institutional status in the process

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**STATEWIDE PUBLIC AFFAIRS TELEVISION: EXPANDING THE C-SPAN
MODEL TO THE STATE LEVEL AND ACHIEVING INSTITUTIONAL
STATUS IN THE PROCESS**

A Dissertation

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

in

Theanship School of Mass Communication

**By
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December 2006**

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Conventional wisdom holds that a dissertation is all about the author and his or her solitary struggle to stay focused, to stay on track, to simply stay the course until the project is done. But that is not entirely true. In reality, a dissertation is about a multitude of people all working toward the same goal ... its completion. This is certainly the case with my dissertation. That it is finished is as much a tribute to the efforts, support, and love of family and friends as it is to the work on my part.

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ABSTRACT

A study of 10 states that have statewide public affairs television networks finds that these systems have become an integral part of the state governmental process in the same way that C-SPAN has become an institution in Washington, D.C. That is, lawmakers, legislative staff members, lobbyists, and statehouse reporters ignore it at their peril. At the same time, the content produced by these state versions of C-SPAN has altered the way in which the members of these groups do their jobs by providing a monitoring capacity that makes it easier for them to be more productive. This study uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to examine data gathered through in-depth interviews with network managers and employees, legislative staff members, lobbyists, and statehouse reporters and through a national telephone survey that sought to determine if there was an audience for statewide public affairs television. The study seeks to expand the applicability of institutionalism theory by using it as the framework to examine statewide public affairs television through the lenses of civic engagement, policy-making, norms and routines, social network analysis, and diffusion of innovation.

INTRODUCTION

Statewide public affairs television first appeared 28 years ago when Kentucky Educational Television—the state’s PBS network—took its cameras into the legislative chambers and began broadcasting coverage around the state. Although it was little noticed at the time, this different model of legislative coverage resonates today as the beginning of the statewide public affairs television movement. The spark for the movement came a year later in 1979 when the Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network—C-SPAN—broadcast its first coverage of the U.S. House of Representatives. In the process, C-SPAN brought this new model for providing the public with information about how government functions to the forefront.

From the beginning when its programming consisted primarily of unfiltered, minimally edited coverage of congressional floor sessions, C-SPAN’s offerings have grown to include call-in shows, weekly wrap-up programs, and interviews with government leaders. This innovation in government coverage did not go unnoticed and as C-SPAN became a fixture of cable programming, a parallel movement aimed at providing similar coverage of state government gained momentum. Known as statewide public affairs television, these entities can be described best as smaller versions of C-SPAN—although they have no formal affiliation with it. At least 20 such systems operate now, and more are in the development stages.

The development of a new model for disseminating information about government coincided as well with a marked decrease in statehouse coverage by traditional media. Market pressures, cost considerations, and a strong belief that members of the public cared little about government news drove many newspaper and local

television companies to cut back on their statehouse coverage beginning in the 1990s, if not eliminate it altogether. After all, news is expensive to produce, Hamilton (2004) says, and media managers were looking to cut costs any way they could. The accompanying consolidation of media companies simply exacerbated the problem. Why does this matter? It is important because, over the same time frame, the federal government has made a concerted effort to shift more and more policy-making power to the states. As a result, policies and laws increasingly are being determined at the state level (Ehrenhalt, 1999; Garand, 1988; Gurwitt, 1996; Gurwitt, 1990; Jewell, 1982; Layton & Dorroh, 2002; Layton & Walton, 1998), while the media's traditional watchdog role has been diminished. The public, in turn, has fewer and fewer ways to obtain the information it needs to understand or provide input into the democratic process.

Statewide public affairs television offers one possible alternative. At their most basic, these state versions of C-SPAN provide minimally edited, gavel-to-gavel coverage of legislative proceedings. Some of the more developed networks also cover legislative committee hearings and state Supreme Court oral arguments, and provide their own public affairs programming. In other words, these networks offer viewers a tremendous amount of detailed information about state policy development.

The mission of statewide public affairs television is to provide the public with information about how state government works, but previous research suggests the primary audience for these systems is not the general public (Kurpius & Rowley, 2004a). Rather, it is an elite audience composed of legislators, legislative staff members, journalists, lobbyists, and the small percentage of the general public that takes a strong interest in how government operates. Other researchers argue that this is not necessarily a

bad thing, nor is it unexpected (Graber, 2004; Schudson, 1998; Zaller, 2003). It is not that the general public is not paying attention, they say. Rather, the public is selective in what it pays attention to and is willing to depend on a small group of elites to oversee the governing process.

The question, then, is what role does statewide public affairs television play? This study argues that over its nearly 30 years of existence, statewide public affairs television has become an integral part of the state governmental process in the same way that C-SPAN has become an institution in Washington, D.C. Thus institutional theory provides the foundation for this project. The theory has a long and complex history in academia. Its research tradition spans both Europe and America and has been used extensively to study human behavior in economics, sociology, and political science. For more than a century, institutionalism has proved to be an adaptable theory that can be used in a variety of ways. One of the areas in which the theory has not been widely applied, however, is mass communication.

This study seeks to expand the applicability of institutionalism by using it as the theoretical framework to examine statewide public affairs television through the lenses of civic engagement, policy-making, norms and routines, social network analysis, and diffusion of innovation. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, data were gathered from 10 states that have operational statewide public affairs television systems and one state where efforts are underway to establish a network. The qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews with network managers and employees, legislative staff members, lobbyists, and statehouse reporters and through site visits to each of the systems. The quantitative data come from a national

telephone survey that sought to determine if there actually was an audience for statewide public affairs television.

With the increasing policy-making power of the states, the continuing decline in traditional media statehouse coverage, and the changes being wrought by legislative term limits, the need for statewide public affairs television has never been greater. For all of these reasons, it is crucial to understand whether these networks have achieved institutional status and if so, what that means for elite and non-elite audiences and for the institutions of state government.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background

Statewide public affairs television started at roughly the same time the Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network—C-SPAN—broadcast its first coverage of the U.S. House of Representatives.¹ In the process, C-SPAN created a new model for disseminating information about how government functions. From the beginning in 1979 when its programming consisted primarily of minimally edited coverage of congressional floor sessions, C-SPAN's offerings have grown to include call-in shows, weekly wrap-up programs, and interviews with government leaders. This innovation in government coverage did not go unnoticed, and soon after C-SPAN became a fixture of cable programming, a parallel movement aimed at providing similar coverage of state government gained momentum. The creation of statewide public affairs television grew out of a desire by legislators, citizens, and grass-roots groups to give the public more access to government. The first statewide public affairs television entity started in Kentucky in 1978 as a partnership between state government and Kentucky Educational Television, the state's public broadcasting organization. Then throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, systems were established in other states, many the result of partnerships with the cable industry.

These systems, which can be described best as state versions of C-SPAN, cover state government to varying degrees. Twenty such television services are in operation now, with at least one more in the developmental stage. Located predominantly in the Northeast, Midwest, and West, these networks vary in their structure, programming, and funding mechanisms (see Appendices A, B, and C). Some operate year-round, others

¹ Portions of this chapter reprinted with permission of *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*.

only when their legislature is in session. Some provide only gavel-to-gavel coverage of legislative sessions, others also cover state House and Senate committee hearings, and still others offer public affairs programming such as call-in shows, legislative highlights programs, journalist round tables, and cultural programs. A few of the networks also are tied into their state's emergency operations center. The system in Florida, for instance, provides the pool coverage for media outlets in the state when disasters are declared, while in Connecticut, the network has set up the emergency broadcast equipment officials use when they need to reach residents.

At the same time statewide public affairs television began to gain acceptance as a source of state government news, commercial media coverage of the statehouse began to decline. Beginning in the 1990s, Layton and Walton (1998) found, television stations and newspapers around the country began cutting back on their state government coverage—capital bureaus were reduced, if not closed altogether; the news hole allocated for government news shrank in numerous cases; and the use of wire services increased. Chief among the reasons for this have been the need for cost containment, the lack of interest in state government news among editors, publishers, and news directors, and the noticeable apathy of the public when it comes to the democratic process (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Hirsch & Thompson, 1994; Layton & Walton, 1998). In terms of cost containment, the media have to work much harder in today's economy to remain as profitable as management and shareholders wish. The ever-increasing expenses of technology, labor, and in the case of newspapers, old-fashioned paper and ink, have many publishers and general managers scrambling to find areas where they can cut, and state capital bureaus have been at the top of their list because news is an expensive commodity to produce

(Gurwitt, 1996; Hamilton, 2004; Hickey, 1998; Kaniss, 1991; Layton & Walton, 1998; McChesney, 2000; McManus, 1994).

In addition, many of these media companies are traded publicly, and their management must contend with boards of directors and shareholders who demand a certain profitability. Traditionally, if that goal has not been met, Wall Street has been swift to punish the offending company via lower stock prices (Hirsch & Thompson, 1994). The response has been to cut costs as much as possible to keep profits at an acceptable level (Champlin & Knoedler, 2002). This increasing pressure for profits has been exacerbated, as well, Champlin and Knoedler say, by the massive consolidation of the media, particularly throughout the 1990s. They and others point out, too, that this pressure to control costs has led newsrooms to rely heavily on pre-packaged news, such as that generated by press conferences, press releases, and video news releases, while giving investigative reporting efforts short shrift (Boorstin, 1992; Champlin & Knoedler, 2002; McChesney, 2000; McManus, 1994).

Further compounding the problem is the lack of interest many editors and news directors have in state government news (Gurwitt, 1996; Layton & Walton, 1998; McManus, 1994). Typically, government news has been categorized as dull-but-important, and the persistent belief among editors and news directors has been that readers just aren't interested in these types of stories—despite research that shows that is not the case (Audience interest by question, 2002; Gurwitt, 1996; Layton & Walton, 1998; Poindexter & McCombs, 2001). Poindexter and McCombs, for instance, found a clear relationship between those who believed they needed to keep informed and their use of newspapers and television news to do so.

There is another factor at work, also, in the media's move away from the intense government coverage that was common in the past, as McManus (1994) and Hamilton (2004) observe. They believe that market forces are driving the change. McManus (1994) argues that with the consolidation of broadcast media, the definition of news has changed. In the market-driven model he proposes, news "becomes a commodity to fit the market demands of a collection of special interests" (McManus, 1994, p. 37). The goal is not so much to inform viewers, as it is to sell them to advertisers. Hamilton (2004) takes the argument further, pointing out that when the news is treated as a market product, simplicity and cost-effectiveness become the driving forces behind what is covered. The result is that public affairs content, which is seldom simple or cheap to produce, is at best marginalized and at worst left out altogether. Nor has the cable industry lived up to its potential for providing access for local and state governments, education, and community news, despite the proliferation of channel space (Kellner, 1990). Instead, cable has become a place to "repurpose" or rerun news content from other network properties. For example, content from NBC is used on the *NBC Nightly News*, CNBC, and MSNBC.

What has been the practical effect of all this? "In capital press rooms around the country, there are more and more empty desks and silent phones. Bureaus are shrinking, reporters are younger and less experienced, stories get less space and poorer play, and all too frequently editors just don't care" (Layton & Walton, 1994, p. 44). Fewer reporters mean fewer stories, as Layton and Walton (1994) point out. As well, less experienced reporters mean less knowledge of how the governmental process works, who the players are, and how a given issue might affect the public.

The changing face of media capital bureaus has not gone unnoticed by those they cover, either. As long ago as 1990, Gurwitt highlighted the increasingly younger and inexperienced reporters being sent to cover state capitals. Prior to Watergate, in particular, many reporters made whole careers out of covering statehouses. While Gurwitt (1990) and Ehrenhalt (1999) acknowledged that perhaps it was not a bad thing that the coziness that had prevailed in earlier days between legislators and reporters was gone, they also bemoaned the lack of expertise that now exists.

... state government is more complicated today than it was 30 years ago. Budgets are far larger, the number of state agencies and departments has mushroomed, and the complexity of the issues that state governments now tackle has grown immeasurably. The question is, as reporters lose the intimate familiarity with legislatures that they once had, how well are they keeping up with the changes? (Gurwitt, 1990, para. 31).

That, in turn, affects how well the public is informed. The question of how well the public is being informed is a concern because state government is big business. In the 1990s, state government ranked eighth on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' list of national growth industries (Layton & Walton, 1998). Layton and Walton also estimated that, in total, the states spend \$854 billion a year—about \$9,000 for every American. More importantly, for some time now, state government has been leading the charge on all sorts of issues that affect people's daily lives, not Congress (Layton & Walton, 1998), while the commercial media have systematically reduced their coverage of these same state governments.

Historically, the political communications literature has centered on the federal process. Rosenthal (1981) observed that “despite the importance of the function, relatively little is known about how policy making is performed by legislatures in the states” (p. 256). Garand (1988), in his study of the growth of state government from

1945-1984, found that “to date, the states have been virtually ignored as a focus of research on government growth” (p. 838). By the early 1990s, the situation had not changed much, as Brace and Jewett (1995) pointed out. “Consciously or unconsciously, too many studies of American politics ignore the important role that the states play in shaping political behavior and outcomes in the United States” (Brace & Jewett, 1995, p. 646).

Some 20 years ago, Rosenthal (1981), Jewell (1982), and Bowman and Kearney (1988) wrote about how policy development responsibility was being shifted from the federal to the state level. More recently, Elazar (1994) argued that the states are frequently public policy pioneers, long before the federal government takes a position. “Many states have pioneered programs that fit into their traditions before the initiation of similar ones on the federal plane or on a nationwide basis through federal aid” (1994, p. 281).

Elazar is best known for his three-part political culture typology. Three factors shape how state political systems operate, he says: “(1) the set of perceptions of what politics is and what can be expected from government ...; (2) the kinds of people who become active in government and politics ...; and (3) the actual way in which the art of government is practiced ...” (1972, p. 90). Using all of these elements, Elazar crafted a three-part typology of political culture that has become a cornerstone of political science research. He argued that American political culture can be subdivided into three categories—moralistic, traditionalistic, and individualistic—and that projections can be made about how a state will act based on which category it belongs to.

Elazar defines the individualistic political culture as one that

emphasizes the conception of the democratic order as a marketplace. In its view, government is instituted for strictly utilitarian reasons, to handle those functions demanded by the people it is created to serve. ... In general, government action is to be restricted to those areas primarily in the economic realm, which encourage private initiative and widespread access to the market place. (1972, p. 94).

In this culture then, the role of government is limited and the purpose of a statewide public affairs television system would be to show the public that officials are not overstepping their bounds.

At the other end of the spectrum is the moralistic political culture. This culture, Elazar says,

emphasizes the commonwealth conception as the basis for democratic government. Politics, to the moralistic political culture, is considered one of the great activities of man in his search for the good society—a struggle for power, it is true, but also an effort to exercise power for the betterment of the commonwealth. ... Good government, then, is measured by the degree to which it promotes the public good and in terms of the honesty, selflessness, and commitment to the public welfare of those who govern (1972, p. 96-97)

The goal of a statewide public affairs television system in this culture would be to give members of the public all of the information they need to participate actively in the democratic process.

Finally, there is the traditionalistic political culture. Falling somewhere between the other two,

the traditionalistic political culture is rooted in an ambivalent attitude toward the market place coupled with a paternalistic and elitist conception of the commonwealth. It reflects an older, precommercial attitude that accepts a substantially hierarchical society as part of the ordered nature of things, authorizing and expecting those at the top of the social structure to take a special and dominant role in government (Elazar, 1972, p. 99)

In this case, demand for a statewide public affairs television system likely would be small because there would be little sense among members of the public that they could take an

active role in government. Elazar says as much, noting that the traditionalistic culture “functions to confine real political power to a relatively small and self-perpetuating group drawn from an established elite who often inherit their ‘right’ to govern through family ties or social position” (1972, p. 99).

Elazar (1972) further points out that although components of each of the categories can be found in every state, one culture tends to dominate and the states tend to cluster according to which culture is dominant. His political culture map shows the states of the Old South characterized by the traditionalistic political culture, while the individualistic political culture dominates in the mid-section of the country, and the moralistic political culture can be found in the states of the far North, Northwest, and Pacific Coast.

Mead (2004), who examined state political culture and welfare reform, found support for Elazar’s typology. He summarized Elazar’s categories this way:

In “moralistic” states, political positions are typically justified by appeals to the “public interest,” rather than narrower interests, and public administration is strong. In “individualistic” states, in contrast, government tends to serve more specific interests. Parties are strong, each standing for coalitions of groups seeking advantages from government. Bureaucracy is well-developed but less enterprising than in the moralistic culture. Finally, in the “traditionalistic” culture, chiefly in the South, government is limited largely to defending traditional values (originally the racial caste system). Parties count for less than in other cultures and the bureaucracy is underdeveloped and distrusted. (2004, p. 274)

Not surprisingly, Mead said, his study found that those states Elazar categorized as moralistic handled welfare reform the best.

If policy development is started and tested at the state level before enactment on a national basis, then it makes sense that the public should have a means to properly oversee government at work. And, in fact, the states have taken the lead on policy issues

as diverse as welfare and Medicaid, gun control and education. Wisconsin, for instance, developed the welfare reform model that ultimately was adopted by the federal government and filtered back down to the states. In Louisiana, the state government established a school accountability program some years before President Bush created No Child Left Behind. Reforms in areas as disparate as health care and no fault insurance all started at the state level (Ehrenhalt, 1999; Gurwitt, 1996; Jewell, 1982; Layton & Walton, 1998; Rosenthal, 1981). It is a devolution of power and policy-making that shows no sign of abating (Elazar, 1994; Gurwitt, 1996). Layton and Walton (1998) pointed out that state legislatures consider approximately 185,000 bills each year and pass about 25 percent of them. “And all of it—the money, the bills, the lobbyists, the elections, the bureaucrats—is covered by a diminishing number of reporters” (Layton & Walton, 1998, p. 47).

The problem, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) say, is that without adequate information on policy development and the political process, the public loses one more way to evaluate whether the work being done by government reflects its interests. In order for new policies to be successful, they point out, the public must support them, and to do that, it must have at least a modicum of understanding of why policies are established and what they are intended to accomplish. “We are not arguing that contemporary democracy requires that all citizens be expert on all facets of national politics, but we do suggest that the more citizens are passingly informed about the issues of the day, the behavior of political leaders, and the rules under which they operate, the better off they are” (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996, p. 61). The media can play a crucial role in providing that understanding. Yet, as Yankelovich (1991) argues, too often when the commercial media actually do provide such public policy information, they do so

with little context or perspective. And that, he maintains, can be just as harmful as not providing any information at all because it leaves the public to fend for itself in reaching thoughtful, deliberative judgments about issues and policies.

What is needed, Yankelovich (1991) says, is a way for people to develop “public judgment,” and he proposed a model for such a process. His model begins with “consciousness raising.” This is where people learn about issues. Once the public is aware of an issue, which may happen quickly as a result of an event or a news story, it moves into a “working through” process by which “an individual must confront the need for change” (Yankelovich, 1991, p. 64). It is in this “working through” process that people become engaged in addressing an issue, while at the same time determining their own beliefs and recognizing the value of others’ beliefs. The final stage of this model is resolution, or what Yankelovich terms “public judgment.” At this stage, “the public must resolve where it stands cognitively, emotionally, and morally” (Yankelovich, 1991, p. 65). The most important part of the resolution stage is the deliberation people must engage in to reconcile their own values with those of others. The relevancy of this three-stage model lies in its potential to create a place for both knowledge gain and information processing by citizens. The question is whether the media can create this place.

The Newspaper Industry

Press and politics have been intertwined in this country since its earliest days. The pattern was set with the creation of the early postal system in 1792 and Congress’s decision to grant newspaper publishers special postal privileges, including “free exchange of newspapers among editors, delivery of publications for minimal postage, free in-

county delivery of papers, expresses to speed the news, the international conveyance of periodicals, and special arrangements to handle subscriptions” (Kielbowicz, 1989, p. 3).

Although their decision was couched in terms of giving the media the ability to provide information to as large an audience as possible, congressional leaders were also cognizant of the need to unify the fledgling country and to establish a common culture. The combination of the post office and the press provided a way to do that. The postal system “provided for redundancy in the circulation of news, supplied a varied diet of information, accommodated complex messages, and permitted any point in the network to send information to any other point” (Kielbowicz, 1989, p. 183).

The importance of that decision cannot be overstated. In one motion, Congress gave newspaper owners the tools they needed to lay the foundation for a wide-ranging mass communication system and established a precedent for government/press relations in which each side was dependent on the other. This dependency can be seen clearly not only in the postal privileges granted to newspapers, but also in the official printing contracts federal, state, and local governments bestowed on specific newspapers in the early days of the industry. Such contracts continue today with local newspapers vying for the right to publish legal notices. The tie between government and newspaper owners, therefore, was built on both informational and financial levels. This relationship has endured for more than two centuries, adapting as society and technology changed and fending off critics who believe the two groups are too closely intertwined, to the detriment of the public.

The Broadcast Industry

The broadcast industry's relationship with politicians is more complex, although, again, Congress and the federal government have played an equally critical part in its development. Today's model of a commercially owned, government-regulated broadcast industry was not the only option available when technology developed sufficiently for the early radio industry to gain popularity. There were other possibilities for the way radio, and then television, could have developed. Streeter (1996), in particular, touches on the different frameworks available for a radio model before the commercial model prevailed. Initially, radio could have taken the form of a medium run by amateurs, small business entrepreneurs, or even the government. The large corporations were uninterested. But that changed with Marconi, who figured out how to make a profit by marketing radio as a service and then controlling the technology used to produce it.

Marconi's historically significant legacy was the practice of extracting profit from radio by treating it as a service instead of as a manufactured product, and by controlling that service through the control of critical technology and through policies restricting how that technology should be used (Streeter, 1996, p. 72-73).

Marconi was extremely successful with his model—too successful for the U.S. Navy's comfort. His operation was based in the United Kingdom, and Marconi, himself, was not a citizen of the United States. In the early 20th century, Navy officials were concerned about the security implications involved with a non-citizen controlling the American radio industry. Ultimately, Congress yielded to pressure from the Navy and its own concerns about U.S. maritime safety and passed the Radio Act of 1912 (Streeter, 1996). That measure established the right of the government to license access to the radio spectrum and left enforcement of the law to federal agencies instead of the courts. Tillinghast (2000) reiterated the impact of the 1912 act, pointing out that for the first time

the government had introduced the idea that it could require licenses for anyone who wanted to transmit a message over the airwaves. Since corporations held considerably more sway over the federal government than small business owners or amateur radio enthusiasts, it did not take long for government to hand over the choicest segments of the spectrum to big business and push everyone else to the fringes.

In particular, the Radio Act of 1912, the follow-up Radio Act of 1927, and the Communications Act of 1934 made it possible for the corporations to develop an oligopolistic radio model instead of a competitive, entrepreneurial model (Streeter, 1996). This model was best embodied by radio station WEAf. The station, which was owned by AT&T, first went on the air in 1922. “What AT&T intended was that the station should be considered a phone booth from which persons could send any message they wished to the public at large—for a fee, of course” (Tillinghast, 2000, p. 35). Kellner (1990) described the larger impact of the model. Radio developed as a commercial enterprise at the same time the nation’s corporations figured out how to expand their systems of mass production and mass consumption, thus laying the foundation for today’s consumer-driven capitalist society. The mass media were the means to direct the public’s attention toward the benefits of a consumer-driven society.

By the latter part of the 20th century, thanks to Congress and the courts, control of the broadcast industry model had moved from amateurs and entrepreneurs to licensed corporate operators to corporate operators governed by chain-broadcasting and fairness doctrine rules. The reality is that there were other directions the broadcast industry could have taken, but the social and political forces of the 1920s and 1930s pushed aside such alternatives as spectrum regulation, amateur radio operators, and nonprofit broadcasters

(Streeter, 1996). Instead, the industry was set up so that it was vertically integrated, highly regulated, and placed in the hands of just a few corporations. One of the consequences of vertical integration is that the corporations involved control everything from the development, manufacture, and sale of the technology to the creation and dissemination of the programming. With all of these interlocking components, changing the system becomes difficult, if not impossible. Commercial television, in particular, has developed into both a business enterprise designed to maximize profit and an enterprise dependent on government intervention for its survival. While statewide public affairs television is also dependent on some form of government intervention for its creation and survival, it has no need to make a profit. That alters the commercial television model substantially and opens up the possibilities for the kinds of information that can be offered. Nor are these networks necessarily trying to garner an audience. In fact, in most cases they refuse to subscribe to ratings services or conduct research that would provide data about who is watching. They also lack a profit motive, which theoretically should allow them to focus on producing content that offers the greatest civic value. However, these systems are constrained by the need to produce content that is acceptable to the legislators who provide funding and access and by the cable system operators who carry their programming and also provide funding in some cases.

In the 1970s, the broadcast model changed again with the rise of cable, and suddenly the potential existed for citizens to take back some control with the requirement that cable franchises provide local access channels. For a brief moment in television history, the public had a chance to put together programming it deemed of value under a 1972 Federal Communications Commission rule that compelled cable systems to set

aside at least three public access channels for community, local government, and educational use (Kellner, 1990). The victory was short-lived, however, because in 1979 the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the FCC's requirement, ruling the agency did not have the authority to enact such a mandate. Nevertheless, Kellner (1990) points out, the precedent had been set, and many local cable systems already were providing access channels by the time the Supreme Court ruled. Such was the environment when Kentucky Educational Television and the Kentucky General Assembly set up what would become the first statewide public affairs television coverage in 1978.

The 1980s saw both the end of the Fairness Doctrine, which meant the commercial networks no longer had to maintain the pretense of worrying about the public interest, and the deregulation of cable. The Cable Communications Act of 1984 essentially cleared the way for cable companies to set up local monopolies. Hailed as a clear example of deregulation, the act allowed cable operators to secure enough government regulation to protect their industry and still run it as they wished. The irony, Streeter (1996) says,

is that the economic conditions driving cable and generating pressures for passage of the 1984 act are the same ones that have motivated most regulation of the corporate economy in general: economies of scale that generate pressures toward vertical integration, oligopolistic behavior, and the practice of using regulation to generate industry stability and political legitimacy (p. 179).

The 1990s saw a further change in the electronic media model with the growth of the Internet, the transnationalization of corporations, and the push to spread market capitalism around the world. Schiller (1999) attributes the change to three factors—the creation of in-house computer networks as corporations worked to improve efficiency, cut costs, and increase profits; the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that the Internet should be

free of government oversight; and the implementation of the Clinton administration policy calling for an Internet free of foreign tariffs, trade barriers, and other restrictions. Still, the latest incarnation of the electronic media model is essentially a variation on a theme and offers little encouragement that it can be a useful source of public affairs information.

Far from delivering us into a high-tech Eden, in fact, cyberspace itself is being rapidly colonized by the familiar workings of the market system. Across their breadth and depth, computer networks link with existing capitalism to massively broaden the effective reach of the marketplace (Schiller, 1999, p. xiv).

Other Models

The work to increase coverage of public affairs on television is not new. In response to the perceived crisis of democratic participation (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Entman, 1989; Fallows, 1997; Jamieson et al., 1993; Jamieson & Cappella, 1994; Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992; Norris, 1997; Parenti, 1986), major reform attempts have taken several broad forms. The earliest attempt to redevelop and invigorate public television public affairs programming took place in the 1990s. A good example of this was the Wisconsin Collaborative Project, which in many ways was the precursor to the PBS Democracy Project. These efforts focused on collaborative work among local public television stations to develop quality public affairs programming for regional and national presentation following the model set by the Wisconsin Collaborative Project. Friedland (1995) found that the WCP stations pushed the national Public Broadcasting System to better understand the role of television in a participatory democracy. In part, this effort led to the creation of the PBS Democracy Project, which encourages member stations to produce content focusing on state and local issues (Sirianni & Friedland, 2001, p. 225-226). This work continues today.

Public journalism was another attempt to alter the commercial broadcast model. Around 1993, some commercial and public television stations began forming partnerships with local newspapers to produce better quality public affairs content. Where the WCP and the PBS Democracy Project focused on the creation of more regional and local public affairs programming, public journalism focused on changing journalistic routines to create better connections with communities and citizens (Sirrianni & Friedland, 2001). Several of these partnerships have lasted more than a decade and continue today.

The early 1990s also led to increased business pressures on local television stations, particularly on commercial stations. A few of these stations saw public journalism as a way to combat market forces and to devote more air time and resources to state and local public affairs coverage. Early on, these efforts focused on election coverage, with citizens at the forefront in setting the agenda for the news coverage. Other projects emphasized quality public affairs coverage. One of the best examples was KRON-TV in San Francisco. For more than two years, the station produced regularly scheduled pieces on race in its series “About Race,” which won national attention, praise, and awards. KRON’s efforts make it clear that television was and is capable of providing in-depth coverage of public issues over a longer period of time, provided the resources and the will are in place (Kurpius & Rowley, 2004b).

The C-SPAN Model

C-SPAN offered still another answer to how television could provide meaningful public affairs programming, with its focus on unedited content that requires no support from commercial market forces. The network is not completely free of financial pressures, however. C-SPAN is dependent on that portion of subscriber fees cable

systems across the country are willing to dedicate to it. Without the cable systems' good will, C-SPAN would have a difficult time continuing to operate.

While its primary emphasis is on gavel-to-gavel coverage of the floor sessions and committee and policy hearings of the U.S. Congress, C-SPAN also produces original public affairs programming that works to provide information and encourage citizens to participate in the discussions and deliberations about national issues. Kurpius and Mendelson (2002) found that C-SPAN's call-in shows, in particular, allowed interested individuals to find entry points into the deliberations, and that these shows offered a high level of discussion.

Despite this, C-SPAN has never claimed that its purpose is to engage people in the deliberative process. Rather, the network says its mission is to cover relevant national events, unedited and, for the most part, in their entirety (C-SPAN Mission, 2006). While this fulfills the watchdog role of journalism by allowing interested citizens to view an entire congressional floor debate, it does not help them work through the deliberative process as described by Yankelovich (1991). In other words, while C-SPAN provides massive amounts of information to the public, it only works in limited ways to engage people in the process of finding solutions to society's problems and issues.

Civic Engagement

Political science and mass communication researchers disagree over whether the public really cares about governmental processes and, by extension, about news coverage of those processes. Numerous studies have tracked the declining rate of voter turnout, the lack of civic participation, and the limited knowledge of current affairs among the public (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Jeffres, Atkin, & Neuendorf, 2002; Rosenthal, 1999;

Scheufele, Shanahan, & Kim, 2002; Tewksbury, Weaver, & Maddex, 2001, among others). The Project for Excellence in Journalism's 2004 media report found declining viewership for both network and local television news. As the report points out, "Network television news was once the most trusted source of information in America. It also had a monopoly over pictures and television reporting from across the country and around the world. Neither of these things is true anymore" (The state of the news media, 2004).

The organization found that by 2002, 32 percent of the public watched network television news, compared to 58 percent in 1993. For local television news, viewership also was down—from 76 percent of the public in 1993 to 57 percent in 2002 (The state of the news media, 2004). Newspapers face an even more dismal situation. By 2002, only 54 percent of Americans said they read a newspaper sometime during the week (The state of the news media, 2004).

Despite this bleak picture, many political scientists insist that the public must have a way to remain informed so that it can make knowledgeable decisions, monitor legislators, and retain a belief in the workability of the system. Rosenthal (1999) argued that since making laws is one of the principal jobs of legislatures, the public must be able to examine how well its legislators are performing that task. To make that judgment, the public must have the information it needs. Jeffres, Atkin, and Neuendorf (2002) reported that their study of political involvement at the community level showed media can, and do, play a positive role in community politics. "Those most likely to rely on neighborhood newspapers as sources," they said, "are less disillusioned with government" (p. 387). Frantzich and Sullivan (1996) found that C-SPAN viewers take

more interest in government and that that interest takes the form of voting in elections, writing letters to members of Congress, contributing money to political campaigns, and discussing issues with other people. In a survey that modeled the study Frantzich and Sullivan (1996) cited and that will be discussed in more detail later, Rowley and Kurpius (2006) found that viewers of statewide public affairs television also took more interest in government, albeit at the state level. They were more likely to contact public officials, write letters to the editor, discuss politics or issues with each other, and contribute to political campaigns.

Yet the question remains: How much information do citizens truly need to function effectively in a democracy? How informed is the “fully informed” citizen? Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) argue that citizens do not have to be informed about every aspect of every policy, but they believe they should be at least “passingly” informed about what government is doing and why.

Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) point out that today “...government is more difficult, popular support is more contingent and effective communication is more vital” (p. 2) because the “traditional ties” that previously helped organize an individual’s political understanding have diminished in influence (e.g., political parties, family, religion, neighbors, and social class groupings), allowed for greater mobility, and placed increased emphasis on communication across traditional boundaries. They noted that this is coupled with a change in media reporting from an outside observer’s perspective to that of an insider participant in the political process. “Taken together, these developments have resulted in the increased dependency of both politicians and voters on the media and the messages they provide” (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, p. 3).

On the other side of the argument are those scholars who maintain that essentially citizens are as informed as they need to be. Rather than being fully informed, these scholars say, it is enough for citizens to pay attention to those issues in which they have the most interest. Schudson (1998), for instance, argues the need for a reassessment of what constitutes a fully informed citizen, pointing out that it is unrealistic and impractical to expect people to keep up with and understand all of the specific details involved in public affairs issues. What he proposes instead is the “monitorial citizen” model. “The monitorial citizen,” he says, “engages in environmental surveillance more than information-gathering. ... The monitorial citizen is not an absentee citizen but watchful, even while he or she is doing something else” (Schudson, 1998, p. 311).”

Other scholars have offered variations of this model. More than 20 years ago, McCubbins and Schwartz (1984) developed a model they termed fire alarm oversight. Although they were concerned specifically with congressional oversight, their model could apply equally well to members of the public. Under this model, citizens make elected officials aware of problems as they arise, with the expectation that leaders then will take action. In other words, members of the public pay some attention to issues, but do not get fully involved until they believe there is a problem. Along the lines of McCubbins and Schwartz’s work, Zaller (2003) developed his burglar alarm model of citizen engagement. “The key idea is that news should provide information in the manner of attention-catching ‘burglar alarms’ about acute problems, rather than ‘police patrols’ over vast areas that pose no immediate problems” (Zaller, 2003, p. 110).

Graber (2004), in her review of research that argues either for or against the necessity of an informed citizenry, found that there is a disconnect between the ideal and

the reality. Ideally, she said, the mass media provide interesting, well-written, comprehensive, and contextual stories that offer the public all the pertinent details they need to fully understand various issues. The problem, she says, is that “there is a huge gap between democratic theorists’ expectation and the reality of how much political knowledge the media will transmit and what citizens can and will learn” (2004, p 550). Further, Graber argues, the majority of the public pays only “selective attention” to issues, and while the supply of public affairs content is likely not a problem for the average citizen, it is a problem for the “attentive public,” which, she notes, “routinely relays political information to less-interested fellow citizens” (2004, p. 563).

Still the disagreement continues about how informed citizens need to be. Converse (1962), for instance, found in his study that, contrary to conventional wisdom, it was the least informed voters who caused the balance of power shifts in election results and that these shifts were most likely to occur when an election—or some facet of it—generated a significant amount of attention, such as a presidential race. He also argued that a voter’s ability to take in information is limited by two factors: “(1) by the volume of output of the formal and informal systems of political communication in the society, and (2) by the voter’s motivation to attend to political communications ...” (Converse, 1962, p. 386).

Price and Zaller (1993) expanded on Converse’s work in their study of audience recall of 16 news stories. The premise of their research was that the political effects of news coverage are best understood by understanding who *gets* the news as opposed to who is merely exposed to the news because “only people who actually acquire information from the news can use it in forming and changing their political evaluations”

(Price & Zaller, 1993, p. 134.) Ultimately they concluded that “better-informed people are both more likely to use the news media and more likely, by virtue of their stored informational resources, to gain from that use” (p. 158). Like Price and Zaller, Gilens (2001) found that exposure to information has the greatest effect on those who already have some general political knowledge—usually elites.

Gilens examined the question of what impact ignorance of specific policy components has on the political policy preferences of fully informed citizens. He argued that it is not enough simply to make information available to the public. Rather it is the kind of information that is available that matters—i.e., policy-specific information—and he drew three broad conclusions from his research. First, surveys that focus on respondents’ general political knowledge may be useful, but they offer an incomplete picture of the effects of political ignorance. Second, he said, “policy-specific ignorance may well have a greater influence on political preferences than the lack of general knowledge as measured by political information scales” (Gilens, 2001, p. 380). Finally, he said, “policy-specific information has a stronger influence on respondents who display higher levels of general political knowledge” (p. 380).

No Interest?

A common perception among television professionals is that viewers are not interested in politics, but a Pew Research Center poll refutes that belief (Audience interest by question, 2002). The survey compared answers to a standard question about a person’s general interest in political coverage. Only 29 percent of the survey’s respondents reported they would be “very interested” about “issues and activities in state government and politics.” However, the same survey found when people were asked

about their interest in specific functions of government, the support for coverage jumped to more than 53 percent. For example, 64 percent of survey respondents said they were “very interested” in coverage about what government can do to reduce health care costs (Audience interest by question, 2002). This suggests that citizens may very well be interested in media coverage of at least some specific areas of government performance.

Poindexter and McCombs (2001) found, too, that there was a clear relationship between those respondents who believed it was their civic duty to keep informed and their use of newspapers, network television news, and local television news to do so. Their conclusion was that the media’s efforts to attract and retain viewers and readers would be better spent in promoting and strengthening “the fundamental democratic principle—a good citizen has a duty to keep informed. This is the news industry’s best hope for reversing the decline in news media use” (p. 124).

Politicians and the Media

While much of the civic engagement literature focuses on how the public responds to media content, a number of researchers have studied this area from the standpoint of the relationship between politicians and the media—specifically, Congress and the press. These researchers can be divided into three groups. One segment maintains that the media are nothing more than recorders of current events, dependent on official sources to point them in the direction of carefully scripted happenings. That is, sources create news and reporters shape the information into a story.

Boorstin (1992), for instance, writes of the rise of the pseudo-event and the media’s dependence on such contrived events to provide them with a steady, reliable stream of news to publish or broadcast. Among the specific types of pseudo-events

researchers have examined are the news interview (Clayman & Heritage, 2002), presidential news conferences (Manheim, 1979), and presidential public appearances (Canes-Wrone, 2001; Hager & Sullivan, 1994, Kernell, 1997). Clayman and Heritage (2002) write about the news interview, describing it as a game with well-established rules. Each side knows what the rules are, and each side comes into the interview with specific expectations about what sort of news will be produced. Over time, they write, the news interview has become more adversarial as interviewers have learned how to press for the answers they are looking for and interviewees have learned how to deflect questions they do not really want to answer. Even so, Clayman and Heritage (2002) say, an element of uncertainty remains; news interviews can boost both politicians' and reporters' reputations dramatically or they can damage them irrevocably.

Canes-Wrone (2001), Hager and Sullivan (1994), Kernell (1997), and Manheim (1979) examined the public capacities of presidents, and argued that whatever the public event is, it is almost certain to make news. This is because the president has access to reporters in ways that other federal officials do not. Manheim (1979) specifically examined the presidential news conference. Although the White House press office goes to great lengths to control news conferences, Manheim (1979) said, in the end it is not a forum controlled by either the president or the press. Over time, reporters' questions have become designed to limit the president's options in answering. The result is that the presidential news conference more often resembles a negotiation rather than a top-down model of information transmission.

Hager and Sullivan (1994) explain why presidents are moving away from news conferences and toward more staged events. They underscore the notion that each

president comes into office within a particular context—for instance, George Bush in 2000 after the controversial Supreme Court decision giving him the presidency. It is this context that often shapes what presidents do, rather than what they each bring to the job. Considering that, it is not surprising that there is more of a move toward staged events. Canes-Wrone (2001) and Kernell (1997) studied the increasing tendency of presidents to circumvent the press conference and congressional bargaining by going public. Such a strategy can be effective in drawing attention to issues important to the president, they say, given that the presidency is the most prominent institution in the news and that there is an entire White House press corps just waiting for something to write about. The danger, they say, is that it leaves little room for public discussion of an issue and little room for negotiating with Congress. Going public, therefore, works best when presidents use it sparingly.

In the case of the states, the governors share similar public capacities as the president. Media attention traditionally focuses on the 50 governors, generally at the expense of their legislatures. Statewide public affairs television provides a way for legislators to reshape the balance of power by giving them a way to reach ordinary citizens and by giving citizens a way to see the governmental process at work with little of the filtering done by the traditional media and by the governors' press offices. In other words, citizens get a more complete picture.

Another group of researchers has examined in depth the idea that the news is “indexed” to the concerns and discussions going on in government. Bennett (1990) was one of the first to describe the relationship between media and government this way, although other scholars (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1980; Gitlin, 1980; Lawrence, 2000;

Molotch & Lester, 1975; Tuchman, 1977, 1972) have examined the same thing under different names. Bennett (1990) examined the *New York Times*' coverage of U.S. funding for the Nicaraguan contras in developing his concept of an index of news. What he found was that the *Times* did, in fact, allow officials to set the range of acceptable coverage on the issue. In this case, it was Congress. By acceding to the official "index," Bennett says, the *Times* effectively shut out any alternative or oppositional views of the funding issue.

At the heart of Bennett's indexing theory is David Manning White's (1950) gatekeeper theory. Basically, White argued that only a fraction of the information available to newspapers is actually put into print and then only after it has been filtered through the subjective thought processes of an editor or editors. These editors decide what to put in the newspaper based on what feels right to them, on what they perceive their audience wants. Whether they actually have an accurate idea of what their audience wants is immaterial. The result is that the public gets a created version of the news that does not necessarily reflect its interests or provide it with the information it needs to understand important policy issues. Statewide public affairs television alters the gatekeeper role, mostly because it usurps the commercial media's place. It offers information without the mass media filter, thereby allowing audiences to see their government at work in a more direct way. Statewide public affairs television also falls in line with Bennett's indexing model. The information being sent out through the network feed is not controlled by the traditional media. Reporters and editors, of course, have the option not to use the content or to question the information that is provided, but with the ever-increasing pressures presented by understaffing, shrinking news holes, and inexperience, it is reasonable to question whether they will.

Finally, there are a number of scholars who argue that the best way to look at the relationship between the media and the politicians is to consider the media as the fourth branch of government, although one not sanctioned by the Constitution (Cater, 1959; Cook, 1998). In a famous passage from the opening of his book, Cater described the role of the Washington reporter as that of recorder and participant. “He is the indispensable broker and middleman among the subgovernments of Washington. He can choose from among the myriad events that seethe beneath the surface of government which to describe, which to ignore” (1959, p. 7). Cater was writing at a time when the executive branch had become the primary generator of legislative programs. Congress, on the other hand, found itself increasingly in an oversight and review capacity. In both cases, publicity took on even more importance as each side tried to make its arguments to each other and to the public.

Cook (1998) explored Cater’s contention that the media function as a fully institutionalized fourth branch of government. Although journalists vehemently disagree with this characterization, Cook (1998) showed how the norms and routines of journalism fit with the government’s need to disseminate information. Further, the government and the press are intertwined because of all the subsidies the media receive, whether they involve preferential postal privileges in the case of print or free spectrum space in the case of broadcast. Far from being a one-sided, top-down relationship, Cook argues, the connection between the press and the government is a negotiated one, with both sides holding equal bargaining positions.

Blumler and Gurevitch (1981) also examined the construction of political communication from the perspective of the politicians and the press and concluded that

the two are “locked into a complex set of transactions” (p. 485). What has happened, Blumler and Gurevitch say, is that the relationship between the press and the politicians has grown increasingly intertwined over the past few decades. It is the quintessential love-hate relationship. They argue, fight, use each other, and in the end share the same disdain for members of the public. As a result, much of the news content that is produced is aimed at each other, and not the public.

Blumler and Gurevitch describe the relationship as one that derives

from interactions between (1) two sets of mutually dependent and mutually adaptive actors, pursuing divergent (though overlapping) purposes, whose relationships with each other are typically (2) role-regulated, giving rise to (3) an emergent shared culture, specifying how they should behave toward each other, the ground rules of which are (4) open to contention and conflicting interpretation, entailing a potential for disruption, which is often (5) controlled by informal and/or formal mechanisms of conflict management (p. 476-477).

In the current political communication system, journalists and politicians talk at, around, and to each other, but not necessarily to the public. Such a relationship, although mutually beneficial, has consequences for the content that results. Blumler and Gurevitch (1981) suggest four possible consequences: (1) Established power holders hold a privileged position in such a system, and it is easier for them to get the media’s attention; (2) Despite the politicians’ relatively easy access, journalists still control how the message is presented; (3) The audience takes a back seat; and (4) It is hard for anything that deviates from the norm or that smacks of innovation to get attention, in part because so many people have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.

Several other scholars have tackled the question of the media’s role when it comes to governance, but from the standpoint of who sets the agenda in Washington (Edwards & Wood, 1999; Epstein & Segal, 2000; Jacobs, et al., 1997; Kollman, 1998;

Manheim, 1994; Schlozman & Tierney, 1986). Essentially what they conclude is that the president has some ability to get issues into the public eye, Congress has less capacity to do so, and the media have the most power of all. If an issue achieves high salience in the media, then Washington officials are almost certainly going to have to address it.

Role of Public Affairs Television

This is where C-SPAN comes in. Over the course of its nearly 30-year existence, the network has become an integral part of Washington, D.C., politics. The network's success in achieving this status is due in large measure to its ability to "maintain its position as an 'honest broker,' providing access to the public and the policymakers in a fair and honest way" (Frantzich & Sullivan, 1996, p. 327). Politicians ignore C-SPAN and the impact of its broadcasts of Congress at their peril because of its power to help them exchange and manage information, as well as give them one more way in which to reach constituents. Further, C-SPAN provides an easily accessible, permanent record of what representatives and senators say, or of what they do not say. As such, it can be a formidable election tool for both incumbents and challengers. In short, C-SPAN has become an institution in much the same way that Cook (1998) argued that the traditional national media have become an institution in Washington. Cook maintains that the national media and the federal government collaborate almost constantly in the dissemination of news, albeit without any sinister intent. In fact, Cook (1998) says, the government more often than not deliberately pursues media help in getting out its information rather than the other way around. This relationship between the media and government is so strong, he continues, that for all intents and purposes, the media should be considered as formal and structured a branch of governance as the three specifically

outlined in the U.S. Constitution and as intertwined with them as they are with each other. Despite this linking, however, the relationship is not as one-sided as it may seem because while the government may try to use the media to get its message out, it has little ability to control the final form the message actually takes. As an example, Cook (1998) cites the presidential press conference. All the elements of control are there for the White House public relations office—it sets the time, place, duration, topic, and parameters for questions, among other things. Yet what stories actually are written or broadcast, or, indeed, if any are written or broadcast at all, is out of the White House’s hands. In that sense, the relationship between the media and government is a negotiated one and one in which the media exercise influence as well. The question is whether the same can be said of statewide public affairs television.

Statewide public affairs television imitates some of the elements of the C-SPAN model. While the stated mission of statewide public affairs television is “to proactively support the establishment and expansion of noncommercial networks devoted to providing citizens with access to unbiased information about state government deliberations and public policy events” (National Association of Public Affairs Networks, 2006), research has shown that the general audience for these networks is small. Frantzich and Sullivan (1996) point to a 1995 Multimedia Audience Report that found that 8.6 percent of the population had viewed C-SPAN “within the last seven days.” On the other hand, Rowley and Kurpius (2006) found that 15.2 percent of those responding to a survey about statewide public affairs television said they had watched their network once in the last week. Although statewide public affairs television appears to have a larger audience than C-SPAN in terms of percentages, the numbers are somewhat

misleading because of the small sample in the survey. Statewide public affairs television still does not reach a majority of the available audience. Nor is it reasonable in this day and age of information overload and declining television viewership to expect that potential viewers will sit through coverage of entire legislative sessions. Most people simply do not have the time or the interest to make such an effort. Given that, the public affairs programming surrounding the gavel-to-gavel coverage takes on an added importance in giving citizens the opportunity to become informed about what government is doing. Such public affairs programming typically takes the form of legislative highlights shows, expert panels, journalist round tables, and audience call-in programs. While statewide public affairs television has great potential for such programming, in reality, the quality and amount of it varies markedly from state to state.

Statewide public affairs television provides the opportunity for a different relationship—one between the politicians and the public. The networks effectively eliminate the commercial media component of the information flow, giving the public a more direct path to news about state government. Like C-SPAN's content, the product these state networks offer is not unfiltered, although it is minimally edited. Decisions have to be made about what to cover. But once the decision is made, the coverage is complete from beginning to end, giving the public more of a chance to evaluate issues or debates for itself, without having reporters do it for them. Statewide public affairs television also offers citizens a way to expand both their knowledge of state government issues and their ability to have input into the decisions and policies that are made.

The Audience for Public Affairs Television

Frantzich and Sullivan (1996) provide a fairly complete, though now a bit dated, demographic overview of the C-SPAN audience. They describe C-SPAN viewers as considerably more educated, older, and more male, with higher incomes and a greater interest in public affairs coverage than the general population. Their research found that 30 percent of the C-SPAN audience held college degrees and that 52 percent of all college graduates have watched C-SPAN.

Frantzich and Sullivan (1996) also found that only 14 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds watched C-SPAN, while 16 percent of people ages 65 and older watched the network. More than 79 percent of viewers were non-minorities. The most interesting area in the study was political activity. C-SPAN viewers are more knowledgeable about current events and 98 percent of them vote (Viewer statistics, 2006). Frantzich and Sullivan (1996) say that C-SPAN viewers are twice as likely as non-viewers to discuss politics, contribute to campaigns, and write to members of Congress. The bottom line is C-SPAN attracts a politically interested and active set of viewers. Thus it is of no surprise that C-SPAN viewers are interested in issues coverage.

In a survey conducted as part of a media credibility study, Rowley and Kurpius (2006) found that statewide public affairs television viewers share many of the characteristics of the C-SPAN audience, but they also demonstrate some differences. Statewide public affairs television viewers are primarily college-educated, middle-aged Caucasians who discuss politics, write letters to the editor, and contribute to political campaigns. Where they differ markedly from C-SPAN viewers is in gender and income. Survey responses indicated that the majority of statewide public affairs television viewers

are female and make less than \$30,000 a year, which was an unexpected finding given the C-SPAN data and the anecdotal data from the people who run the statewide networks. In numerous interviews conducted as part of research prior to the survey (Kurpius & Rowley, 2004, 2003; Rowley & Kurpius, 2005), the administrators of these networks stated their firm belief that the audience for their content consisted primarily of legislators, legislative staff members, lobbyists, statehouse reporters, and a handful of political junkies—the elite.

While the survey findings indicated that the audience is more diverse than that, the results also reiterated that most of the people who watch these networks are elites who use the content to monitor policy development issues, in the mode of the monitorial citizen described by Schudson (1998), Zaller (2003), Graber (2004), and others. One of the strongest findings was that the primary reason people watch statewide public affairs television is to hear about the day's events. The easiest way for viewers to do this is through the legislative highlights programs many of these networks air. Such highlights shows by their nature focus on key pieces of information rather than specific details. They allow viewers to practice “environmental surveillance,” as Schudson terms it or react to the “burglar alarms” signaling important issues, in Zaller's words. By watching this type of programming, viewers can stay informed about the issues they deem important, which is precisely how Graber (2004) describes today's engaged citizens. They pay attention and take action as they feel the need. Indeed, the data showed that the viewers of these networks will engage in such activities as trying to persuade someone to adopt a particular political position, or contact a public official, or contribute to a

campaign. The willingness to participate and provide input, in turn, allows viewers to have an impact on how policies are shaped.

Policy-Making

As described previously, policy-making long has been recognized as one of the primary functions of government at any level. Yet the question of *how* policy is made is one that has stymied researchers for decades. As a result, a large body of work exists on the subject, but not a lot of agreement. Part of the problem stems from the complexity of the components that go into public policy (Dye, 1975; Ingram & Schneider, 1995).

Ingram and Schneider, for instance, describe public policy as “a complex combination of elements, including goals and objectives, agents and implementation structures, targets, tools, rules, and rationales” (1995, p. 444).

In trying to explain how policy is made, Schneider and Ingram (1993) decided to focus on how policy-makers conceive of, and act toward, various target populations in reaching their decisions. They developed a four-part typology of target populations on which to base their evaluations of policy-makers. Thus, they look at how decision-makers react to the advantaged, the contenders, the dependents, and the deviants in crafting policy. In their typology, Schneider and Ingram describe the advantaged as consisting of such segments of the population as the elderly, business people, veterans, and scientists. Contenders include the rich, large unions, minority groups, the cultural elite, and the Moral Majority. Dependents include children, mothers, and the disabled, and the deviant category consists of criminals, drug addicts, Communists, flag burners, and gangs. Schneider and Ingram (1993) argue that these target populations vary according to power and influence, and therefore in their ability to affect policy decisions. At the same time,

they say, specific policy decisions can send a clear signal to a target population about what exactly its status is in the larger scheme of things. Public officials know this, too.

In almost any policy area there are multiple logics that involve different target populations and/or different roles for target groups. Thus, even when public officials are pursuing widely held public interest goals, they are commonly able to provide benefits to powerful, positively constructed groups and burdens to less powerful, negatively constructed ones. (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, p. 337)

That is, the benefits of policy decisions tend to go to the most influential target populations, while the negative effects fall disproportionately on the least powerful.

The effect of public opinion on policy development is another area of contention among researchers. Edwards and Sharkansky (1978) believe there are two perspectives from which decision-makers can gauge what policy decisions to make. One is public opinion, the other rational analysis. On the surface, following public opinion seems to be an easy way to determine policy, Edwards and Sharkansky say. “To utilize this gauge, they (decision-makers) need only consult and evaluate public opinion and make their decisions in line with the public’s wishes. Reliance on public opinion as the basis for decisionmaking conforms with a prominent view of the way decisions *ought* to be made in a democracy” (1978, p. 5-6). The problem is that often most of the public has no particular policy preference. Further, officials frequently are limited by law in what decisions they *can* make, no matter what public opinion says. In addition, Edwards and Sharkansky (1978) say, since government officials spend a great deal of time trying to persuade the public to support various policy decisions, it is often hard to tell who is influencing whom.

Edwards and Sharkansky also explore the idea of making policy decisions through a rational analysis framework. For that to work, they say, decision-makers must

follow five steps—identify the problem, determine precisely what the goals are and what priority they should have, gather all the information available on all the possible options, determine and assess the consequences of each option, and choose the option that best meets the goal. The problem is that the framework is unrealistic. Not only is policymaking an “ambiguous, complex, and conflictual process which cannot be broken down into neat categories” (Edwards & Sharkansky, 1978, p. 7), but also no government official has either the time or the resources to follow such a process.

The idea of public opinion as a determinant of policy decisions can be broken down further into the conflict between elite and participatory models (Steelman, 2001), or between elite and mass opinion (Dye, 1975). In these frameworks, the participatory, or mass opinion, model promotes the inclusion of the general population in any decision-making process. The elite model, on the other hand, suggests that policymaking “is best left to the domain of experts and thus is protected from the capricious influence of a potentially uneducated and impassioned public” (Steelman, 2001, p. 73). Steelman finds that neither model can account for all of the elements that must go into a policy decision. Rather, he says, some combination of the two seems to work best, with the understanding that there will be some change in the balance depending on the situation. “The goal should be to structure a decision such that the knowledge from the technical experts can inform the citizen participants, while the knowledge from the citizen participants informs the technical elite” (Steelman, 2001, p. 86).

Other frameworks through which to study public policy have been posited as well by researchers. Schlager and Blomquist (1996), for example, examine three—institutional rational choice, structural choice, and the advocacy coalition framework. Institutional

rational choice theorists, they say, see “public policies as institutional arrangements—rules permitting, requiring, or forbidding actions on the part of citizens and public officials” (p. 653). Structural choice proponents, on the other hand, believe public policies are formed as a result of “the interaction of interest groups, politicians, and bureaucrats within the context of democratic politics” (Schlager & Blomquist, 1996, p. 655). The third of the frameworks—the advocacy coalition—argues that policy change is “a function of (1) the interaction of competing advocacy coalitions within a policy subsystem; (2) changes external to the subsystem (e.g., in socioeconomic conditions); (3) the effects of relatively stable system parameters (e.g., constitutional rules, basic social structure)” (Schlager & Blomquist, 1996, p. 656). Here again, none of the frameworks is able to provide a full explanation for how policies are determined.

Statewide public affairs television does not provide a full explanation for policy decisions either, nor is that its role, but it does allow citizens to hear policy debates and discussions, and to draw their own conclusions. In that regard, the networks follow in the footsteps of the Wisconsin Collaborative Project, one of the first efforts to revitalize broadcast television through the production of quality public affairs programming. The Wisconsin Collaborative Project focused on building relationships among local public television stations and producing content that encouraged the public’s participation in the democratic process. Often, a renewed interest in democracy is one of the first arguments made in favor of establishing a statewide public affairs television system, too.

Norms and Routines

Mass communication researchers have argued for decades that the production of news is very much a function of set routines dependent on official channels of

information (Bennett, 2003; Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1999; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1980; Golding & Elliott, 1999; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Kaniss, 1991; McChesney, 2000; Schlesinger, 1999; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978; among many others.) That is, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) write, media organizations are set up to provide their audiences with the most acceptable product in the most efficient manner, given the time and space constraints under which they work. To do that, the media have developed a specific set of routines that allows them to send reporters out to those sources where information is plentiful and easily accessible. These routines include a reliance on official sources for information, a focus on the most dramatic element of a story, regardless of whether it provides an accurate portrayal of the story as a whole, and a belief that there are only two sides to every story—for and against (Bennett, 1990; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1980; Gitlin, 1980; Kaniss, 1991; Lawrence, 2000; Molotch & Lester, 1975; Tuchman, 1977, 1972, among others).

The advantages in focusing on official sources are numerous. It saves time because officials tend to work in a handful of central locations, which means it is faster to find them. The offices where these officials work generally are repositories of information, so reporters can both talk to officials and find the documents they need or want without having to drive all over town. As Fishman (1980) explains it, the world is bureaucratically organized for journalists.

Fishman (1980), Gans (1980), Gitlin (1980), Lawrence (2000), Molotch & Lester (1975), and Tuchman (1977, 1972), in particular, looked at journalists' reliance on official sources for information. This reliance, they say, is driven in large part by media organization demands to gather as much information as possible as efficiently and

cheaply as possible. The tendency, then, is to gravitate toward centers of information, which almost inevitably are government centers—City Hall, the state Capitol, the courthouse, etc.—because sources and documents are concentrated in these places. The reporter can gather more information more quickly than he could if he had to go to many different places. The problem with this style of reporting is that it favors those in positions of power who have access to lots of information. Left out are those individuals and groups that do not have the ability to hand the media nicely packaged information. In addition, because journalists' reliance on official sources becomes almost second nature, it becomes difficult for non-official sources to even get reporters' attention. When it comes to choosing an official version of events or an alternative version, the media generally give the benefit of the doubt to officials. Still, this newsgathering routine is not inevitable or unchangeable. The media are capable of seeking out alternative sources of information as Kurpius (2003) showed in his study of local television stations and civic journalism, but outside funding and a visionary newsroom manager are critical to such efforts. When these civic journalism initiatives were successful, journalism norms and routines were altered temporarily as coverage focused on issues, or themes, rather than episodes, and greater attention was given to finding a diversity of sources, including sources from segments of the community that usually would be marginalized—particularly in McManus' (1994) market-driven model and in Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model. These best practices efforts, as Kurpius (2003) described them, tended to be limited to how long the foundation money held out or the primary driving force behind the project, i.e., the visionary, remained at the station.

Gitlin (1980), Lawrence (2000), and Molotch & Lester (1975) earlier had found out how difficult it is to alter journalism's norms and routines with their studies of coverage of the Students for a Democratic Society protests, police use-of-force incidents, and the Santa Barbara oil spill, respectively. Even when the media do pay attention, the results can be a double-edged sword, as Gitlin found. The alternative group gets the publicity it wants for its cause, but ultimately the norms and routines of journalism as embodied by members of the mainstream media lead to the neutralization of the group. There are several reasons for this, Gitlin (1980) writes, but the biggest reason is that members of the traditional media tend to come from the elite class. They are mostly white, upper-middle to upper income, and well-educated, and they tend to share the same core values and belief in the American system as those in government. That makes these journalists more predisposed to go along with the government's view of things and to frame their stories that way. Practically speaking, that means that alternative groups tend to be pictured on the fringes, as outsiders who pose a threat to society. The focus of coverage becomes the process of the protest, rather than the issues that are driving the protest. After the newness of the protest wears off, group members are left with the options of either moderating their views to fit more in line with the mainstream, or escalating their protest activities to get more media attention, which in turn pushes them even further to the fringes.

Molotch and Lester (1975) found that accidental events, such as the Santa Barbara oil spill, offer non-official groups the opportunity to capture media attention, but eventually the normal order of things is restored. In the end, the official and the business versions of the oil spill prevailed in the media. Part of that had to do with the fact that the

major media are concentrated on the East Coast, which is also the business and governmental center of the country. In addition, the media are predisposed by virtue of their place among the elite and by the nature of the norms and routines under which they operate to take the official viewpoint.

On the other hand, Lawrence (2000) argues, every now and again, an accidental happening is so momentous and so controversial that public outcry forces the media to adopt an adversarial role in dealing with official sources. Such was the case with the Rodney King incident. Normally, Lawrence (2000) says, police use-of-force incidents attract little media attention. On those rare occasions when they do, the media tend to give more credence to the official version of the incident. However, the Rodney King beating and videotape were so outside the norm and the public outcry was so immediate and sustained, that the media really had no choice but to follow the public's lead. When that happens, Lawrence (2000) says, then there is a rare opportunity for meaningful change.

Tuchman (1978) likens the reporting process to the casting of a net, but adds that the net only will gather information in those areas where it is cast and that the holes in the net vary in size, thereby limiting what gets caught. In particular, she argues, reporters, editors, and news directors have a tendency not to stray from well-established patterns and sources when it comes to gathering news. The news that is produced, therefore, does not really reflect society as much as it reflects the view of those in charge. It requires a conscious effort to look beyond the readily available to find information outside the norm (Fishman, 1980; Kaniss, 1991; Tuchman, 1978).

Fishman (1980) goes further, maintaining that “news is the result of the methods newswriters employ” (p. 14). He argues that through their work routines, reporters do more than selectively report the news; they, in effect, create the news. The concern, of course, is that it is generally a creation of news as projected by the existing power authority. What the public sees is a view of the world as the government bureaucracy wishes it to be seen. Kaniss (1991), too, points out that journalists work under a set of “Standard Operating Procedures” that allow them “to internalize certain professional values that guide them in their search for news and in the way they package what they find. These standard operating procedures both assure that the journalist will be able to fill the newshole each day and that he or she will fill it efficiently” (p. 73). She concludes:

The reliance on eager official sources for information, the lack of quantitative expertise, the need for sexy angles to stories, and the fragmented beat structure of metropolitan newspapers all combine to prevent journalists from presenting the public with a balanced presentation of the pros and cons of new policy initiatives. (Kaniss, 1991, p. 100)

For television reporters, Kaniss (1991) says, the situation is even more pronounced.

... the need for effective video and sound bites and for drama and emotion leads to a distortion of some news and, in general, to the de-emphasis of governmental news in favor of crime, fires, accidents, and disasters. When local television does cover government, it is often the sexier government stories or the more humanistic angles of government plans that are reported, frequently at the expense of more important information. (Kaniss, 1991, p. 132)

Not surprisingly, these well-entrenched work routines have led to criticism that the media frame the news primarily in terms of how the elite or the powerful or those with disproportionate access to the press see it, thereby leaving out the views of those not in the mainstream. Tuchman (1978) puts it more succinctly: “Clearly, whom one asks for

information influences what information one receives. ... That people with power serve as sources bears consequences for the information newswriters uncover..." (p. 81).

As described earlier, the norms and routines of journalism are designed to let reporters gather the most amount of information in the least amount of time and at the least cost possible. This element of norms and routines answers the demands of the market-driven model of journalism that prevails in this country (Bagdikian, 1997; Hamilton, 2004; McManus, 1994). When the bottom line is the overriding concern of media operations, then the most expedient way to deal with that is to develop a set of routines that minimizes the costs of doing business.

Further, the norms and routines of journalism are self-perpetuating. Each generation of journalists is socialized into believing that these norms and routines are the best and only way to do things. The socialization process is not overt, as many scholars have found (Breed, 1999; Donsbach, 1999; Hardt & Brennen, 1995; McDevitt, Gassaway, & Perez, 2002; Sigelman, 1999). Instead, an unspoken code exists in most newsrooms about what is acceptable news coverage and what is not. It does not take too many instances of having a story sent back or killed outright for novice reporters to figure out what they need to do to get their copy on the air or on the front page.

One of the biggest problems with the norms and routines of journalism, scholars say, is the type of content that eventually makes it to the public. Gans (1980) describes it as content built on scheduled events, officially sponsored events, and government-centered events. Bennett (2003) argues that the norms and routines of journalism lead to content that is overly personalized, overly dramatic, fragmented, and unduly focused on the tension between authority and disorder. The public gets little in the way of insightful,

substantive issues coverage. Since the public takes its cues from the media about what it needs to pay attention to (Cappella & Jamieson, 1996; Iyengar, 1990; McCombs & Shaw, 1999), the opportunities for meaningful debate are almost nonexistent. The default then is to whatever the official view of things is. Even when journalists undertake investigative reporting efforts, Protess et al., say (1991), the public seldom takes notice. Rather, investigative reports only generate a response if the officials involved feel strongly enough to do something.

Journalists also use their norms and routines to absolve themselves of any responsibility for the content they produce (Schudson, 1978; Soloski, 1999; Tuchman, 1972). By using opposing sources, direct quotes, corroborating evidence, and the inverted pyramid style (Tuchman, 1972), journalists convince themselves that they have discharged their obligation to present a balanced story to readers or viewers. The fact that most stories do not lend themselves to such simplistic treatment never seems to be considered.

Statewide public affairs television has its own set of norms and routines, which help shape its coverage. Legislative floor sessions are always covered, regardless of whether something more interesting is happening, such as a committee hearing on a controversial issue. The camera angles in both the legislative chambers and the committee meeting rooms are fixed, usually on whoever is speaking and on whoever is presiding over the session. Beyond identifying the speakers, many of the systems do not provide any sort of on-screen text that might give viewers some context to help decipher what they are watching. Critics of statewide public affairs television suggest that without context, the information these networks provide is not that useful to the average citizen.

Those who operate the networks counter that it is not their job to make interpretations for viewers nor is it their job to encourage them to participate in the deliberative process. It is simply to make the information available.

Social Network Analysis

Social network analysis is marked by numerous theories, disagreements about content versus structure, and a history that encompasses both American and British research traditions. Even something as elemental as what constitutes a social network has been the subject of much debate. Banck (1973) summed up the lack of order, concluding that each researcher defines a network according to his or her needs. With no overarching theory to guide it, the path of social network analysis has been full of detours and side trips as one theory after another gained favor and then faded. Among them have been the balance theory (Heider, 1946), the exchange theory (Kapferer, 1969), the political economy framework (Benson, 1975), the focus theory (Feld, 1981), and the contact hypothesis (Nelson, 1989). In addition, different levels of analysis exist for social networks. For instance, Banck (1973) said, networks can be studied from the perspective of the influence of their structure on individual actions or from the perspective of an individual's manipulation of the network for his own ends.

Boissevain (1973), writing at the same time, provided this definition of a social network: "The basic postulate of the network approach is that people are viewed as interacting with others, some of whom in their turn interact with each other and yet others, and that the whole network of relations so formed is in a state of flux" (p. viii).

Initially, social network analysis developed out of the social anthropology field and researchers' dissatisfaction with the ability of the structural-functional framework to

explain the relationships that exist in complex, rapidly changing societies (Boissevain, 1973; Noble, 1973). Anthropologists were accustomed to studying slowly evolving rural and tribal societies. But in the 20th century, the center of society shifted to urban areas, and a much faster pace of life developed. “Structural-functional analysis by definition views societies as essentially static, moral corporations whose members’ behaviour is explicable in terms of, if not determined by, jural rules” (Boissevain, 1973, p. vii). By the middle of the 20th century, such an approach to studying communities was unworkable. Social network analysis arose out of a desire among many researchers to create a theoretical framework that would “be more adequate in tackling problems of urban societies and tribal societies” (Noble, 1973, p. 9).

Sociometric Analysis Tradition

Scott (2000) defines three traditions that form the foundation for social network analysis. In the 1930s, sociometric analysts focused on the relationships found in small groups and developed the technical graphing methodology that often is used to depict the links among members of social networks. Among the early sociometric analysts were Kurt Lewin, Jacob Moreno, and Fritz Heider. Lewin believed that the field of social forces in which the group is located determines group behavior. Moreno developed the sociogram as a way to depict the formal properties of social configurations, and Heider examined how “a person’s various attitudes towards others are brought into a state of ‘balance’ ” (Scott, 2000, p. 11).

Some years later, Stanley Milgram developed his small world theory, and he and fellow researcher Jeffrey Travers devised an experiment to test its limits. Briefly, the theory poses the question, “what is the probability that any two people, selected

arbitrarily from a large population, such as that of the United States, will know each other?” (Travers & Milgram, 1969, p. 425). In the experiment, Travers and Milgram chose an arbitrary target person and a group of starting people. The goal was to generate an acquaintance chain from each starting person to the ultimate target person.

In this case, the target person was a Boston stockbroker and the starting people comprised three groups—100 Nebraska blue-chip stockholders, 96 random Nebraska residents, and 100 random Boston residents. All were to mail a folder to the target person via a series of acquaintances. Ultimately, 64 of the 217 folders sent out, or 29 percent, made it to the target person. When broken down by group, 24 percent of the Nebraska random group, 31 percent of the Nebraska stockholders, and 35 percent of the Boston random group completed their acquaintance chains.

The results were not statistically significant, but Travers and Milgram found “there is a weak tendency for higher completion rates to occur in groups where the mean length of the completed chains is shorter” (1969, p. 438). The mean length of the completed acquaintance chains was 5.7 for the Nebraska random group, 5.4 for the Nebraska stockholders, and 4.4 for the Boston random group. In addition, Travers and Milgram found that as the chains converged on the target, some intermediaries began to show up in more than one chain. “The 64 letters which reached the target were sent by a total of 26 people” (1969, p. 439). Further, among the senders, 86 percent sent their folder to friends and acquaintances, while 14 percent sent it to relatives. Although it used different terminology, the Travers and Milgram study can be viewed as a precursor to Granovetter’s work on strong and weak ties.

Early Harvard Tradition

Another social network analysis tradition developed at Harvard University in the 1930s and 1940s as researchers there studied “patterns of interpersonal relations and the formation of ‘cliques’ ” (Scott, 2000, p. 7). The Harvard researchers of that era pushed the social network field forward with the work of W. Lloyd Warner and Elton Mayo (Scott, 2000). Mayo’s research focused on business but with a sociological twist. He was concerned with individual motivation and its connection with Pareto’s “non-rational” components of action. Rather than the theoretical and applied concerns that Mayo was interested in, Warner preferred to study actual group behavior settings to test theories and to bring a level of empiricism to the research. He, Mayo, and other Harvard researchers collaborated on the Hawthorne and Yankee City studies.

The Hawthorne studies revolved around employees at the Hawthorne Works of the Western Electric Company in Chicago. Researchers found that worker productivity rose regardless of any physical changes in the working conditions and that the increase was more a result of the workers being happy that they were the center of attention than of alterations in their environment. The Yankee City study focused on a small New England town, Newburyport, where Warner examined the social configurations that existed in the town and found both sub-groups and cliques. He defined sub-groups as family, church, classes, and associations. Cliques, on the other hand, were informal associations among people who felt a degree of intimacy with each other and in which norms of group behavior existed. Shortly after Warner finished the Yankee City study, several of his colleagues conducted the Old City study of a city in the Deep South with

the goal of explaining the internal structure of cliques. What they concluded was that cliques have three layers—the core, the primary circle, and the secondary circle.

Homans then combined the two lines of research and developed a theoretical framework to describe group behavior.

He divided the structure of any group into an ‘internal system’, which expresses the sentiments that arise through the interactions of its members and an ‘external system’ through which group activities are related to the problem of environmental adaptation. The environment itself consists of the physical, technical and social contexts of group behaviour (Scott, 2000, p. 25).

The Manchester Anthropologists

Finally, Scott (2000) says, in the 1950s and 1960s, the Manchester University anthropologists “built on both (the sociometric and Harvard University) strands to investigate the structure of ‘community’ relations in tribal and village societies” (p. 7). The best-known Manchester anthropologists of the period were John Barnes, Elizabeth Bott, and J. Clyde Mitchell. They emphasized looking at “structures as networks of relations” and “combined the formal techniques of network analysis with substantive sociological concepts” (Scott, 2000, p. 27).

Barnes, for instance, studied the relationships among people living in the small Norwegian island community of Bremnes. He described social network theory as being

useful in describing and analysing political processes, social classes, the relationship of a market to its hinterland, the provision of services and the circulation of goods and information in unstructured social environments, the maintenance of values and norms by gossip, structural differences between tribal, rural and urban societies, and so on (1969, p. 52-53).

In his study of Bremnes, Barnes identified three types of social relationships:

The first were the sets of relationships the islanders were involved in in their working life—the industrial system. The second embraced the relationships people became involved in by reason of their occupying a place in a territorial system of social relationships. But in addition to these there was a set of personal

relationships which interfused and cross-cut the set of relationships in the industrial and territorial systems. These were the relationships based on friendship, kinship and neighbourliness ... (Mitchell, 1973, p. 15).

Since 1954, when Barnes published his work on the people of Bremnes, Mitchell (1973) said, social network theory has evolved to encompass networks of agencies, organizations, and the units within them, but its origins remain in the analysis of the family unit. This was seen clearly in Bott's 1955 study of 20 London families. Initially, she planned to use social class and the neighborhood to explain the variations she found in the division of household chores, but problems with her data led her to look for a different framework (Mitchell, 1973). She ended up turning to social networks, which she defined as consisting of friends, neighbors, and kinsfolk, to analyze the relationships within her subject families, and "she contrasted the relationships her couples had with these with the relationships derived from involvement in what she called 'organized groups', particularly those relating to work or local government, medical services and schools" (Mitchell, 1973, p. 16).

Mitchell also came out of the Manchester tradition. He argued that there are two aspects to the study of social network theory. One is the structure of the network, that is, the patterns of the links (the morphological features) among the members. The other is the flow of communication into and out of the network (the interaction features). Although researchers have tended to focus on one aspect or the other in their studies, Mitchell (1969) suggested that the two are intertwined, each affecting and being affected by the other.

Among other notable Manchester researchers were Epstein and Kapferer. Epstein (1969) developed the idea of qualitative differences in one's social network. There is the

effective network, which consists of close-knit, socially equal ties. This part of the network tends to be compact. Then there is the *extended* network. These ties are more numerous but less closely knit and involve the members of one's network who likely do not know each other well.

Kapferer (1969) used a dispute among workers at an African mining company to study the tradeoffs that are inherent in the relationships that make up social networks. He found that the individual workers chose sides or picked issues that “allowed them to discharge their obligations to others without incurring too great a loss in their social investment built up over a period of time” (p. 243). A network approach to such a dispute “accounts for the selection of issues and norms, and variations in the manipulation of these norms to serve particular interests in a specific context” (Kapferer, 1969, p. 244).

Contemporary Social Network Analysis

Eventually, Scott (2000) says, the three strands of research converged at Harvard University in the 1960s and 1970s, and contemporary network analysis developed. Early social network analysis tended to have an anthropological or sociological focus, but by the 1970s, more and more researchers began to see its applicability to fields as diverse as psychology, political science, and communication. At Harvard, in particular, Granovetter helped propel this shift with his model of information diffusion. This model posited that acquiring information “depends upon, first, the motivation of those with information to pass it on, and second, the strategic location of a person's contacts in the overall flow of information” (Scott, 2000, p. 35).

But Granovetter (1973) went further in his research, focusing particularly on the strength of a person's contacts, or ties, and the effect that has on the flow of information.

He argued that small-scale interpersonal networks—weak ties—turn limited interactions into larger patterns that in turn feed back into small groups. What he tried to show was “how the use of network analysis can relate this aspect (interpersonal ties) to such varied macro phenomena as diffusion, social mobility, political organization, and social cohesion, in general” (1973, p. 1361). He likened the ties among people in a network to bridges and argued that the more bridges that exist among members of network, the easier it is for information from a variety of sources to flow through. He concluded that those people in a network with many weak ties are in a better position to receive and disseminate information than those with strong ties.

Burstein (1976), Burt (1976), and Crenson (1978) followed up on Granovetter’s work, conducting studies that focused on the transmission of information among members of networks. Burstein looked at data from the 1969 Israeli national elections in an effort to determine the relationship between party membership and voting. He hypothesized that “measures of political environment are often more highly correlated with party choice than are background attributes” and “the impact of the environment is to a significant extent independent of the impact of the attributes” (1976, p. 835). What he found was that network variables—that is, social ties—“have a significant impact on party choice independent of background attributes, and are important as mediators between background attributes and party choice as well” (1976, p. 845).

Burt (1976) set out to develop a way to conceptualize the various relations between actors in a network. He started from the standpoint that there are two ways to look at the intensity of the relationship between two actors in a network: “from the

perspective of the two actors as a dyad which is only secondarily associated with the overall network” or

from the perspective of the two actors as elements of the overall network. The former can be discussed in terms of an asymmetric individual distance from one actor to another. The latter can be discussed in terms of a symmetric social distance between the two actors in terms of their respective positions in the network. (1976, p. 94).

In essence, he found that the intensity of the relationship between two actors in a network is affected by their relationships with each of the other actors in the network.

For example, if one actor is a member of a clique which excludes the other actor, then they will have a greater social distance between them than they would if both actors were members of the same clique—even if the individual distances between them were the same under both circumstances. Further, the distance between the two actors would be larger still if each actor were a member of a clique which excluded the other actor (Burt, 1976, p. 95).

Crenson (1978) examined six neighborhoods in Baltimore—two close-knit, two loose-knit, and two cosmopolitan—and their neighborhood associations to determine what sort of relationship networks among the residents existed, how those relationships functioned, and what effects they had on the residents. In particular, he wanted to know whether it was true that only close-knit neighborhoods could muster the means and the people to engage in local political life. What he found, however, was that knowledge of the existence of, and involvement in, the community associations was highest and most intense in the loose-knit neighborhoods. Those neighborhoods he termed cosmopolitan ranked second, and close-knit neighborhoods were last. The findings suggest “that loose-knit networks may function more effectively than close-knit networks as mechanisms for spreading information about neighborhood associations” (Crenson, 1978, p. 581).

Crenson reasoned that this is because members of loose-knit neighborhoods are more likely to have a variety of information sources and thus have access to more kinds

of information. "... the fact that loose-knit respondents became so well-informed about community associations is due, not to the size, but to the structure of their neighborhood social networks" (1978, p. 583).

The flow of information proved to be the key in some later studies using social network analysis. Blau and Alba (1982), for example, looked at the networks among workers at a public children's psychiatric facility. They wanted to know the effects of the networks on individual workers' power within the organization. What they found was that "there were few, if any, cliques, and individuals tended to associate with others outside of their unit as often as they did with immediate colleagues" (1982, p. 366). They speculated that one reason for this was the intentional blurring of network lines. The facility's staff and health care personnel held numerous meetings over the course of a week—both formal and informal—as they sought to keep each other informed about patients. In addition, there was a great deal of crossover from one work group to another, which meant that a nurse might preside over a committee meeting, while a doctor helped coach a ball game. Further, the more an individual worked with the children, the more personal power he or she acquired, and the more influence he or she was able to wield. Blau and Alba concluded that "group characteristics influence individuals' positions in the configuration of power, effects that have consequences that permeate the organizational matrix" (1982, p. 376).

A few years later, Burkhardt and Brass (1990) came to the same conclusion in their study of the effect adoption of new technology had on the network structure and power positions within a federal agency. What they found was that adoption of the new technology altered both. "Early adopters (of the technology) were able to reduce

uncertainty for others, and this uncertainty reduction ability enabled them to gain power and centrality” (1990, p. 119). Burkhardt and Brass (1990) concluded this would tend to give early adopters an advantage within the organization in the same way that innovative companies are able to rise to the top within an industry. Although Burkhardt and Brass were looking at the impact of new technology on a social network structure, their study also touches on one aspect of the diffusion of innovation—that of early adoption. The diffusion of innovation process encompasses four other stages of adoption and provides another perspective from which to examine the growth of statewide public affairs television.

Diffusion of Innovation

Diffusion of innovation is a longstanding theory used by scholars from many research fields, including rural sociology, sociology, anthropology, education, marketing, public health, and, more recently, mass communication (Katz, Levin, & Hamilton, 1963). Although most scholars cite the 1943 Iowa hybrid seed corn study conducted by Bryce Ryan and Neal C. Gross as the genesis for the theory, Rogers and Singhal (1996) give the credit to French sociologist Gabriel Tarde, who defined such concepts as “opinion leadership, the S-curve of diffusion, and the role of socioeconomic status in interpersonal diffusion” in his 1903 book *The Laws of Imitation* (p. 410-411). Anthropologists almost immediately seized upon Tarde’s work, using his concepts to investigate the role technological innovations play in spurring cultural change. One of the most notable of these studies was a 1923 study by Clark Wissler, who examined the diffusion of the horse among the Plains Indians in the United States (Rogers & Singhal, 1996).

Use of diffusion theory in academic research continued to grow, and in the 1950s, communications scholars adapted it to study the diffusion of news events (Rogers & Singhal, 1996). Paul J. Deutschmann and Wayne A. Danielson, in particular, popularized the theory with their 1960 study on the diffusion of news events, in which they concluded that information about news events spread much more rapidly throughout a society than adoption of the agricultural innovations Rogers was studying (Rogers & Singhal, 1996).

As a result of the volume of work involving diffusion theory, many definitions have been developed. One of the most widely accepted comes from Rogers, who says,

Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. An *innovation* is an idea, practice, or object perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption. The diffusion process involves both mass media and interpersonal communication channels. (Rogers & Singhal, 1996, p. 409)

What makes diffusion of innovation unique, Rogers and Singhal (1996) say, is that it involves not only an awareness of the innovation, but also a decision to adopt and use it. These innovations, they add, are primarily technological in nature, and the two scholars argue that more qualitative research needs to be conducted into diffusion of innovation—particularly into the consequences of technological innovations.

Katz, Levin, and Hamilton (1963) describe diffusion “as the (1) *acceptance*, (2) over *time*, (3) of some specific *item*—an idea or practice, (4) by individuals, groups, or other *adopting units*, linked (5) to specific *channels* of communication, (6) to a *social structure*, and (7) to a given system of values, or *culture*” (p. 240). The mass media, they point out, are usually successful in fostering the initial awareness of an innovation, but the acceptance of that innovation is affected more by interpersonal contact. That seemed to be borne out in earlier research (Kurpius & Rowley, 2004b), where interpersonal

contact among the leaders of the various statewide public affairs television systems seemed to be more of a factor in the diffusion of the technology needed to run them.

Rogers' model of diffusion of innovation features five stages—innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Where the decision to establish a statewide public affairs television system falls on the scale may depend on the degree of interaction officials have with their counterparts in other states. DeFleur (1966) argues “actors in a social system who have already adopted a particular item ‘expose’ or otherwise influence those who have not” (p. 316). And Eyestone (1977) found that one of the components of diffusion is interaction. The more favorable the interaction, the more likely a policy or innovation will be diffused. A state “may emulate the policy of another state not because of expert pressure, but because the other state provides a timely model which may be seen as the solution to a vexing local political problem” (Eyestone, 1977, p. 441). Mintrom (1997) also makes the case for the importance of interaction, pointing out that networking allows the “policy entrepreneurs” to learn more about innovations elsewhere, to learn about the experiences of early adopters, and to learn how best to sell their innovations to their stakeholders.

In fact, the officials who run these statewide public affairs television systems spend a great deal of time talking with other, from informal phone calls and e-mail messages to a formal meeting each year where they gather to discuss problems, issues, technology, etc. Their adoption of technology, in turn, has had a significant impact on their ability to provide information to the public. The adoption rates are mixed, however, with some operations using different technology in the same statehouse, and the

technology ranges from low-end basic equipment to more sophisticated, high-end cameras and control consoles.

Most of the scholarship on diffusion theory has focused on its application to technological innovations. Walker (1969), however, used diffusion theory to study the propensity of states to adopt new programs and policies. Specifically, he looked at why some states adopt new programs more readily than others and then, once an innovation was adopted, how it spread among the states. To answer his questions, Walker (1969) analyzed 88 different programs adopted by the states before 1965, the dates they were adopted, and whether they were adopted at all. His data cover only the 48 contiguous states; Alaska and Hawaii were left out because there was not enough information available at the time to provide meaningful results. Through his analysis, Walker developed an innovation score for each state and concluded that new or experimental programs tend to be more easily accepted “in the industrialized, urban, cosmopolitan centers of the country (1969, p. 887). That is, those states scoring the highest on his scale not only were the ones most likely to embrace new policies, but they also tended to be the larger, wealthier, more populated states.

Walker also examined what criteria decision-makers use in determining whether to even consider a proposal for a new program or policy and found that regionalism plays a significant role in state policy-making. State decision-makers often look

to each other for guides to action in many areas of policy ... In fact, I am arguing that this process of competition and emulation, or cuetaking, is an important phenomenon which determines in large part the pace and direction of social and political change in the American states. (Walker, 1969, p. 890)

In essence, regional proximity has a large effect on whether a state decides to adopt a policy. If one or more of its neighbors have adopted the policy in question, then a state is more likely to consider doing the same.

Gray (1973) also studied policy innovation among the states. She examined the rates at which laws were adopted in three policy areas—welfare, education, and civil rights—and concluded that “... ‘innovativeness’ is not a pervasive factor (in policy decisions); rather, it is issue- and time-specific at best” (1973, p. 1185). Gray differed from Walker in her conclusion, arguing that developing an average innovativeness score for each state was not an accurate way to gauge how innovative that state is. Instead, she said, the degree to which a state can be considered innovative depends on the specific issue or policy under consideration and the political and environmental circumstances at the time.

Eyestone (1977), however, believed both Walker’s and Gray’s analyses of policy diffusion have some shortcomings. Gray, he said, opted to fit the diffusion process to an interactive equation and in the process assumed that the states are interchangeable. Only six of the 12 areas she examined showed an interactive effect. The results for the rest indicated independent adoption decisions by the states. On the other hand, the problem with Walker’s analysis, Eyestone said, was that it suggested an emulative pattern of adoption with a regional component. That is, the states tend to follow the regional leaders in deciding whether to adopt a policy. Eyestone concluded that was too simplistic an explanation for how policies are spread among the states. Instead, he said, the diffusion of policies among the states is a complex phenomenon, and different models—such as

interactive effects, independent adoption, and federal mandate—can provide only partial explanations for how it occurs.

Foster (1978) later re-examined the data from Walker's study and found his regionalism explanation for policy diffusion to be a valid one but also one that does not provide a complete explanation for how policies spread. More recently, Jensen (2004) looked at the diffusion of policy, and found that it is, indeed, a complex process. In his study of the spatial diffusion of public policies, Jensen combined organizational theory with public policy research in an effort to develop a richer, deeper analysis. He came up with two possible models to explain how policy is diffused—the internal determinants model and the regional diffusion model. The internal determinants model posits that “policy adoption occurs as a result of political, social, or economic variables specific to the governmental division (i.e., state),” while the regional diffusion model suggests that “policy diffusion occurs regionally and that proximity determines adoptions” (2004, p. 109).

Clearly the common thread running through all of these theories is regional proximity. States look to see what their neighbors are doing. The effect of regionalism on how states make decisions also fits with the political culture research, which finds clusters of states sharing similar approaches to government and governmental decisions. In looking at those states that have statewide public affairs television, it is clear that regionalism does come into play. For example, the Pacific Coast states—Washington, Oregon, and California—all have systems. So do Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, and Wisconsin has a system in the development phase. In the Northeast, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts all have systems.

These systems are characterized by three primary elements. First, they foster the production of content with minimal editing and resources and provide that content to the public. Such technology innovations as robotic cameras, automatic systems, non-linear editing capability, and digital cameras have made it possible for many of these systems to set up with limited resources, considering the amount of content they work to cover. The technology also allows them to tighten or broaden the scope of their operations as circumstances permit (Kurpius & Rowley, 2004b). Second, the content these systems produce is a source of information for reporters working for more traditional media, such as newspapers and commercial television (Rowley & Kurpius, 2005). In addition to providing basic gavel-to-gavel coverage, many of these systems can cover events outside of the capital, shift coverage easily from one chamber to another or from one committee room to another, develop their own public affairs programming, and offer non-government related content if they wish. Finally, with just a few exceptions, these systems tend not to hire trained journalists, but instead rely on employees with technical backgrounds (Kurpius & Rowley, 2004b).

Rogers and Singhal (1996) talked about the need to study the consequences of the diffusion of technological innovations. One of the consequences of this diffusion of technology is that it helps the diffusion of information and ultimately leads to the creation of additional space on television (including cable, satellite, and broadcast) for state public affairs content. For instance, at one statewide public affairs television system that relied on the two legislative bodies to provide coverage, there was no provision for archiving. One of the engineers at the statehouse took it upon himself to handle the task. There in the control room behind the racks are rows of DVCam tapes—digital recordings of the

proceedings that make up the most comprehensive archive that system has to date. This potentially important video archive holds value as the network covers state issues over time. The engineer simply thought someone might want them someday and that it was a shame to miss the opportunity.

In the end, information is the key. For decades, the commercial media provided the primary means for watching what state government was doing. That role has diminished considerably, however, in the wake of a changing industry, leaving the question of where the public can go to get the information it wants or needs. Statewide public affairs television systems offer an alternative, but only if state governments make the conscious policy decision to establish them.

The availability of new technology has allowed statewide public affairs television to create content that distinguishes it from traditional media. That content tends to be more substantive, more complete, and more widely disseminated than that of traditional media. The wider dissemination comes courtesy of the cable systems in each state, which set aside channel space for statewide public affairs television because they need the content to fill airtime and because it demonstrates their commitment to public service. This, in turn, helps the cable systems maintain their monopolies in the communities they serve. The more substantive and complete coverage the networks air is a result of the unfiltered nature of the content and the ability of the statewide public affairs television systems to stay with legislative hearings and floor sessions from start to finish.

Institutionalism

The work in institutional theory essentially comes down to trying to answer two questions: How does one define an institution, and how does one explain how an

institution functions? For more than a century scholars have debated these questions in the context of institutionalism and the closest they have come to an answer is ... it depends. Specifically, it depends on what area one is talking about (economics, sociology, or political science), what academic tradition one is talking about (European or American), and what time frame one is talking about (early institutionalism versus new institutionalism).

The definitions of institutionalism have proved to be as varied as the scholars who have studied it. Hughes (1936), for instance, explained it this way: “The only idea common to all usages of the term institution is that of some sort of establishment or relative permanence of a distinctly social sort” (p. 180). Selznick (1957) had this definition:

Institutionalization is a *process*. It is something that happens to an organization over time, reflecting the organization’s own distinctive history, the people who have been in it, the groups it embodies and the vested interests they have created, and the way it has adapted to its environment ... In what is perhaps its most significant meaning, ‘to institutionalize’ is to *infuse with value* beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand. (p. 16-17)

Davis and North (1970) had this explanation:

At one time or another it (the word institution) has been used to refer to organizations (a bank, for example, is a financial institution), to the fundamental legal rules that govern the economic relations between people (the institution of private property), to a person or a position (the president or presidency), and even at times to something as slight as a particular document (the Mayflower Compact). (p. 132)

Meyer and Rowan (1977) argued that “institutionalization involves the processes by which social processes, obligations, or actualities come to take on a rulelike status in social thought and action” (p. 341). And North, writing later, further refined his definition. Institutions “are perfectly analogous to the rules of the game in a competitive

team sport. That is, they consist of formal written rules as well as typically unwritten codes of conduct that underlie and supplement formal rules” (1990, p. 4).

Institutionalism and Economics

Scott (2001) provides one of the clearest overviews of the development of institutional theory, tracing its evolution over time and through various permutations. Starting with economics, Scott (2001) describes how the theory first came to prominence in Germany in the 19th century. The arguments forming the basis for the theory grew out of a debate over scientific method in the social sciences and whether one should start with human behavior in explaining how economic systems work or develop economic principles that could be both timeless and abstract. Neither side yielded, and it was left to later generations to reach a compromise. In the United States, Jacoby (1990) says,

Institutionalism swept American economics in two waves: the first appeared in the eighteen seventies and eighties, and included the work of Ely, Seligman, and Patten; the second—and more influential—crested during the two decades after 1900, and included the work of Veblen, Mitchell, and Commons. (p. 318)

Scott explains that although Veblen, Mitchell, and Commons all viewed institutionalism and economics differently, all were critical of conventional economic models because they involved unrealistic assumptions about human behavior and paid little attention to the importance of historical change in studying how people behave. Veblen believed that people’s economic behavior was determined in large part by habit and convention. He defined institutions “as ‘settled habits of thought common to the generality of man’ ” (Scott, 2001, p. 3). Commons, for his part, dismissed the notion of individual choice behavior and focused instead on the idea of transactions as the driving force behind behavior. He argued that institutions were nothing more than an imperfect solution to a set of problems. Mitchell maintained that institutionalism offered a superior

way to understand economics, as opposed to the competing neoclassical view.

Conventional economics, he said, “was a hindrance to understanding the nature of the business cycle, and he devoted much of his energies to studying economic change. Like all institutionalists, he was reluctant to embrace an assumption of economic equilibrium” (Scott, 2001, p. 4). Despite their prominence and their arguments, Veblen, Commons, Mitchell, and their theoretical supporters failed to prevail. Instead, proponents of neoclassical economics prevailed and continue to dominate today.

The new institutional economics takes a somewhat different approach, viewing transactions as the primary unit of analysis. The pioneer here is Ronald Coase and his 1937 article, “The Nature of the Firm.” Coase was the first one to explore the idea of transaction costs in the formation of institutions. He was trying to answer the question of why some economic exchanges are subject to imposed rules or enforcement mechanisms rather than the free market. What he determined is that “there is a cost of using the price mechanism” (p. 389). That cost is the cost “of negotiating and concluding a separate contract for each exchange transaction which takes place in a market” (Coase, 1937, p. 389). That is, institutions—firms—arise because of transaction costs. Scott (2001) points out that Coase’s insight attracted little attention until Williamson resurrected it with his work on institutional economics in the 1970s.

Williamson extends Coase’s arguments by pushing them beyond the market versus firm comparison to consider a wide variety of ‘governance systems’ ranging from markets to hybrid organizational forms, such as franchising or alliance arrangements; to hierarchical structures, such as unified firms and multidivisional corporations. (Scott, 2001, p. 30)

Powell and DiMaggio (1991) explained transaction costs this way:

The parties to an exchange wish to economize on transaction costs in a world in which information is costly, some people behave opportunistically, and rationality

is bounded. The challenge, then, is to understand how such attributes of transactions as asset specificity, uncertainty, and frequency give rise to specific kinds of economic institutions. According to organizational economists, institutions reduce uncertainty by providing dependable and efficient frameworks for economic exchange. (p. 4)

Among the new institutional economists, North is perhaps the most recognized.

Powell and DiMaggio (1991) describe North as

... one of the few economists to attend to the importance of ideology and the state in maintaining institutions. As exchanges among individuals grow more specialized and complex, contracts require third-party enforcement, a demand that is met by political institutions, which play a positive role in specifying and enforcing property rights. But states vary greatly in the ways they define property rights, and citizens may view political institutions as more or less legitimate, depending on their ideologies. When ideological consensus is high, opportunistic behavior is curbed. When it is low, contracting costs are higher and more energy is expended on efforts at institutional change. Thus ideological consensus represents an efficient substitute for formal rules. (p. 5)

North (1990), himself, refers to institutions as entities that “exist to reduce the uncertainties in human interaction” (p. 25). As such, they involve exchange relationships—monetary and otherwise. That is, each party has something the other wants and they negotiate to reach a means—a framework—by which they can trade. Over time, these “rules” become accepted across societies and eventually reach institutional status. He points out that there is nothing inherently fair or equal about these exchange relationships, but that generally each side believes it is getting something of value.

Institutionalism and Political Science

The institutional approach to the study of political science dominated the field in both Europe and the United States in the second half of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century. The leading American proponents of the institutional approach in political science were J.W. Burgess, Woodrow Wilson, and W.W. Willoughby. Their work was based on constitutional law and moral philosophy and

focused primarily on the legal frameworks and administrative arrangements of specific political systems or governance mechanisms.

Bill and Hardgrave (1981) described the institutional school of the early 20th century as fixated on formal structures and legal systems, more interested in detailed descriptions of specific political systems and the explanation of normative principles than in the development of testable propositions. Such a focus on the micro-aspects gave way in the 1930s to the behaviorist approach. The behaviorist proponents sought to shift the focus away from the study of the institutional structures inherent in political systems and toward the way people behaved in political systems, such as voting behavior, party formation, and public opinion. Like the early institutionalists in economics, however, the behavioralists pushed too far in the opposite direction from the “configurational” theorists, with the result that a new institutionalism arose in political science.

The current institutionalists

do not call for a return to “configurational history” but do seek to reestablish the importance of normative frameworks and rule systems in guiding, constraining, and empowering behavior. Moreover, it has come to be recognized that formal structures can exert important influences in social life apart from their effects on the behavior of those subject to them. (Scott, 2001, p. 8)

Institutionalism and Sociology

The history of institutionalism in sociology is almost as long as that of institutionalism in economics. In this case, Scott (2001) says, the most influential thinker throughout the 20th century is considered to be Herbert Spencer, whose work spanned 1876-1896. Spencer’s conception of “society as an organic system evolving through time” (Scott, 2001, p. 9) guided most of the major scholars in the field, including Sumner, who found that an institution “consists of a concept (idea, notion, doctrine, interest) and a

structure” (Scott, 2001, p. 9). In essence, Scott says, Sumner’s concept “defines the purposes or functions of the institution; the structure embodies the idea of the institution and furnishes the instrumentalities through which the idea is put into action” (2001, p. 9).

After Sumner, Scott says,

Kingsley Davis (1949) defined institutions as “set of interwoven folkways, mores, and laws built around one or more functions,” adding that in his opinion, “the concept of institutions seems better than any other to convey the notion of segments or parts of the normative order.” (2001, p. 9)

While the work of Spencer, Sumner, and Davis was built around the various social groups to which people belong—family, work, church, economic status, etc.—Cooley focused on “the interdependence of individuals and institutions, of self and social structure” (Scott, 2001, p. 10), and Hughes argued that institutions could be found in the “standardized behavior of individuals” (Scott, 2001, p. 10).

In Europe, the institutional tradition in sociology is generally traced to Marx.

Marx, working in the early decades of the industrial revolution, saw the key structures as the economic: Productive activity had been transformed into involuntary labor. Under a capitalist system, work was no longer an expression of creative productivity; it was alienated labor. The nature and meaning of work and work relations were seen to be transformed by structures of oppression and exploitation. These structures—involving the accompanying beliefs, norms, and power relations—are the product of human ideas and activities, but they appear to be external and objective to their participants. (Scott, 2001, p. 12)

After Marx, Durkheim and Weber are usually cited as among the major European scholars in institutionalism and sociology. Durkheim focused on the role symbolic systems, shared cognitive frames, and schemas play in the creation and maintenance of social institutions, while Weber sought to understand “the ways in which cultural rules, ranging in nature from customary mores to legally defined constitutions or rule systems,

define social structures and govern social behavior, including economic structures and behavior” (Scott, 2001, p. 13).

Scholars working with the new institutionalism in sociology have tended to focus their attention on organizations and the people within those organizations. Such a perspective, Powell and DiMaggio (1991) say,

emphasizes the ways in which action is structured and order made possible by shared systems of rules that both constrain the inclination and capacity of actors to optimize as well as privilege some groups whose interests are secured by prevailed rewards and sanctions. (p. 11)

The new institutional sociology draws from a number of fields, including social psychology, anthropology, phenomenology and cultural studies, and ethnomethodology. Geertz (1973), for instance, developed a concept focusing on the symbolic features of culture, while Durkheim and Parsons moved institutional thinking in the direction of shared knowledge and belief systems. Meyer and Rowan (1977) moved the work further, arguing that institutions form as the rules that govern a specific work activity become established and expand as these rules become incorporated into the structural framework. Meyer and Rowan were interested in the macro effects of institutionalism. Zucker, on the other hand, examined the micro effects, emphasizing how cognitive beliefs anchor behavior. “... social knowledge, once institutionalized, exists as a fact, as part of objective reality, and can be transmitted directly on that basis” (1977, p. 726).

Today’s Institutionalism

The early work of the institutionalists, while considered crucial to the development of the field, also suffered from some important limitations.

Scott described those limitations this way:

Little attention was accorded to organizations. Some theorists focused their analyses on wider institutional structures—on constitutions and political systems, on language and legal systems, on kinship and religious structures—whereas others emphasized the emergence of common meanings and normative frameworks out of localized social interaction. Few, however, treated organizations themselves as institutional forms or directed attention to the ways in which wider institutions shaped collections of organizations. (2001, p. 18)

Later institutionalists—the new institutionalists—made organizations the primary focus of their research. Specifically, they were concerned with how organizations develop into institutions and how those institutions in turn maintain their legitimacy. Powell and DiMaggio attributed the development to March, Simon, and others who

... developed an array of insights that students of organization now regard as foundational elements: the importance of uncertainty and its reduction through organizational routines; the notion that the organization of attention is a central process out of which decisions arise; the concern with the implications of decision making when choices are made under conditions of ambiguity about preferences, technology, and interpretation; and the many insights that follow from the view of decision making as a political process involving multiple actors with inconsistent preferences. (1991, p. 18-19)

In this view, institutionalization of various organizations spreads by a “contagion of legitimacy,” to use Zucker’s (1988) phrase. DiMaggio and Powell (1991) argue that

organizations tend to model themselves after similar organizations in their field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful. The ubiquity of certain kinds of structural arrangements can more likely be credited to the universality of mimetic processes than to any concrete evidence that the adopted models enhance efficiency. (p. 70)

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) further explored what it is that makes organizations so similar and why it matters whether that is understood or not.

Fields only exist to the extent that they are institutionally defined. The process of institutional definition, or “structuration,” consists of four parts: an increase in the extent of interaction among organizations in the field; the emergence of sharply defined interorganizational structures of domination and patterns of coalition; an increase in the information load with which organizations in a field must contend;

and the development of a mutual awareness among participants in a set of organizations that they are involved in a common enterprise (DiMaggio, 1982). (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148)

In the process, DiMaggio and Powell created a framework for isomorphism that this study will use to examine whether statewide public affairs television has achieved institutional status. In their model of institutional isomorphism, DiMaggio and Powell offer three ways in which change can occur: "...1) *coercive* isomorphism that stems from political influence and the problem of legitimacy; 2) *mimetic* isomorphism resulting from standard responses to uncertainty; and 3) *normative* isomorphism, associated with professionalization" (1983, p. 150).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) describe coercive isomorphism as resulting "from both formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations upon which they are dependent and by cultural expectations in the society within which organizations function" (p. 150). More relevant to statewide public affairs television is their summary of Meyer and Rowan:

Meyer and Rowan (1977) have argued persuasively that as rationalized states and other large rational organizations expand their dominance over more arenas of social life, organizational structures increasingly come to reflect rules institutionalized and legitimated by and within the state (also see Meyer and Hannan, 1979). As a result, organizations are increasingly homogeneous within given domains and increasingly organized around rituals of conformity to wider institutions. (p. 150)

With mimetic isomorphism, DiMaggio and Powell say,

Uncertainty is also a powerful force that encourages imitation. When organizational technologies are poorly understood (March and Olsen, 1976), when goals are ambiguous, or when the environment creates symbolic uncertainty, organizations may model themselves on other organizations. ... The modeled organization may be unaware of the modeling or may have no desire to be copied; it merely serves as a convenient source of practices that the borrowing organization may use. Models may be diffused unintentionally, indirectly through

employee transfer or turnover, or explicitly by organizations such as consulting firms or industry trade associations. (1983, p. 151)

Normative isomorphism stems from professionalization, DiMaggio and Powell say.

Following Larson (1977) and Collins (1979), we interpret professionalization as the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work, to control “the production of producers” (Larson, 1977:49-52), and to establish a cognitive base and legitimation for their occupational autonomy. (1983, p. 152)

Specifically, they say, uniformity in the formal education or training for a field and the creation of professional networks help push normative isomorphism.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The mass communication, political science, and sociological theories at the heart of this study fit well with DiMaggio and Powell's model for institutional isomorphism. Policy-making can be placed under the coercive process part of the model, social network analysis and diffusion of innovation under the mimetic process, and civic engagement and norms and routines under the normative process. In this way, institutionalism provides the framework for using these theories to determine whether statewide public affairs television can be deemed to have become an institution.

From a civic engagement perspective, statewide public affairs television provides the information and opportunity for non-elites to participate in policy discussions and to have an impact on what decisions are made. But there are questions about how well these networks achieve that goal because of problems with accessibility, public awareness of the systems, and programming limitations created by varying operational structures. The answers, in turn, affect the public's ability to gather the information necessary to get involved in the process in a substantive way.

The policy-making component offers another way to examine the role statewide public affairs television plays in the state governing process. Previous research suggests that the primary audience for these networks is an elite one whose members are directly involved in public policy debates and decisions. What is important to know is how they use statewide public affairs television in the policy-making process.

Traditionally in mass communication, norms and routines refer to the specific manner in which journalists do their jobs. Earlier research (Rowley & Kurpius, 2005) showed that these networks have had a subtle, but noticeable, impact on the norms and

routines of statehouse reporter. The question is whether the same can be said of legislative staff members and lobbyists. Diffusion of innovation and social network analysis offer two more perspectives from which to study statewide public affairs television. Similarities in operational structures and programming also would suggest that these networks have become institutionalized.

Out of these theoretical components one primary research question and seven secondary research questions were developed.

Primary research question: Has statewide public affairs television achieved institutional status and become an integral part of the state governing process?

Research question 1: How do elite audiences use the content produced by statewide public affairs television?

Research question 2: What role do elite audiences play in the content decisions of statewide public affairs television?

Research question 3: Has statewide public affairs television had an impact on how the state conducts business?

Research question 4: How do non-elite audiences use the content produced by statewide public affairs television?

Research question 5: How have programming and technological innovations helped in the development of statewide public affairs television as an institution?

Research question 6: What obstacles hinder the development of statewide public affairs television into an institution?

Research question 7: Does statewide public affairs television provide a viable alternative to commercial broadcasting in fulfilling the public information and education role originally envisioned when television was first developed?

METHODOLOGY

This project combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies in seeking to answer whether statewide public affairs television has achieved institutional status. The qualitative component features a multi-faceted approach, using comparative case study, in-depth—or long—interviews, and ethnographic observation. The quantitative element consists of a random national telephone survey. The use of multiple methodologies, or triangulation, in mass communication research is an approach that is more the exception than the rule (Cooper, Potter, & Dupagne, 1994; Kamhawi & Weaver, 2003; Trumbo, 2004). Cooper, Potter, and Dupagne (1994), for instance, analyzed the methodologies found in articles in eight journals between 1965 and 1989. The journals they analyzed were *Communication Monographs*, *Communication Research*, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, *Human Communication Research*, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *Journal of Communication*, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, and *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. They found that 57.8 percent of the articles reported quantitative methods, 35.1 percent reported qualitative, and 7.2 percent mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative). (Their results were estimates based on sampling of the total articles over that period.)

Ten years later, Trumbo (2004) replicated the study and found that between 1990 and 2000, 57 percent of the articles reported quantitative methods, 41 percent reported qualitative, and 2 percent reported mixed (qualitative and quantitative). Kamhawi and Weaver (2003) examined a somewhat different set of journals (*Communication Monographs*, *Communication Quarterly*, *Communication Research*, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, *Human Communication Research*, *Journal of Broadcasting &*

Electronic Media, Journal of Communication, Journalism & (Mass) Communication Monographs, Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, and Public Opinion Quarterly) between 1980 and 1999, but they found essentially the same results—71.9 percent of the articles used a quantitative methodology, 25.6 percent used a qualitative methodology, and 2.5 percent used a combination.

Mixed methods research is not a new concept (Brewer & Hunter, 2006; Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Erzberger & Prein, 1997; Weaver, 1988, 1993). The approach first came to prominence in a landmark 1959 article written by Campbell & Fiske, but scholars since then have been slow to adopt it in any great numbers (Cooper, Potter, & Dupagne, 1994; Kamhawi & Weaver 2003; Trumbo, 2004). Despite this, the mixed methods approach offers some advantages. Chief among them, Weaver (1993) says, is that a mixed methodological approach can “provide more complete and more valid answers to many of the questions about communication than do the commonly used single methods such as content analysis, experiments and surveys” (p. 203). Erzberger & Prein (1997) argue that one of the primary reasons to consider mixed methodologies is the fact that both quantitative and qualitative approaches offer advantages as well as disadvantages.

Whereas quantitative research often neglects the fact that social structures can only survive if they are actively reproduced and interpreted by social actors, qualitative researchers tend to ignore that there is an objective social reality beyond individual interpretations or they tend not to distinguish between narratives and reality (Erzberger & Prein, 1997, p. 142).

By combining the approaches, the weaknesses could be, if not overcome, at least mitigated.

What a mixed methods approach means in practice is that

... the research design is split in two distinct and mutually exclusive parts: different data sets are collected, one of them consisting of numerical data, for

example collected with survey questionnaires ... The other data set could consist of unstructured textual material, for example transcripts of open-ended questions in questionnaires or interviews, or verbal records from participant observation. (Erzberger & Prein, 1997, p. 143)

In fact, that is the case with this study. Qualitative data were collected via in-depth interviews and ethnographic observation. The quantitative data came from a telephone survey.

The Qualitative Component

Qualitative researchers employ a variety of methodologies in gathering data—methodologies that allow them to collect and analyze their information in such a way as to capture subtler meanings and nuances than is often possible with more quantitatively oriented processes. Among the most widely used methodologies in qualitative research are case studies, long interviews, and ethnographic observation. Although each stands alone as a methodology, in reality most qualitative research projects use some combination of these techniques because each offers a different perspective on the data being gathered.

Hamel, Dufour, and Fortin (1993) describe the case study approach as one that takes an in-depth look at the cases under consideration using various means—interviews, participant observation, and field studies, for example. The case study's strong suit, they argue, is that "it has proven to be a powerful descriptive study" (p. 33). Case studies, too, offer the chance to examine a larger community while focusing on a few representative examples. Stake (2000) observes that the case study method is a way in which

a researcher may jointly study a number of cases in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition ... They may be similar or dissimilar, redundancy and variety each important. They are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases. (p. 437)

Ragin (1987) and Burawoy et al. (1991) also argue in favor of case studies, pointing out that they are relevant for interpreting historical or culturally significant phenomena or advancing theory. Ragin (1987), in particular, makes the case for the comparative case study method, adding that those researchers “who use case-oriented strategies often want to understand or interpret specific cases because of their intrinsic value” (p. 35).

The long interview is a focused, intense methodology based on an open-ended questionnaire that provides structure to the research and ensures that the same topics are covered with each respondent. It is especially useful in situations where there is not time for an extended participant observation study or where privacy concerns prevent the researcher from getting close enough to the subjects of the study. McCracken (1988) says that the long interview “seeks to diminish the indeterminacy and redundancy that attends more unstructured research processes” (p. 7). The methodology further allows researchers to concentrate on developing broad categories that try to explain cultural patterns and shared meanings. “The method can take us into the mental world of the individual,” McCracken says, “to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world. It can also take us into the lifeworld of the individual, to see the content and pattern of daily experience.” Bellah et al. (1996) found interviews to be a crucial element in their work as well, arguing that “active interviews create the possibility of public conversation and argument. When data from such interviews are well presented, they stimulate the reader to enter the conversation, to argue with what is being said” (p. 305). Fontana and Frey (2000) point to the flexibility of the interview method, observing that interviews can

be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured, depending on the nature of the data sought.

Lastly, there is ethnography. Ethnographers focus on observation, on examining the world around them while at the same time maintaining a distance between themselves and those they are studying. Tedlock (2000) says that ethnographers are expected “to cultivate rapport, not friendship; compassion, not sympathy; respect, not belief; understanding, not identification; admiration, not love.” But the advantage of this approach, Burawoy et al. (1991) say, is that it allows researchers not just to observe how people act, but to find out “how they understand and experience those acts. It enables (researchers) to juxtapose what people say they are up to against what they actually do” (p. 2).

Like the long interview, ethnography works to provide the audience with wider cultural understandings. Its greatest strengths, Chambers (2000) says, lie in its ability to draw out the “native point of view” and to uncover the more unspoken elements of culture. Anderson (1992) used a combination of ethnography and interviews in *StreetWise*, his study of two communities in transition—one undergoing gentrification, the other becoming poorer and more isolated—and the shifting boundary between the two. Through the data gathered from his observations, as well as from numerous interviews, Anderson succeeds in giving readers a clear picture of what it is like to live in The Village and of the changing list of issues and tensions that shape everyday life.

Each of these qualitative methodologies enables the researcher to look from the inside out at how people and organizations perform. They also allow the researcher to focus on the people who make up organizations and how they do their jobs, how they see

their jobs, and how they see what they do fitting into society at large. A qualitative approach, McCracken (1988) says, “does not survey the terrain, it mines it. It is, in other words, much more intensive than extensive in its objectives” (p. 17). The data that result frequently are richer and provide a more contextual picture than that gleaned from a quantitative approach alone.

Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative data for this study were collected in multiple phases as part of an ongoing research project. Some of the data were gathered as part of this specific study, and some of the data come from earlier work done by the doctoral student in conjunction with the professor who developed the original research project. Initially, 20 operating and one developing statewide public affairs television system were compared on the basis of structure, distribution, funding, and programming. A truth table—as described by Ragin (1994) in his work on comparative case studies—was constructed to examine these variables and look for patterns. The networks then were grouped into like categories, and a purposive sample was selected that reflected a representative of each type. From there, visits were made to each organization in the sample to observe its operations and conduct qualitative, in-depth interviews.

The states selected for the initial visits were California, Florida, Kentucky, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Washington. The sites were chosen based on initial data gathered from the Internet Web sites of these systems and brief, preliminary phone interviews. The factors considered in making the selections were source of funding, whether a government, public television, cable, or foundation entity established the system, the state’s political culture as defined by Elazar (1972), and geographic location.

The researchers believed this would provide the greatest source of variation and the opportunity to observe varied models. Not all 20 states with systems were considered, however. Alaska and Hawaii, which both have statewide public affairs television networks, were excluded because of the distance and the expense that would have been involved in the travel. In addition, Wisconsin was selected for a visit because it was in the process of developing a statewide public affairs television network, and it was anticipated that valuable insights into the creation of these systems would be gained.

Table 1. Criteria for Sample Selection

Source of funding	State government, cable industry, private group of foundation, sponsored programs
Entity establishing system	State government, cable industry, public television system, foundation
Political culture	Individualistic, moralistic, traditionalistic
Geographic location	Northeast, Midwest, Northwest, South

Initially, the lead researcher—who is a former television journalist—visited two of the sites—California and Washington—to determine how long it would take to reach redundancy in the interviewing process and what range of interviews would be needed to obtain the appropriate data. The first two trips were scheduled for a week each with the ability to expand that time if necessary. Based on these trips it was determined that a week was sufficient to gather the necessary interviews as long as a trained doctoral student could help conduct the interviews. The data gathered from these initial trips also led the researchers to conclude that the best information would be gathered through interviews with the employees of the statewide public affairs television systems,

legislative staff members, statehouse journalists, and, where possible, lobbyists because these were the groups most likely to be aware of and to use the networks' content.

At this point the doctoral student—who is a former print journalist—joined the data gathering process. Most of the initial interviews were formal sessions conducted at the interviewee's office. The doctoral student, who did not go on the first two trips, then conducted several more interviews over the phone following the same interview protocol. After completing all of the interviews for the two sites, it was determined that there was no difference in the quality of the data gathered from either the in-person interviews or the phone interviews. The professor and the doctoral student jointly carried out subsequent data gathering in Florida, Kentucky, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania. The professor focused on the statewide public affairs television managers and workers, and legislative staff, while the doctoral student focused on interviews with statehouse reporters. Both also interviewed lobbyists.

In each site visit, the researchers continued to interview until they reached the point of redundancy in the data, which happened fairly quickly. At each site the researchers conducted an average of 12 interviews. Except for a few rare cases, interviews were held in the interviewee's office following the standard interview protocol developed for this project (see Appendices D, E, and F). Journalists typically were interviewed at their desks at the statehouse. The researchers allowed the interviewees to move the discussion away from the protocol but in the end the interviewers always made sure the entire protocol was covered. This allowed for new potential elements of interest to develop. Interviews lasted about one hour, with a few running more than two hours.

The interview protocol started with basic structural questions and moved to questions focused on the structure and value of statewide public affairs television.

Table 2. Statewide Public Affairs Television Interviews

	Internal Staff	Legislative Staff	Journalists	Lobbyists	Total
California	2	4	5	3	14
Connecticut	5	3	4		12
Florida	8	1	4	2	15
Kentucky	5		2		7
Michigan	4	5	5		14
Minnesota	7	3	8	2	20
Ohio	3	1	3		7
Pennsylvania	7	2	9	3	21
Rhode Island	1	1	2		4
Washington	4	1	7	2	14
Wisconsin	5		2		7
Total	51	21	51	12	135

For this study, the author selected four additional states to visit: Connecticut, Michigan, Ohio, and Rhode Island. These states were chosen because their statewide public affairs television systems shared similar characteristics with those in the states previously examined and because they also provided some geographic and cultural contrasts. In selecting these states, the goal was to reinforce previous research as well as use the data collected as a means to study the institutionalism question, which is at the heart of this project. Data collection was done through in-depth interviews and ethnographic observation. An interview protocol was developed incorporating the questions from the previous research and expanding it to focus on the institutionalism question. Again, the protocol was designed to guide the interviews and make sure all areas were covered. At the same time, there was considerable leeway for the discussions

to move away into different areas. Most interviews lasted approximately one hour, although a few went as long as two hours.

A total of 135 people were interviewed across 11 states, and the data from all of the interviews were analyzed using the qualitative analysis software NVivo. The software allowed the data to be coded and examined for patterns that could be used to answer the institutionalism question.

The Quantitative Component

Survey data make up the quantitative element of this study. Proponents of survey research argue that it enhances understanding of public opinion. It is not a perfect tool, they say, but over time it has proven to be the most effective and reliable way developed to measure what the public is thinking (Brady, 2000). Through the quantitative science aspects of the survey process, researchers are able to ask questions of a relatively small number of people and extrapolate those results to whatever general population the sample represents with a fairly high degree of certainty (Frankel & Frankel, 1987). The survey is a more credible and objective way of finding out what researchers wish to know than using such things as family and friends, workplaces, recollections, or anecdotes (Brady, 2000). When well-executed, a survey affords researchers the opportunity to obtain objective and unbiased information about the public's feelings toward a particular person or issue.

Arguably, in fact, survey research's most important use has been, and continues to be, as a measure of politically related issues. With it, political scientists have gained tremendous insight into what issues the public thinks are important, what tools the public uses to make decisions about what's important, and how to predict public reaction to

specific issues or people (Kim, Weaver, & Willnat, 2000; Kinder & Winter, 2001; Scheufele, Shanahan, & Kim, 2002). If for no other reason than that, survey research would be a tremendous social science tool.

But it is also incredibly flexible—working just as well for the academic as for the public relations or marketing practitioner. Researchers in all social science fields have made use of survey research. A survey can be used to measure virtually anything—from how Washington State voters feel about affirmative action, for instance (Moy, Domke, & Stamm, 2001) to how TV reporters view their stations’ coverage of City Hall (Coulson, Riffe, Lacy, & St. Cyr, 2001) to whether there is cross-country support for a European Union-wide government (Rohrschneider, 2002).

The actual surveys themselves are flexible in format and can take a variety of forms. They can be conducted by telephone (Curtin, Presser, & Singer, 2000; Keeter, Miller, Kohut, Groves, & Presser, 2000; Singer, Van Hoewyk, & Maher, 2000, Tourangeau, Steiger, & Wilson, 2002), in face-to-face interviews (Javeline, 1999; Zipp & Toth, 2002), by mail, and by Internet (Kim, Weaver, & Willnat, 2000). The field of survey research, too, has shown a tremendous capacity to evolve and adapt as society changes, as knowledge in the field increases (Box-Steffensmeier, Jacobson, & Grant, 2000; Krosnick, 1999; Merkle, 1996), and as technology changes (Couper, Traugott, & Lamais, 2001).

Survey research undeniably presents some problems, with the quality of some of the research being done at the top of the list (Weissberg, 2002). Dryzek (1988) argues that opinion surveys can provide only a flawed, imperfect account of how and why people vote the way they do. Further, the widespread use of such surveys has the side

effect of reinforcing the existing social political order and blocking any substantive alternatives to it.

Empirical scrutiny of political man was once fairly casual. Only in the last few decades has science been brought to bear. ... By far the most popular approach has involved the application of survey research methods, especially in conjunction with the fields of public opinion and voting studies. (Dryzek, 1988, p. 705)

What all this research has shown, Dryzek concludes, is:

Most people are uninterested in and uninformed about politics. When pressed, they express attitudes highly intolerant of unpopular minorities. There is little consistency across any political opinions they do express. Their minimal political behavior is often under the sway of social and psychological forces the individual does not fully understand (in the standard socio-psychological model of voting behavior, vote choice is determined by attitudes, which in turn are affected by social forces). (1988, p. 705-706).

He goes on:

Every time a survey is designed, or its questionnaire administered, or its results analyzed, or its conclusions reported in textbooks, or discussed by students in a class, or noted by fellow-practitioners, political leaders, or the attentive public, then a conception of politics as properly instrumental, individualistic, limited, reactive, and power-oriented is reinforced and furthered, at the expense of a politics of unimpeded discussion and interaction. The mismeasure of political man lies squarely in the path of attempts to promote alternative visions of political life; and if Aristotle is right that man is indeed *zoon politikon*, obstructs man's achievement of his true nature. (Dryzek, 1988, p. 722)

But no one has yet devised a process to replace survey research. Until then, researchers simply will have to keep working to maintain its viability and credibility.

Quantitative Data Collection

The data for this study were collected as part of a larger survey on media credibility. Fifteen questions were developed specifically to ask respondents whether their state had a statewide public affairs television network, whether they watched the network, and what use they made of the information (see Appendix G). The 15 questions were folded into the overall survey, which was conducted via a national random sample

of 605 adults over the age of 18. Respondents to this telephone survey were contacted between September 22, 2005, and November 4, 2005. Trained interviewers from the Louisiana State University Public Policy Research Lab conducted the surveys using telephone numbers selected through a random digit dialing process. All numbers in the pool of eligible numbers were tried a minimum of 10 times with no answer before being removed from the pool. Interviewers made three attempts to contact potential respondents at 72-hour intervals to convert interview refusals. The final response rate for the survey was 33 percent, with a 55 percent cooperation rate.

The survey questions first sought to establish whether the respondent's state had a statewide public affairs television network, with 1 indicating yes, and 2 indicating no. If the answer was yes, the respondent then was asked how often he or she watched the network. Answers were coded on a five-point scale, where 1 was more than once a week, 2 was about once a week, 3 was once or twice a month, 4 was rarely, and 5 was never ($M=3.68$, $SD=1.41$). Respondents also were asked what their primary reason for watching was. Answers were coded as 1 – track specific bills or issues, 2 – see what a specific legislator was doing, 3 – hear what experts said about an issue, 4 – hear what journalists covering the issues had to say, and 5 – hear about the day's events ($M=3.53$, $SD=1.57$). The survey also asked a series of questions designed to gauge respondents' participation in such political activities as writing a letter to the editor or calling into a public affairs talk show, contacting a public official about an issue, persuading someone they knew to support or oppose a political issue, and contributing to a political campaign or organizations. The responses to each of these questions were coded as a dichotomous variable, with 1 being yes and 2 being no.

In addition, the survey asked respondents to rate the accuracy of news coverage, the fairness of news coverage, and whether news coverage helped solve problems in specific issue areas. To gauge accuracy, respondents were asked how confident they were in the accuracy of news coverage for politics and public affairs using a 10-point scale where 1 indicated little or no confidence and 10 indicated a great deal of confidence. To measure fairness, respondents were asked to rate news coverage about politics and public affairs on a 10-point scale as generally fair to all sides (coded as 10) or generally strongly favoring one side over another (coded as 1). Finally, respondents were asked whether they thought news coverage of politics and public affairs issues helped to solve problems, or made them more difficult to solve. Answers were ranked on a 10-point scale with 10 indicating the coverage helped resolves problems and 1 indicating that coverage made problems more difficult to resolve.

The overall survey also asked about various demographic categories, and the data were included in the analysis here. Education was measured on a standard seven-point scale where 1 was less than ninth grade, 2 was ninth through 11th grade, 3 was a high school diploma, 4 was some college or vocational school, 5 was a four-year college degree, 6 was some graduate work, and 7 was an advanced degree ($M=4.5$, $SD=1.4$). Race and gender were coded as dichotomous variables with 1 indicating non-whites and females respectively. Age was coded as a continuous variable reflecting the respondent's age in years ($M=48$, $SD=16.6$).

Political ideology was measured as an index of a person's self-identified position on foreign policy, social issues, and economic issues. Within each area, respondents were asked to place themselves on a 5-point scale with 1 indicating very liberal and 5

indicating very conservative. The result was a 12-point scale ranging from 0 indicating very liberal to 12 indicating very conservative ($M=9.3$, $SD=3.14$). Finally, partisan affiliation was measured on a 5-point scale with 1 indicating strong Democrats, 2 weak Democrats, 3 independents, 4 weak Republicans, and 5 strong Republicans ($M=2.94$, $SD=1.33$).

RESULTS

Initial coding of the interview data yielded 32 categories, which were collapsed into 15 (see Appendix H). An examination of the original set of categories showed considerable overlap among them, so some consolidation was necessary to ensure that every item coded was placed in a discrete category and that a clear distinction could be made in the information provided by each category. Then a textual analysis of the data was done and the findings used to address the research questions posed by this study. The data gleaned from the telephone survey were descriptive in nature and a series of cross-tabs were run to try to determine what they showed about the non-elite audience for statewide public affairs television.

Research Question 1

How do elite audiences use the content produced by statewide public affairs television?

Journalism Routines

For the majority of reporters interviewed, statewide public affairs television has become another tool in covering state government.² Primarily they use the network feeds for monitoring purposes, and often that monitoring takes place while they are writing another story or waiting for phone calls to be returned. Depending on the state, they can monitor House and Senate floor debates, as well as legislative committee hearings, press conferences, and state Supreme Court arguments. In short, many of them said, access to statewide public affairs television allows them to multi-task.

² Information under Journalism Routines reprinted with permission of *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*

The reporters also use the feed as a way to cover events that they cannot physically be present for or to cover something that breaks unexpectedly in a committee hearing or legislative floor debate. One reporter observed that “government is a slow-moving, ponderous kind of thing and there’s a lot of stuff we don’t really care about. So you can be working on other things here ... kind of monitoring out of the side of one ear on the TV and when good stuff happens, we can either watch it down here or run upstairs.”

For television reporters, the feeds are an important source of sound bites and are frequently clearer than what they might obtain on their own from a hearing room or a legislative chamber. Further, in those states where statewide public affairs television provides access to archives, the reporters use them both to catch up on something they might have missed and for background purposes for a story. Television reporters also use archives for file footage for their stories. Reporters cited another use for the feed, too. In some instances, they said, the feed helps them identify legislators who are speaking during a floor debate or a committee hearing—something that is not always possible when they listen to proceedings via the old-fashioned squawk boxes or the Internet.

The access has caused some subtle changes in reporters’ routines. Many said they attend fewer floor sessions and committee hearings, opting instead to monitor the proceedings from their offices. Part of that has to do with logistics—press corps offices in California, Florida, Kentucky, Ohio, and Washington, for instance, are outside their respective state Capitol buildings—and some of it has to do with the changing philosophy of the media. Specifically, stories place more emphasis on long-term trends and the impact of bills on people than on the actual legislative process. Reporters still need to

keep track of the progress of various bills, however, and statewide public affairs television is one more way to do that.

The format and programming of the networks also plays a large role in how much and how often their content is used by statehouse reporters. In California, for instance, where the California Channel's programming day ends at 3:30 p.m., reporters expressed frustration that frequently the feed would end in the middle of a session or hearing they were following. In Minnesota, the House and Senate television services programming day generally ends at 5 p.m., and reporters there had the same complaint. Further, while the Minnesota reporters had access to multiple feeds within the state Capitol, outside the Capitol they were limited to the channel provided for the general public. In Michigan, MGTV is on the air from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and the House of Representatives generally doesn't begin its floor sessions until 1 p.m. That means little of the actual session can be broadcast. In addition, reporters complained about MGTV's habit of running previously taped meetings and hearings that are days or weeks or months old by the time they air, pointing out that those programs do them no good given the timeliness the news business demands.

On the other hand, TVW in Washington, PCN in Pennsylvania, the Florida Channel, and CT-N in Connecticut offer 24-hour-a-day programming. Therefore, if hearings or floor debates run late, reporters have the option of leaving for the night and keeping tabs on things from home. Many of them said they take advantage of that.

Access to archives is another important feature of some networks. Where the archives are easily accessible—TVW in Washington or the Ohio Channel, for instance—reporters make frequent use of them. “I was working on a story related to British

Columbia and their budget,” said one reporter. “The premier of British Columbia spoke at some event six months ago, and TVW happened to cover it. It was great because I could go back and listen to the whole speech.” In Ohio, the Ohio Channel has archived House and Senate sessions in such a way that they are searchable by bill number, legislator, or topic. In addition, the search engine allows users to skip over the irrelevant parts of the meeting or debate to get to the precise information they need. Users also can find every instance in which a legislator spoke about a particular topic or every time a specific issue has come up for debate.

What emerged most clearly from the data is that statehouse reporters consider statewide public affairs television to be just another tool for doing their jobs. At first blush, the networks seem not to have changed journalists’ reporting routines so much as they have become an integral part of those routines. Certainly the routines as articulated by Tuchman, Gans, Fishman, and others have not been altered. Reporters still spend the bulk of their time tracking down their news from official sources. What happens in the Capitol is news—albeit an official version of the news. The development of statewide public affairs television has not altered that. In fact, it could be argued it has reinforced that.

A closer look, however, reveals some subtle changes in routines. Some of the reporters interviewed, for instance, said they take notes and quotes directly from the television feed, and many acknowledged that they do not spend as much time going to chamber floors for debates or going to committee hearings. The disadvantage of watching the proceedings on television as opposed to being present for them is that the cameras fail to capture the nuances of what is happening in the chamber or the committee room.

Because the cameras are permitted only limited shots, they miss side conversations between legislators or between legislators and lobbyists or they fail to capture who is in the room and who is not. All of these things provide additional context for the discussions and debates taking place. Although the reporters concede that watching the proceedings on television is not entirely the same as being there, they also point out the benefits. They are able to keep track of more than one story at a time, they can write one story while listening to a debate on another, which is an advantage when working on deadline, and they can follow the progress of a bill over time without wasting time sitting in hearings that will not yield a story. That, in turn, fits with the changing philosophy many newspapers have adopted when it comes to legislative coverage. They are less interested in the technical processes of making legislation and more interested in the impact legislation actually will have on people.

For virtually all of the reporters interviewed, access to public affairs television has become a way to stretch diminishing or stagnant resources by allowing them to multi-task. This is especially the case in those Capitol bureaus where a single reporter is responsible for covering state government for his paper.

Another of the concerns raised about use of statewide public affairs television is who controls the signal—in other words, who is the gatekeeper? It is true that the commercial media do not control the signals emanating from these television services nor do they make the decisions about what floor debates or committee hearings are covered. In fact, who controls the signal varies among the networks. In some cases, network employees control the equipment and the feed; in other cases, state employees control them, and the network simply takes the feed just as the commercial media do. The

concern is that if state employees are controlling the signal, then there likely is some self-censorship of the network's content because protecting the legislators and protecting their own jobs would factor into coverage decisions. However, most of the reporters said they found that the coverage choices made by the television services staff generally reflected what were considered the most important topics. Occasionally, they said, they disagreed with the decision to cover a specific hearing, but they found that to be more of a minor annoyance rather than a serious problem.

Further, while reporters have no control over the camera angles used for the feeds, it is also the case that they cannot choose their sight lines when they are on the chamber floor, in a gallery, or in a committee hearing room because the media are confined to one spot—they cannot wander. In that sense, little has changed. The question remains, however, of how well reporters are able to pick up on the nuances of debate—the back room deals—when they are watching something on the television. Some say there is a difference; others maintain that if a reporter is truly tuned in to what is going on, it is not a problem.

Lobbyist Routines

Lobbyists also have found statewide public affairs television to be an effective way to monitor the progress of bills or the back-and-forth of legislative debate.

“Lobbyists are fans of our coverage,” said the head of House Television Services in Minnesota. “They can be in their offices and watch our live Internet streaming. We will get calls from lobbyists when we go off the air because it is an issue of importance for them.” The clerk of the House of Representatives in Ohio said she had noticed that there

were fewer lobbyists sitting in the public gallery in the chamber. “They’ll go back to their offices and watch it. It’s made it easier for them.”

Having access to the network feed allows lobbyists to follow hearings and events outside of the capital city as well. “I know I can watch a committee hearing in Spokane that I can’t get to,” said one Washington lobbyist, “and I can watch it the next day. When you have a bill in two committees and a meeting at the same time, you watch TVW.”

Another lobbyist talked about how he was able to get a bill heard in committee that was not originally on the calendar: “On one of the more boring sessions, I decided to spend the morning in my office doing paper work and watching the Senate on TV. They announced that they were going to let committee chairs pull any bill from Rules and put it on the calendar, and I immediately thought of this little water bill that was pretty innocuous but important to some. I rushed up there and tried to get the committee chair to add it to his list and he wouldn’t do it because it wasn’t that important. I asked another member to ask for the bill and he said OK, and he put it on and it passed, and it was because I was watching TVW.”

Lobbyists also have found other ways to use statewide public affairs television. For instance, some ask for copies of tapes of hearings to show to clients as proof that they are doing their jobs or to use in pitches for other work. In other cases, lobbyists have asked for copies to critique their own performances.

The data showed clearly that statewide public affairs television has had an impact on journalists, lobbyists, and their routines. The content provides journalists and lobbyists alike with a tool that allows them to make more efficient use of their time. The ability to monitor proceedings via television or the Internet means that neither journalists nor

lobbyists have to spend as much time sitting through legislative floor sessions or committee hearings that might or might not be productive. Instead, they can keep track of debates and bills and issues and do other work at the same time. For instance, journalists can follow a meeting while writing another story, making phone calls, and waiting for phone calls to be returned. Lobbyists can monitor multiple bills if they are being heard in different committees at the same time or follow bills being debated in out-of-town hearings without having to make the trip. On the other hand, both the journalists and lobbyists interviewed agreed that as helpful as the network content is, it is no substitute for actually being present for hearings and debates. The cameras fail to capture all the sideline machinations among legislators, and such nuances often are more important to understanding what is happening than simply following the details of the process. Further, the availability of the feed has the potential to become a crutch, particularly for journalists who are under constant pressure to do more with less. The worst case scenario, said one journalist, would be a situation in which a reporter who has never been to the capitol follows the proceedings through the statewide public affairs television feed, makes a few phone calls to get some quotes, and then writes the story. Such a story might be worse than no story at all if the reporter is writing it without any understanding of the legislative process or the people involved. The question would be how valuable or informative the story would be to members of the public.

Research Question 2

What role do elite audiences play in the content decisions of statewide public affairs television?

The stated mission of the networks in this study is to open up government to the public, but anecdotal evidence suggests that most of the people who watch statewide public affairs television are those whose jobs revolve around the state capitol—legislators, legislative staff members, lobbyists, and statehouse reporters. In addition, all of these networks are dependent on the state legislature for access in order to produce a signal; many also rely on the state for funding. What this question sought to determine was how these realities affect the programming of the networks.

Political Pressures

Whether a statewide public affairs television network feels political pressure seems to depend on which network one is describing and on whom one asks. The networks can be divided into three categories in terms of operational structure. In one group are those networks dependent on a legislative television feed for their signal—the California Channel, MGTV, and PCN. In another group are networks run by the state—Minnesota House Television and Senate Media Services, the Ohio Channel, and Capitol Television in Rhode Island. In the last group are those networks that run the equipment and provide their own feed—CT-N, the Florida Channel, KET, and TVW. None of the groups is immune to political pressure; the pressure simply takes different forms. Those dependent on the legislative feed, for example, could be faced with the loss of their signal if the legislature decided it was unhappy with the coverage, while the employees of those networks run directly by the state clearly are dependent on the state for their jobs. For other networks, the potential pressure is financial if their primary source of money is the legislature.

And even if the pressures are minimal, the perception of such censorship sometimes can be just as strong, as the data showed. For instance, many of the statehouse reporters interviewed believed that these networks operate as arms of the legislature rather than as independent entities and that the content presented represents the wishes of elected officials. One reporter remarked, “The legislature controls everything that goes on on the floor. They all know exactly what the rules of engagement are at PCN. Obviously they don’t have full access.” Another said, “It’s (the network) taxpayer-funded, but it’s kind of an arm of the General Assembly, so is the House Speaker calling the shots, is the Senate president? I don’t know honestly.”

Even some of the lobbyists seemed to wonder how independent the networks are. A California lobbyist noted that the California Channel never shows the meetings of the Rules Committee, which is the most powerful committee in the legislature because it decides where bills are assigned or if they even will receive a hearing. In addition, the Rules Committee oversees what is broadcast by the Assembly TV and Senate TV services, and they, in turn, provide the signal for the California Channel. Interviewees acknowledged that the Rules Committee had acceded on occasion to legislators’ requests that a hearing not be aired. When that happens, meetings either are moved to an unwired room or are scheduled after 3:30 p.m., after the California Channel goes off the air. At that point, the best the California Channel can do is tape the hearing and show it on a delayed basis. The practical effect is that decisions can be made out of view of the public.

In Minnesota, staff members who run the House Television and Senate Media Services insisted they had complete editorial freedom, although they also conceded it was possible for legislators to work around them by scheduling meetings for unwired rooms.

Officials with the Ohio Channel, on the other hand, operate under the premise that they are there to keep legislators happy and it is up to legislators to ensure the integrity of the content. In that vein, the Ohio Channel does not cover legislative committee hearings and is reluctant to press legislators to open them up. The head of the Ohio Channel said that “what we do is we say that it’s basically self-policing. My role is not to say no to anybody. I tell them, ‘I’ve got 132 plus bosses and I’m not saying no to anybody because you all sign my budget.’ ”

For those networks that provide their own feed, the pressure usually comes in the form of the budget. All of the networks mentioned receive a significant portion of their funding from the state and can be subject to threats of cuts if legislators are displeased by the content. What seems to happen most often with those networks is that they become particularly attentive to the question of balance in the coverage. So if a Democratic legislator is quoted in some piece, a Republican legislator must be found to give a counter-view. While these networks have editorial and production independence, the budget threat can lead to a cautious approach to programming, at least until the network establishes a track record and legislators become comfortable with it. At TVW, network staff members keep detailed records about who appears on the programming to head off complaints that they are favoring one party over the other. One staff member explained< “We once had a legislator who made a comment that he didn’t like how much we were covering the governor. So I immediately picked up my database and told him what percentage of our total programming that past year had been of the governor and said, ‘If you think there is a problem, you tell me because we’re certainly making an effort,’ to which he responded that he loved us and put us back in the budget.”

The problem with having to worry constantly about funding stability or record keeping or content decisions made by others is that all of these things distract the networks from their primary goal, which is to provide the programming the public needs to stay informed about the policy-making process and to help it participate if it wishes. A focus on pleasing legislators at the expense of creating useful, quality programming sharply limits the ability of the networks to offer content that furthers the debate. Rather than living up to their potential for engaging the public, they settle for a more stenographic role. What the data showed was that only a handful of these networks—TVW, CT-N, and the Florida Channel—have developed to a point where executives believe they have built up sufficient credibility and trust to be able to think more creatively about programming and to delve into self-produced content that requires some editing decisions about what or who will be shown. Other networks, such as the cable-funded PCN, California Channel, and MGTv, also have moved beyond gavel-to-gavel coverage, but the programming they produce is relatively safe from a political pressure perspective. That programming takes the form of high school sports coverage, interview programs with state leaders, cultural events, and book programs, and minimal editing is involved.

Earning legislative respect and trust is one of the biggest hurdles these statewide public affairs television systems face. Without it, they are more prone to the political pressures that affect content as they work to keep individual legislators happy. Self-censorship becomes a concern, as does reluctance to explore new types of programming that might draw in more viewers. Constantly having to worry about money and a preoccupation with the appearance of balance also get in the way of programming

innovations. In that regard, statewide public affairs television can find itself in the same position as traditional media where the bottom line and the focus on the “two sides” of the story often lead to content that gives the public little opportunity for meaningful discussion of issues or any context for the information it uses to make decisions.

Research Question 3

Has statewide public affairs television had an impact on how the state conducts business?

Legislative Process

Whether a network is part time or full time, reaches just within the capitol or across the state, or focuses only on the legislative process rather than producing its own programming, the data show a clear impact on the state government institutions it covers. Most noticeable among the effects is the increase in efficiency for legislators and legislative staff members. Put simply, statewide public affairs television allows these groups to keep track of the latest developments in policy debates, follow the progress of specific bills, and, in general, use their time more productively by multi-tasking. Legislative staff members, in particular, can spend more time working at their desks while monitoring proceedings via the Internet or a television set rather than sitting in committee hearings or floor sessions. In addition, the ability to stay informed allows staff members to work more effectively with members of the public. For instance, in Michigan, a vote in the House of Representatives on a bill to make major changes in teacher benefits stalled as proponents tried to gather enough support. Legislative staff members who had been watching the proceedings were flooded with phone calls from anxious teachers wanting to know what was happening. Because staff members had been

following the session from their offices they could tell callers that the voting was still going on and how many votes were needed to pass the measure.

Even staff members who have to be on the floor find a way to use the feed. One said, “If I can’t figure out what is going on (on the floor), I go out and watch a monitor because all the clutter and noise are gone.” Another staff member said that she will watch the feed toward the end of the session “to kind of critique how we did. Not every day, but if we’ve had a particularly tough day, I’ll watch it to see how we did.”

Other staff members said they found the network coverage to be especially helpful in this day and age of legislative term limits. As one said, “I do not necessarily watch it for where policy stands, since I don’t have any direct interest in that. I am more interested in learning the personalities of the members. Because of the term limits, I need to get to know people faster. I can get to know their personalities faster through television.” This same staff person went to explain that he watches when the House Speaker is on “because I want to know what the Speaker is planning. There might be something he will not think to share with me. If I know the Speaker is on, I watch to get insights into the process and plan. That allows me to stay up on the flow of the process.”

For legislators, themselves, the network coverage lets them keep track of what various committees are doing, as well as what the other chamber is talking about. “What we’ve started to find is that in some ways we are contributing to the efficiency of how the institution operates, the ability for legislators to time shift for example. If they can’t be at a hearing at a certain time and we’re covering it, they can go to our Web site and they can watch in real time and whenever they want because we store everything in on-demand files,” said one network director.

Statewide public affairs television also has had another impact on legislators in that members of the minority party find they have more of a public presence than they might otherwise. In Connecticut, “the Republicans (who initially opposed the creation of CT-N) have come full circle because they realize that now when they stand up on the House floor and offer amendments or debate their side of an issue ... whereas before it was never reported, now it goes to a statewide audience,” said one network employee.

With the statewide networks providing essentially uninterrupted coverage of legislative debates, speeches, and other proceedings, legislators also have a means of reaching their constituents that is not possible with traditional media coverage. The unfiltered, minimally edited nature of the network coverage allows legislators to get their entire message out rather than just a sound bite. The remote broadcasting capabilities of some of the networks also give legislators another tool with which to reach their constituents. They can organize a town hall meeting and arrange coverage of the event so that those unable to attend can see it. Capitol Television employees have been surprised at the popularity of a new portable camera the network bought. “We’ve only had it for less than a year and we’re doing a lot more and what happens is that you send it out with one member of the House or Senate and you do something like that and they come back and tell their colleagues and then they come to us and eventually we need another camera, we get so many requests.”

The wider impact of statewide public affairs television becomes even more apparent as more legislators seek coverage for their committees or ask that previously unwired hearing rooms be wired. In Michigan, legislators “wanted to have one room where they could have a meeting and not feel like, well, maybe those cameras are on. So

we had one committee meeting room that did not have cameras, and we're putting cameras in that room starting in January," said one staff member. In the Rhode Island statehouse where only two committee rooms are wired because of size constraints, legislators sometimes will ask to have their hearings moved into one of them so they can be televised, and in Washington, legislators complain if TVW decides not to cover their specific hearing.

Another measure of the impact of statewide public affairs television is the willingness of legislators to press for carriage of the signal. The most dramatic evidence of that came from Connecticut where legislators proposed a measure requiring all cable companies to carry CT-N on their lower channels. "... it was probably the first time in history where you had a press conference with the Speaker of the House, the minority leader of the House, the president of the Senate, and the minority leader of the Senate ... all four caucuses in a press conference asking for the same thing," said the director of CT-N. Ultimately the cable companies agreed, and CT-N now has statewide carriage on channels more accessible to the public than the digital tier.

Not all of the impact has been positive, however. Most noticeable has been the effect the cameras have on the behavior of legislators. In every instance, the most frequently cited objection to installing cameras in the chambers and committee rooms was that their presence would lead to grandstanding by legislators and detract from the serious business of state government. Another fear was that the video from the coverage could be taken out of context and used by legislators' political opponents.

On the subject of grandstanding, or playing to the cameras, the data were mixed. Some interviewees were absolutely convinced that lawmakers played to the cameras. "...

when TVW publishes a schedule that says we're going to cover these committees ... that doesn't go unnoticed. I see more dark suits and red ties on those days. They get dressed up. ... we're nicer, better, more statesman-like," said one observer. Others said there was no difference in legislators' behavior that they could determine, arguing that since the cameras were not within the legislators' sight in most cases, they tended to forget they were on camera. At the same time, most of the networks must abide by guidelines that restrict camera angles to shots of the person speaking, rather than views of the whole body. Term limits also have played a role in how legislators behave, some of the interviewees said. In those states where term limits have taken effect, the legislative bodies tend to be made up of members for whom the cameras always have been present and they do not feel the need to modify their behavior. Still others pointed out that while some legislators did grandstand a bit, they would do that with or without the presence of cameras. "They're used to the televising. If they want to posture, they know how to do it. In the beginning, there was fear of posturing and perhaps it does happen. Everybody's expecting to be televised, so they behave accordingly."

Where there was more agreement was in the observation that legislative processes have been altered by the presence of the cameras. For instance, legislative debates and committee hearings have lengthened noticeably with the installation of the cameras. As one interviewee observed, "I think sometimes some of our events can become a bit more dramatic and lengthy because CT-N is covering the event. There have been times when we have, not necessarily debated, but certainly discussed an issue in committee far longer than we would have in the past because people want the opportunity to be viewed by the folks at home." Another change has been the willingness of legislators to speak when the

issue involved is a controversial one. "... when it's a controversial bill, usually there's almost no remarking other than the proponents of the bill and certain key members," one staff member said. "When it's something that pretty much everybody can get behind, that's when you have legislator after legislator after legislator getting up to remark on something that's pretty much a home run, but they want the face time, if you will, to go along with it."

The concern is that the presence of the cameras exacerbates some aspects of legislator behavior that are not necessarily conducive to sound policy-making or keeping citizens informed. The unwillingness to speak when an issue is controversial, for instance, could keep constituents from fully understanding a legislator's thinking or from being presented with an alternative view that might provide them with more information on which to base their own decisions. The urge to play to the cameras while speaking has the potential to put the focus more on theatrics and less on the policy issue under debate, again with the result that citizens are less informed.

What the data show are changes in the norms and routines of legislators and legislative staff members. As with statewide public affairs television's impact on journalists and lobbyists and their routines, the changes are subtle. But they are noticeable. The availability of statewide public affairs television allows both legislators and legislative staff members to be more efficient in that they can make better use of their time by multi-tasking instead of sitting in meetings. In addition, the opportunity to see both chambers and multiple committees at work means staff members can follow the progress of various policy issues and bills more easily. For legislators, the availability of statewide public affairs television provides them with more ways to maintain contact with

their constituents and a platform from which to compete with the governor for the public's attention. In addition, minority party legislators find they have more exposure through the networks than they did previously, which allows them a means to get their message out when it might be overshadowed by the majority party.

Research Question 4

How do non-elite audiences use the content produced by statewide public affairs television?

Democratic Process

The data in this category were expected to show how statewide public affairs television uses its content to encourage citizens to take part in the democratic process. Improvement in civic engagement, after all, is usually the first reason given for the creation of a network. Instead, most of the networks made it clear they did not consider it part of their mission to actively encourage viewers to participate. Rather, the data showed that they felt simply presenting the chance to become better informed was sufficient. That is, it was enough to make the information available and after that, it was up to citizens to make their own decisions about becoming more involved.

As one interviewee said, "If they choose to involve themselves, that opportunity's there. To let people know that the process is not a behind-closed-doors process; it's open to the public." Another said, "We hope from time to time something will pique their interest or they'll tune in and they'll understand the process and how decisions are made." This point of view fits more with Graber, Schudson, and Zaller than with Blumler and Gurevitch, Yankelovich, and Delli Carpini and Keeter. Graber, Schudson, and Zaller argue that members of the public are as informed as they need and want to be. That is not

to say that information should not be made available at every opportunity. Rather, the concept maintains that people will dip in and out of the information according to their needs. The executives who run statewide public affairs television understand this even as they see the potential for something more. “ ... some day we’re going to look back at the beginnings of these state networks and see that that was the beginning of a shift in how people get their information about state government and a shift in, hopefully, citizen participation and engagement, which could be reflected in voter turnout and things like that,” said one. The market-driven model of the traditional media offers little hope that local newspapers and television stations will ever produce much in the way of quality public affairs content. Between the economic demands and the entrenched norms and routines of journalism, changing the existing model of coverage simply becomes too difficult. What statewide public affairs television offers is the potential for a new model of coverage, one that provides multiple entry points for citizens. Such a change is by no means certain, and the managers of these networks acknowledge that they face many obstacles, but the potential remains nevertheless.

One of the criticisms leveled against traditional media is that the public has few ways to make its feelings or concerns known, nor do reporters and editors make much of an effort to seek that kind of input. The statewide public affairs television networks examined in this study have a similar problem with feedback from the public.

Feedback from the Public

All of the networks reported receiving feedback from members of the public, although only CT-N in Connecticut has tried to quantify it with a viewer satisfaction survey it did in 2005. In general, the networks do not go out of their way to solicit

comment, but they all provide some mechanism for viewers to reach them if they wish. “We hope we have motivated people to care enough to take action to find out what the follow-up is, either by writing a letter to the committee or legislator or getting on the Web site to do research,” said one network employee. “We try to provide the resource and allow them to do their own work.”

In some cases, the network provides a comment form on its Web site for people. In others, phone numbers and e-mail addresses are run at the end of programs, alerting viewers to how they can obtain more information, ask a question, or make a comment. A few of the networks produce call-in shows that encourage members of the public to contact them.

The data show that viewers call for all sorts of reasons. Some want to comment on a program, some want more information, others want to know if they still can provide input into whatever the public discussion is, and still others want copies of programs that aired. One network director said, “We do get a lot of calls especially when something’s a hot issue. ‘When are you going to rebroadcast that’ and that type of thing. ‘Can we see it again, how long is it going to be on, can I come down and talk about it?’ ”

Despite the lack of firm viewership numbers or other data on whether these networks are reaching people, the anecdotal evidence suggests there is an audience. One CT-N employee said: “We get all kinds of people (calling in). Even though we disclaim the comment line up one side and down the other that we want comments about the programming, not necessarily the issues, we get people who will leave four and five minutes that can be rails against whatever they just saw on CT-N that they’re taking issue with from a policy perspective. They don’t know where to go to get this off their chest.

Unfortunately we don't have a mechanism where we can pass that stuff on to anybody, but it's an indication that there is a sense among the general viewing public that they want to be heard and they don't know how to be heard." He added that at the moment CT-N has no way to pass these types of calls along to an appropriate person, so the network is primarily a sounding board for unhappy citizens rather than a conduit to the appropriate state official.

Members of the media who have appeared on some of the programs produced by the networks or who have been captured on tape while at a press conference also said they had received comments from people who had seen them on television. One Pennsylvania reporter said, "... if they're (PCN) covering the same press conference as me and I'm asking a question, my mother-in-law in Hazelton will say, 'Hey I saw you on TV. Why weren't you wearing a tie?' So it's amazing the span of people that watch it." Another reporter talked about the sudden celebrity that television appearances can bring. "I'm a print reporter and you're used to being anonymous ... just some schlub who can slip in and out of places with no problem at all. When I first moved up here, I did my first show about three or four months after I got here. ... I was in the grocery store one time and some lady came up to me and said, 'I saw you on PCN.' It's weird. A lot more people watch it than you think."

Legislative staff members also talked about hearing from the public, particularly when the coverage involves controversial issues. One pointed out that she knows the network is having an impact "when you get the phone call from somebody. 'I was watching the hearing the other day and' ... either asking a question about what went on during the hearing that they didn't quite get or 'is it too late for me to submit testimony?

I'd really like to contact the committee, I have something to say on this subject, and can I send something in?' There are far more questions about participation in the process after they've watched an event."

Legislators also hear from constituents who have seen them on the network or who are following a specific issue and want to comment. "People come up to them in their districts, talking to them about minutia in the legislation that no one would have access to a copy of ... the filed copy ... of the bill with its changes and calendar notes," said one legislative staff member. "No one would have that access, but now it's talked about and someone watched it and heard it and questioned the senator when they saw him again." Of course, there is a down side to the access, as another legislative staff member ruefully observed. If the debate is happening in real time, then viewers can contact them in real time, and "they'll hear 20 minutes of a debate and the rhetoric's getting heated and they'll get the wrong idea of what happened."

The ability for members of the public to provide input is a crucial part of civic engagement and the networks that are part of this study clearly welcomed the feedback. Where the gap exists is between a member of the public making a comment and taking things a step further to actually become involved in the process. This seems to be where the networks draw the line. They are more than willing to accept the feedback and to provide some opportunities for people to gather the information they need to take action, but most of the onus is on the viewers.

The data in this section speak to the civic engagement dilemma outlined previously—namely, how informed and active does the public need to be for the democratic process to function effectively. What emerged was a belief more in line with

Schudson, Price and Zaller, and Graber and their model of a monitorial citizen. That is, network managers seem comfortable with the idea that members of the public tune in when they feel a need to do so or inadvertently, such as when they come across an issue that interests them. They admit that the legislative process does not always produce the most exciting programming, nor is every issue debated of interest to every member of the public. In that sense, the monitorial model is an appropriate one. Where network managers differ somewhat from the scholars is in their optimism that these systems have the potential to develop into a model that will encourage and make easier the public's participation in the democratic process.

Research Question 5

How have programming and technological innovations helped in the development of statewide public affairs television as an institution?

The sharing of information about equipment, programming, and funding concerns is common among these networks. What this question sought to examine was the extent to which this diffusion of innovation took place.

Networking Among Systems

The data showed that the managers of these networks talk with each other frequently and have done so for some time. They compare notes, discuss common problems and questions, and look for ideas for everything from programming to signal carriage to funding. What seems to have emerged is an informal system by which managers and staff members at more established networks pass along their knowledge to those wishing to start up networks. Several of the interviewees, for instance, indicated that as they set up their networks or sought to expand them, one of the first people they

called was Denny Heck, then president of TVW in Washington. Paul Giguere, the head of CT-N in Connecticut, was one of those. “I went out to TVW and I visited Denny for a while ... right after that I started looking into (setting up CT-N) and Denny sent me all of their original planning documents and organizational structure, equipment lists. I put together a plan to create a full-time network.” Likewise, Giguere has become a resource for others. He said a group in Massachusetts that wants to expand the network in that state had asked him for advice, and he, in turn, sent it all of his original planning documents, budgets, equipment lists, and programming decisions.

With the creation of an interest group, the National Association of Public Affairs Networks, a few years ago, statewide public affairs television managers seem to be trying to move beyond the informal networking stage. They now have a Web site and a list of contacts for every system in the country. In addition, several of them meet each year, sometimes at the National Cable Television Association’s conference and sometimes at the National Conference of State Legislatures’ meeting. They hold a mini-conference of their own to share information and to meet with members of the NCSL and the NCTA, upon whose good graces they depend for legislative access, channel allocation, and signal distribution.

The basic definition of social network theory is the study of interactions among people and how those interactions cascade so that a network of relationships ultimately is formed. In the case of statewide public affairs television, the development of a social network among the systems has been crucial in their expansion to more states. The network started to form almost from the first days of statewide public affairs television as the managers and founders of the earliest systems shared operational, programming, and

financing information with those who came afterward, enabling them to tailor things to fit the situation in their particular state. The frequent contact among the managers continues today. What has happened is that as more systems have come online, those interested in setting up new networks can use already established systems as concrete examples for their legislators. The established networks show how the systems can work, what is entailed in creating them, and how lawmakers can benefit from the presence of cameras in their chambers and committee rooms. Further, the social network that exists among the managers allows them to keep track of what each is doing, provide support where they can, and consider new ways of expanding programming and increasing their value to the state governments they cover and the members of the public they are trying to reach.

Cameras

The backbone of statewide public affairs television is the camera. Before a network can be established several questions related to the cameras have to be addressed: How many will the network use? Where will they be placed in the chambers? Will they be placed in committee rooms? What type of shots will the cameras be allowed to take? Who will control the cameras? How these questions are answered determines in large measure the shape of the network and how effective it can be in disseminating information about how state government works.

The data revealed certain similarities and patterns regarding placement and use of cameras. All of the systems under study here had cameras in their state's House and Senate chambers to provide gavel-to-gavel coverage of legislative sessions. Gavel-to-gavel coverage is the foundation for statewide public affairs television, and every system—no matter what its specific characteristics are—offers it. The number of cameras

in the chambers ranges from a low of three in Rhode Island and Ohio to a high of eight in Florida. Camera position obviously varies somewhat with the difference in the number of cameras, but typically they will be mounted in spots behind the House Speaker or Senate President, then along the sides, and finally in the back of the chamber. In some states, another camera is positioned up in the public gallery area in the back of the chamber. With the exceptions of Kentucky and the House chamber in Rhode Island, all of the other states in this study use robotic cameras that are mounted up high on the walls of the chambers out of the sight line of the legislators. In Rhode Island, the House cameras are set on tripods on raised platforms at the edges of the chamber, while in Kentucky, the cameras are on dollies that are wheeled into each chamber. In both cases, camera operators must be present when the cameras are used. These were the most extreme departures from the norm among the states studied.

The shots the cameras are allowed to take run from one end of the spectrum to the other. In some states the cameras essentially have fixed shots—usually on whoever is speaking at the rostrum and on the House Speaker or Senate President. In other states where legislators stand at their desks and speak, the cameras are allowed to move from legislator to legislator as they are recognized by the presiding official, but the shot must be fairly tightly focused on the person speaking. Panning the chamber with the cameras generally is not allowed so that the chances of catching a legislator napping or arguing with another lawmaker are minimized. In a few states, system executives insist there are no restrictions on the camera shots they take, other than “common sense” and “good taste.”

The freedom of the networks to use whatever camera shots they deem necessary is an important consideration in discussing the civic engagement element of statewide public affairs television. The stated mission of these systems is to open up the process of state government to the public. When their camera shots are limited, their ability to provide an accurate, minimally filtered depiction of government at work is also limited, and viewers miss more of the context surrounding the debate/discussion of issues than they would if the cameras were allowed free rein.

Programming

The data showed that the programming for these networks follows a pattern. All start with gavel-to-gavel coverage of their respective legislatures. As legislators grow more comfortable with the cameras and begin to see a value in having their sessions televised, they become more amenable to having legislative committee hearings covered. From there it is a short leap to coverage of state agency boards. In some cases, the networks also cover the governor's office and the state supreme court. As the networks expand their programming day, they have to find or produce additional content to fill the time. That content can take many forms, including coverage of public policy forums, town hall meetings, speeches by newsmakers, and election campaigns. Self-produced programming usually goes hand-in-hand with the expanded coverage and is as varied as the networks themselves. Some networks produce book programs, business tours, and cultural programs, while others air their own legislative highlights shows, expert panels, journalist round tables, and documentaries. In California, "we average 150 hours per year of our own programming, where we go out mostly in the state Capitol area to cover events around the Capitol and state government-oriented stuff."

PCN is unique among the statewide public affairs television networks in that it airs high school sports. The programming is unorthodox, but it has served to draw viewers to the network. PCN's high school sports coverage came out of state Senate hearings into the state high school athletic association's decision to move the football championship games from one side of Pennsylvania to the other. One of the senators who took part in the hearings wondered why PCN was not showing the events. System officials met with the athletic association after the hearings were over and negotiated an arrangement to carry the so-called minor sports—hockey, swimming and diving, track, and so forth. Besides responding to an interest expressed by a legislator, PCN officials also saw the programming as a way to attract viewers who might not otherwise turn to their channels and to coax them into looking at some of the other government-related content.

A few of the networks make arrangements to rebroadcast programming from other entities. Thus, the Ohio Channel has an agreement with the PBS stations in the state to air any of the programs from their archives, its executive director said. "We started putting all of our programs together, and we cover the House and the Senate, the Supreme Court, the governor's events, and we realized, wow, on a good week, we probably had maybe 12 hours of programming, and if we're talking about a 24/7 feed, that's a lot of repetition. We started saying, well, why are we confining this to just three branches? What if we dipped into the Public Broadcasting library and started taking all of the Ohio-based programming? ... We found eight hours of programming from around the state of weekly public affairs things."

CT-N, which is based in Hartford, Connecticut, rebroadcasts the Sunday morning news programs of the local commercial stations. The network's director explained why: "Channel 3 does *Face the State*, Channel 30, the NBC affiliate, does Connecticut Newsmakers, and the Fox affiliate does *Beyond the Headlines*, but again, they air at ungodly hours because in terms of selling commercial time, it's not going to happen, so they're going to stick it somewhere. So I think it raises their visibility that they are doing some things, and it's been a really good thing for us as well." The Florida Channel also picks up some additional content by rebroadcasting some of the programming from Space Coast TV, which is a government access channel based near Cape Canaveral.

Most of these networks have plans for more ways to expand their programming, too. For instance, TVW in Washington will begin Spanish language programming, while CT-N plans to start closed-captioning some of its legislative content. Other networks are trying to persuade their Supreme Courts to allow cameras in during oral arguments, and in Michigan, which already broadcasts Supreme Court arguments, the state Court of Appeals is looking for funding to wire its courtroom for television coverage. As legislators and other elite audiences become more comfortable with these networks, a snowball effect seems to occur, and other agencies and groups start to look at how they can have their meetings and hearings televised, too. At the same time, most network managers are looking for ways to vary and expand their programming so that their audience appeal increases.

Expansion of Networks

All of the statewide public affairs television systems in this study have moved beyond just providing gavel-to-gavel coverage of their legislatures. Five of the systems in

this study—CT-N, the Florida Channel, the Ohio Channel, PCN, and TVW—program 24 hours a day. To fill the airtime, CT-N, for instance, also covers legislative committee hearings, the executive branch, state agencies, the Connecticut Supreme Court, public policy discussions, and the University of Connecticut’s monthly health forum. In addition, the network covers events and meetings outside the capital with a remote crew. CT-N also carries the weekly news interview programs produced by its commercial counterparts in Hartford. The network runs the three programs back to back in a bloc on Sunday nights, making them easy for viewers to find.

In Ohio, the Ohio Channel serves as an in-house production operation for state government, in addition to providing gavel-to-gavel legislative coverage. Thus, legislators are invited and encouraged to put together their own 30-minute shows on a topic of their choice, and the Ohio Channel provides the production expertise. The network also contracts out its production services to state agencies and commissions. In addition, the network rebroadcasts programs produced by the various PBS stations around the state, giving them wider exposure than they might otherwise get.

In Washington, TVW covers the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, produces its own interview and legislative highlights programs, and covers events around the state. TVW’s latest project is the development of Spanish-language programming. The Florida Channel also produces a legislative highlights show as well as cultural programs about different areas of the state, and has become the pool network for the Florida Department of Emergency Management. That means the Florida Channel will be the only network allowed into the state’s emergency operations center and will be responsible for providing feeds for other broadcast media. In addition, CT-N and the

Florida Channel also have moved into coverage of electoral politics, although in a more limited fashion than the commercial media.

The other networks in the study—the California Channel, KET, MGTV, Minnesota House Television Services and Senate Media Services, and Capitol Television in Rhode Island—also look for opportunities to extend their programming beyond the gavel-to-gavel coverage. Capitol Television, for example, has begun covering community meetings, often at legislators’ request, while MGTV covers the Michigan Supreme Court’s oral arguments, and KET in Kentucky produces a highly respected legislative wrapup show. The program runs nightly when the legislature is in session and weekly when it is not.

In addition, most of the networks try to provide educational materials that both members of the public and teachers can use. In Connecticut, CT-N has put together a video detailing how to testify at a public hearing. The video covers everything from where the Legislative Office Building is to how and where to park to how to sign up to how best to prepare testimony. MGTV in Michigan has put together a curriculum package for teachers on the Civil War battle flags that hang in the Capitol building. The network also provides links to generic House and Senate legislative sessions that teachers can bring up to show students how the bodies work. The California Channel partners with the California Center for Legislative Studies to put together programs for high school students.

What is interesting in examining how the networks have expanded their programming beyond the simple gavel-to-gavel coverage of the legislature is that a few of them—CT-N, TVW, and the Florida Channel—seem to be moving toward a model

more typical of the traditional broadcast media, but without the demands imposed by an advertising-supported model. That is, they are producing content that sometimes has little to do with the legislative process but which serves as another avenue to attract viewers.

The development and growth of statewide public affairs television has been driven by both technological and programming innovations. From a technology perspective, the early founders of these networks used technological advances to create a model that could be used by others. These innovations allow the networks systems to produce content with minimal editing and resources and to provide that content to the public. Such advances as robotic cameras, automated playback systems, non-linear editing capability, and digital cameras have made it possible for many of these systems to set up with limited resources, and to tighten or broaden the scope of their operations as circumstances permit. At the same time, the managers of these systems have looked for ways to expand their programming so that more and more members of the public might find something of interest. Gavel-to-gavel coverage of legislative sessions is rarely exciting, and the managers recognize that they must find other types of programming to attract audience interest. The hope is that once a viewer discovers the network, he or she eventually will tune in some of the legislative content.

The ability to develop innovative programming generally depends on the relationship between legislators and the network and how stable the network's funding mechanism is. Those networks that have built reputations of fairness and even-handedness in their coverage tend to be the most innovative in their programming, as are those that have dependable funding streams. In addition, the social network the managers of these systems have developed allows them to exchange ideas about programming and

technology, which, in turn, helps spur their development. What the data showed was that statewide public affairs television has benefited tremendously from this diffusion of knowledge and expertise—of innovation—among the networks.

Research Question 6

What obstacles hinder the development of statewide public affairs television into an institution?

Distribution of Networks

Accessibility to statewide public affairs television is one of the most persistent challenges these networks face. Within the capitol buildings themselves the availability of the feed varies. Generally, the pressrooms in the buildings are equipped with television sets that carry the signal, as are legislative offices. Legislative staff members usually can access the feed via their computers. A few of the buildings also have monitors installed in public areas where anyone can watch, while in Rhode Island and Connecticut, televisions are moved into vacant committee rooms or out into hallways to accommodate overflow crowds.

Only two of the systems seem to have resolved the distribution issue outside of the capitol buildings. Both Connecticut and Rhode Island have statewide distribution. In Connecticut's case, the statewide reach is due to its intervention in a lawsuit over the federal requirement that cable companies set aside space for PEG channels—channels dedicated to public access, educational programming, and government programming. CT-N's position was that in the past, the cable industry had defined the government component of the PEG channels as local government. CT-N contended that there was nothing in the law that specified local government and that a channel dedicated to state

government would be equally applicable. Rather than fight the battle, cable leaders in Connecticut capitulated and agreed to carry CT-N on a lower channel, making it accessible around the state.

In Rhode Island, the cable franchise is under the state's control, and channels were set aside for public access in the initial agreements more than 20 years ago. Capitol Television shares one of the channels with local college educational programming. But again, the reach is statewide. While the statewide distribution these two networks have is notable, it also should be pointed out that both states are small in terms of geography, and distribution is not the problem it is in larger states like California and Florida.

With the exception of Pennsylvania, where PCN reaches into more than 80 percent of the state, the other states in this study struggle to obtain cable carriage. The California Channel, the Florida Channel, and House Television and Senate Media Services in Minnesota, in particular, have had difficulty convincing cable companies to give up valuable channel space to programming that brings in no money. In Kentucky, the situation is worse because the cable signal is only available in Frankfort, the capital. In Ohio, Ohio Channel officials have created a hybrid distribution network that combines cable and the statewide PBS network. As a result, the channel reaches about two-thirds of Ohio's households.

Another facet of the distribution issue is the Internet presence of the systems in this study. All of these networks, with the exception of Capitol Television in Rhode Island, have a Web site where more state government content is available than is possible through their broadcast signal. The Web cast capability allows some of these systems to solve their dilemmas over which committee to cover when more than one is meeting at a

time or which chamber session to put out over the air when both are meeting. The Web sites allow for multiple signals, assuming the committee rooms in question are wired, giving audience members a choice of what to watch. While this flexibility increases the opportunities for citizens to gain information about what their state government is doing, that is only the case for those who have access to a computer and Internet service. In the same way, the cable-only access of the networks automatically means some potential audience members will be excluded because they cannot afford cable service.

One of the inherent flaws in statewide public affairs television is its reliance on the cable industry for distribution. Since not everyone has access to, can afford, or wants to pay for cable television service, not everyone has access to the content produced by these networks. People who choose not to pay for cable service have made the decision that they can do without the expanded programming cable offers, including that produced by statewide public affairs television. That is different from those who have no access to or cannot afford cable service. For the members of the public who fall into either of these groups, the decision has been taken away from them. The same is even more true for Internet access. So even if a system has a Web presence, the reality is that even fewer members of the public will have access to it than have access to the cable channel. This inequity in accessibility, in turn, affects how engaged citizens can be and reinforces a two-tiered society of information haves and have-nots.

Criticisms of Networks

The criticisms of statewide public affairs television flowed primarily from questions and concerns having to do with the specific makeup of each system. So, several of the interviewees complained about the short broadcast days of the California Channel,

MGTV, and Minnesota House Television and Senate Media Services. In the California Channel's case, the network's on-air legislative coverage ends at 3:30 p.m. each day. In Michigan, MGTV only broadcasts from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day, while Minnesota House Television and Senate Media Services are on the air from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The practical result is that the primary audience for both of these networks is elites, not ordinary citizens, because most members of the public work during the day or are busy taking care of children and households. That limits the non-elite audience for these networks to viewers who work the night shift, or are retired or unemployed, who are not typical of the general public. In addition, the limited programming schedule means the networks sometimes go off the air in the middle of important legislative debates, making them less useful for statehouse reporters and legislative staff members.

Other criticisms focused on the lack of availability of the network outside the capitol building, the fact that in some states not all legislative committee rooms have cameras, and even in states where every room is wired, the network does not cover every committee hearing. The data also revealed a belief among some interviewees that those networks dependent on the cable industry for funding and distribution—the California Channel, MGTV, and PCN—had to concern themselves more with keeping the industry happy than with producing useful, quality content. Limited camera views of the chambers and the lack of any informational graphics on the broadcast signal also drew criticism. The restricted camera views mean that it is impossible for viewers—elite or non-elite—to see what else is happening in the chambers or committee hearing rooms. Therefore, they cannot see which legislators are whispering to each other, which ones are distracted or bored, or which ones are present or absent. They cannot see which lobbyists are talking

with which legislators and which lawmakers are being taken to task by the legislative leadership. All of these things provide context for the legislative process and the decisions made but they are things viewers miss because the cameras almost never show them.

In a similar vein, simply putting pictures up on a television monitor or a computer screen does not tell viewers much about what is actually happening. Some on-screen informational graphics to help audience members orient themselves would give them some context for what they are seeing and would allow them to make better use of the information.

Finally, in Connecticut, statehouse reporters complained about CT-N's permanently assigned Capitol crew. The three-person team stays over at the Capitol to make sure a camera is available to record impromptu press conferences or other unscheduled happenings. The reporters' complaint was that it was one thing for CT-N to act as a news-recording entity and another for it to engage in news gathering. Their view was that the latter was inappropriate given that CT-N contracts with the General Assembly to provide the legislative coverage. "If they're setting themselves up as a news organization, I wonder ... they're a creature of the General Assembly. How well is a creature of the General Assembly going to cover the General Assembly?" asked one reporter. This criticism, in particular, highlights the problem these networks have in establishing credibility. On the one hand, many of the statehouse reporters tended to be skeptical of how independent these networks truly are. On the other, they used the content anyway to help them do their jobs. In a way, the credibility issue may not be that problematic for reporters because they have access to many other sources of information

and can weigh one against the other. It is a relevant question for members of the public, however, since they have fewer ways to get information about the governmental process. This criticism also ties into the previously cited Political Pressures category. If a network is susceptible to pressure from legislators, then it is reasonable to question its effect on programming and on the system's overall credibility.

The more important concern is how these weaknesses affect the access citizens have to information about state government and how they affect the quality of the content statewide public affairs television provides. If the networks are not broadcasting when people are most likely to be watching or if the signal is not widely available, then ordinary citizens lose one more way to get the information they need to begin to think about participating in the process. In the same way, if there are suspicions about the quality or credibility of the content statewide public affairs television provides, then citizens will be less likely to pay attention to it, which also will affect their ability to stay informed.

Public Awareness of Networks

Statewide public affairs television has two distinct audiences—an elite one made up of legislators, legislative staff members, lobbyists, and statehouse reporters—and a non-elite one that consists of members of the public. The non-elite audience can be broken down further into a small group of very interested, knowledgeable members of the public and the much larger group of viewers who dip into the content periodically depending on the issue and their level of interest in it. One legislative staff member said he did not think that most people would watch the programming from start to finish. “I think most people ... channel-surf a lot and if they’ll get on it and happen to see someone

making a point, someone they recognize ... they may watch it for a little while.” While network managers have a good sense of who their elite audience is, they acknowledge that they know little about their non-elite viewers. What information they do have is anecdotal and based on the feedback they get from members of the public. Thus they know when certain types of programming strike a chord with viewers because of the phone calls, e-mails, and requests for copies they receive. Some of the networks also produce call-in shows, which is another way to gauge whether anyone is watching.

What these networks do not do is conduct formal viewer surveys or subscribe to any ratings service like Nielsen. One reason for that is the cost involved. Such a survey would require tremendous oversampling just to obtain enough responses to get a valid indication of viewership. The survey that forms the quantitative component of this study, for instance, was possible because it was part of a larger overall media credibility survey, and even with that advantage, the sample size was small, meaning that it is difficult to draw broad conclusions from the data.

Only CT-N has tried to conduct any sort of survey to determine who is watching its network, and that was done in-house. The marketing director built his own research program and used network resources to conduct the survey. “Candidly, it’s come in a little slower than I would have liked ... and the response rate on some of these surveys has not always been to my liking, but it’s finally getting to the point where I’ve spent enough money on free thank-you gifts for people who fill out the survey that I’m starting to get some significant information.” Essentially CT-N’s survey showed that its audience mirrored that of C-SPAN.

Nor are network managers entirely certain they want to know how large their audiences are. Part of that is because they see their mission as simply to make the information available, not to actively seek viewers. And part of that has to do with not wanting their funding sources—the legislature or the cable industry—to know just how small their audience is. In line with that is the limited effort most of these networks make in terms of marketing and promotion. In addition to the costs involved, statewide public affairs television executives face some challenges in trying to promote their networks. Gavel-to-gavel coverage and legislative committee hearings, for instance, may have a definite start time, but they rarely have a specific end time. In other words, legislative coverage does not fall into neat hour or half-hour blocks. If a legislator makes a 10-minute speech on the chamber floor, statewide public affairs television shows the whole 10 minutes. It does not cut the speech short to fit into an artificially constructed time slot, as commercial broadcast television must do. Such unpredictability makes it difficult to get the programming listed in any type of television guide. Even worse for these networks is that because they cannot say for certain when the gavel-to-gavel or legislative committee coverage will end, they cannot promote their own public affairs programming because they cannot guarantee when it will run. All of this makes it hard for viewers who have been conditioned by commercial broadcast media to look for specific start and end times to tune in.

Another major obstacle to marketing efforts is the inconsistency in channel allocation. Typically, the channels allocated to statewide public affairs television vary by the cable system that carries it. That is, the programming may be on Channel 2 in one city, Channel 17 in another, and Channel 21 in a third. That means promotional

campaigns have to be tailored to specific cities, which is an expensive proposition and something the networks do not have the resources to do. Obtaining a standardized channel is next to impossible as well because each cable system determines its own line-up. The networks would have to negotiate with each cable system individually and get them all to agree to provide the same channel. Another problem is the limited broadcast hours of some of the networks. Air time for the networks in this study ranged from a low of four hours during the day in Michigan to 24-hour-a-day programming in Connecticut, Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Washington. If a network is only on the air during the day, it is difficult to build awareness among a public that works during the same time.

Who Is Watching?

Still, some information exists about who is watching statewide public affairs television. The quantitative component of this study yielded data showing the non-elite audience was larger and more diverse than anticipated, although in terms of overall numbers, the sample size was extremely small. The random national telephone survey garnered 605 responses. Of those, 284 respondents (46.9 percent) said their state had a statewide public affairs television network, while 163 (26.9 percent) said their state did not, and 151 (25 percent) said they did not know whether their state had a network or not. The question was phrased so that it asked about the networks by name (i.e., The California Channel, The Florida Channel, PCN, TVW, etc.) in an effort to make sure respondents understood what was being asked. Of the 284 respondents who said their state had a public affairs television network, 10.5 percent said they watched the programming more than once a week, 15.2 percent said they watched once a week, 12

percent watched once or twice a month, 20.3 percent said they rarely watched, and 42 percent said they never watched.

The survey also asked about the reasons why respondents watched their public affairs networks. By far the largest number—46 percent, or —said they watched to learn about the day’s events. Next was hearing experts discuss the issues, with 18.7 percent citing that as their primary reason for watching. That was followed by tracking a specific bill or issue (17.5 percent), keeping tabs on what specific legislators were doing (11.5 percent), and watching to see what the journalists who cover state government had to say about the proceedings (6.8 percent). Again, the actual numbers of respondents was small, but indicative of a trend that warrants further exploration.

Demographic information gathered from the respondents showed that among those who watched statewide public affairs television, women outnumbered men (51.8 percent to 48.2 percent), roughly a quarter had college degrees (23.6 percent), and most fell into the 45- to 64-year-old age group (39.9 percent), followed by those who were 25 to 44 years old (33.5 percent). In terms of political affiliation, more viewers were Democrats (40.2 percent) than Republicans (30.4 percent) or Independents (26.5 percent). The information also showed that 63.4 percent of viewers were employed, as opposed to being retired (22.3 percent), or unemployed (14.3 percent), and 41.1 percent of viewers earned less than \$30,000 a year. Just under a quarter of statewide public affairs television viewers earned more than \$75,000 a year. Finally, the survey found that 76.6 percent of statewide public affairs television viewers were Caucasian, 12.6 percent were African-American, 6.3 percent were Hispanic, and 1.8 percent were Asian.

Table 3 compares the characteristics of statewide public affairs television viewers that emerged in the telephone survey with those of C-SPAN viewers. The biggest differences were found in the education and age categories.

Table 3. Comparison of Viewers

	Statewide Public Affairs Television	C-SPAN
Education	23.6 % have college degrees	29% have college degrees
Age	42.4% are between 25 and 44; 33.9% are between 45 and 64	40% are between 25 and 44; 33% are between 45 and 64
Ethnicity	76.6% are Caucasian	89% are Caucasian
Political activities	Discussing politics, contacting public officials, contributing to campaigns, writing letters to officials	Discussing politics, contributing to campaigns, writing members of Congress

The telephone survey data also were examined to see whether a relationship could be determined between viewers of statewide public affairs television and their political preferences, their participation in the political process, and the attention they pay to news coverage of politics and public affairs. The statistical analysis consisted of a series of cross-tabs comparing the viewership variable with variables encompassing different aspects of political preferences, participation, and attention to politics and public affairs. A chi square test was run in each case to determine statistical significance.

Only two of the relationships were found to have statistical significance. The relationship between those who watch statewide public affairs programming and the attention they pay to news coverage of politics and public affairs was significant at a 0.05 level. In addition, the relationship between those respondents who said their state had a statewide public affairs television network and their belief that news coverage of politics and public affairs helps to solve problems was found to be significant at a 0.08 level.

An analysis of those who watched compared with the ways in which they participate in the political process found that 48.1 percent had tried to persuade someone to support or oppose a political issue, 36.9 percent had contacted a public official about an issue, 34.9 percent had contributed to a political campaign or organization, and 22 percent had written a letter to the editor or called in to a public affairs talk show. Other analysis looked at those who watched compared to whether they thought news coverage of politics and public affairs was fair or accurate and whether respondents took liberal, moderate, or conservative positions on social, economic, and foreign affairs issues. None of these comparisons was found to have any statistical significance.

The biggest shortcoming of this study clearly is the small sample size that ultimately was obtained and the descriptive nature of the data it yielded. Out of 605 respondents, only 284 said their state had a public affairs television network devoted to covering state government and an even smaller number—160—said they had ever watched it. Despite the small numbers, the survey did provide sufficient data to explore further the determinants of who watches statewide public affairs television, and the author estimated an ordered logistic regression model in which the dependent variable “watches network” is depicted as a function of several independent variables:

1. Attention to news about politics and public affairs, which measures respondents’ attention news about politics and public affairs in their state on a 10-point scale.
2. Perceived accuracy of news coverage of politics and public affairs, which measures respondents’ perceptions of how accurate news about politics and public affairs is in their state on a 10-point scale.

3. Perceived fairness of news coverage of politics and public affairs, which measures how fair respondents perceived news about politics and public affairs to be in their state on a 10-point scale.
4. Use of news media, which measures how frequently respondents watch national television news and local television news, or how frequently they read a newspaper.
5. Types of public affairs participation, which measures the kinds of public affairs-oriented activities in which respondents engage—writing a letter to the editor or calling in to a news talk show, contacting a public official, persuading someone to believe in their point of view, and contributing to a political campaign or organization.
6. Respondents' perceptions of how liberal or conservative they are in their political philosophy.
7. Merges political perception variable, which merges the negative and positive halves of the scale measuring the intensity with which respondents identified themselves as liberal or conservative into a scale ranging from 0 to 6.
8. Gender.
9. Racial identity, which asks respondents to specify whether they are African-American or non-African American.
10. Education, which asks respondents about their level of educational achievement.
11. Employment, which asks respondents whether they are employed full time or not.

12. Political party identification, which measures the strength of political party affiliation.

13. Merged political party identification variable, which merges the negative and positive halves of the scale measuring respondents' political party affiliation into a scale ranging from 0 to 6.

The dependent variable, "Watches Network," measures the degree to which respondents watched their statewide public affairs television network. The variable is measured as 5-point scale, ranging from "watch more than once a week" to "never watch." The ordered logit analysis shows that not much in the model is significantly related to the dependent variable. In fact, only the variables Use of news media and Gender are shown to have significant effects on individuals' use of statewide public affairs television (see Table 4). The finding that those respondents who made more frequent use of national and local television news and newspapers are also more likely to watch statewide public affairs television is not surprising. The most likely explanation is that individuals view statewide public affairs television as yet another tool with which to keep informed. Since they already are inclined to follow the news, individuals who are heavy media users are likely to use these networks as another source. In contrast, the relationship between those who watch statewide public affairs television and gender is a negative one. That is, women are less likely than men to watch the networks. This fits with a substantial amount of research that finds that, in general, men tend to pay more attention to the news than women.

What is most interesting about the results of the regression is the variables that proved to be unrelated to building the model of who watches statewide public affairs television.

For example, neither political party identification nor the intensity of respondents' political party identification has any bearing on whether they watch statewide public affairs television, and while the data show an unexpectedly negative relationship between level of education and the frequency with which respondents watch statewide public affairs television, it is not statistically significant. The education finding is especially unexpected because research has shown that people with higher levels of education tend to pay more attention to the news. Indeed, in their study of C-SPAN, Frantzich and Sullivan (1996) point to a 1995 Mediamark Research Inc. survey that found that 12.5 percent of the national network's viewers were college graduates, while 10.1 percent had attended college. The expectation with the survey of statewide public affairs television viewers is that education would play the same role. That is not the case. In fact, what the analysis shows is that the higher the level of education, the less likely respondents are to watch statewide public affairs television. One possible explanation for this negative relationship may be that people with higher levels of education generally have access to more sources of information than those with less education, and they may not feel it necessary to watch these networks. Still the data are revealing in that they confirm that there is an audience for statewide public affairs television outside the walls of state capitols—an audience that is driven primarily by its usage of other media and to some extent by gender.

Distribution and marketing are two of the biggest obstacles statewide public affairs television faces in trying to build audience awareness. The demand for the content these networks provide is small to begin with, compared to the audience for commercial television, but they are not helped by the lack of consistency in channel allocation and the

Table 4. Parameter Estimates (Ordered Logit Coefficients) for Model of Who Watches Statewide Public Affairs Television

Variable	b	z
Dependent Variable: Watches network		
Attention to news about politics & public affairs	0.058	0.84
Perceived accuracy of news about politics & public affairs	0.017	0.25
Perceived fairness of news about politics & public affairs	-0.071	-1.38
Use of news media	0.065	2.75*
Types of public affairs participation	0.119	1.07
Respondents' perceptions of how liberal or conservative they are	0.055	0.45
Merged political perception variable	0.011	0.14
Gender	-0.479	-1.73**
Racial identity	0.081	0.19
Education	-0.128	-1.16
Employment	-0.044	-0.15
Political party identification	-0.137	-1.17
Merged political party identification variable	0.031	0.18
Intercept 1	0.127	
Intercept 2	0.914	
Intercept 3	1.598	
Intercept 4	2.816	
N	220	
Pseudo-R ²	0.035	
Wald X ²	22.57	
**prob < 0.1, one-tailed test		
*prob < 0.01, one-tailed test		

inability to schedule programming in well-ordered blocks of time. That, in turn, makes it difficult to develop effective marketing campaigns, and most networks have neither the money nor the staff to devote to full-time promotional efforts. Further, there is a sense—particularly among those systems that are dependent on the state for money, equipment,

and staff—that legislators would not look favorably on spending taxpayer money for marketing efforts. On the other hand, the data from the telephone survey suggest that there is an audience for statewide public affairs television and that it consists of both elites and non-elites. If that is the case, then it would seem to be in the networks' best interests to cultivate the non-elite segment of their audiences. Demonstrating conclusively to legislators that their constituents are watching could only help strengthen the networks' position in the institutional process.

Research Question 7

Does statewide public affairs television provide a viable alternative to commercial broadcasting in fulfilling the public information and education role originally envisioned when television was first developed?

These networks, which at first glance seem to be a pale version of the traditional media, have developed into a distinct broadcasting model with some specific characteristics. What this question sought to determine was what type of model has emerged and whether it is capable of providing the public with the information necessary to keep track of policy issues that affect it and what legislators are doing about those issues.

Political Economy of Networks

Although the basic model for statewide public affairs television is the same for all of the networks, some noticeable differences exist among the systems. For instance, funding mechanisms vary among the 20 operating systems. Ten of them are funded solely by their respective states, four are financed by cable subscriber fees, five have mixed funding sources, and one receives all of its operating money from foundations. Among

the states in this study, CT-N, the Florida Channel, Minnesota House Television and Senate Media Services, and Capitol Television in Rhode Island are all state-funded. The California Channel and MGTV are financed by the cable industry. KET, the Ohio Channel, PCN, and TVW have mixed funding structures. WisconsinEye, which is still in the developmental stages, is trying to put forgo both state and cable funding and is looking to private foundations for support.

While these networks take pride in the fact that they are not commercial operations dependent on advertising revenue, it also is true that at least three of them have moved a little closer to their commercial counterparts by accepting underwriting for some of their programs. Thus, TVW allows underwriting for its self-produced content but not its gavel-to-gavel coverage. The Ohio Channel, on the other hand, signed Honda Motors to underwrite the entire operation of the network. Honda could not sponsor a specific program under the terms of the contract or air advertising for its products, but it could run brand identity spots. The whole idea of underwriting is problematic for these networks because it raises the question of who actually is controlling the content. Yet it is an attractive option because legislative funding is sometimes subject to the whims of the body, while the cable funding is beginning to drop because of the decreasing number of subscribers and the consolidation of the industry. One of the biggest differences between statewide public affairs television and the traditional media is the lack of a profit motive. At the same time, however, underwriting pushes the networks closer to the corporate capitalist model that dominates broadcasting in this country.

Another facet of the statewide public affairs television model is the overarching focus on gavel-to-gavel coverage. As noted elsewhere, these networks build their

programming around coverage of legislative floor sessions. This is in marked contrast to the commercial media, where the demands of the capitalist model make it difficult to provide more than cursory coverage of state government. Turning the cameras on in the chambers and letting them run simply does not fit with a model that requires shorter and shorter stories, more sensationalistic video, and glitzier production values. In addition, while commercial broadcasters seek as wide an audience as possible, statewide public affairs television is generally content with its niche audience.

The networks differ from their commercial counterparts in terms of their programming as well. Where local commercial stations program for 24 hours a day, many of the statewide public affairs television network are only on the air for part of the day. The rest of the time they either share the channel space with another entity, or they put up static graphics that tell viewers when programming will resume. For the handful of networks that run 24-hour-a-day operations, finding content to fill the air time can be a challenge. That, in turn, has led to some unusual arrangements. So, for example, PCN runs high schools sports coverage as well as infomercials. CT-N runs a bloc of news talk shows produced by the local commercial stations, and the Ohio Channel has arranged to pick up programming from that state's PBS archives.

One element the commercial media and the networks do share is the vertical integration of operations. Many scholars have decried the vertical integration of media operations that developed out of the corporate capitalist model, concluding that it stifles creativity and closes off alternative views. Yet for statewide public affairs television, such integration is what enables it to operate as inexpensively as possible. Everything is

kept in-house. Another element these networks have in common with the commercial media is the development of norms and routines specific to their needs.

Network Norms and Routines

Over the nearly three decades that statewide public affairs television has existed, some common operating patterns—norms and routines—have developed that are different from those associated with traditional media. The most important is that coverage of legislative floor sessions takes precedence over everything else.

Programming is built around how and when the legislature is covered. Other norms include covering events or sessions or hearings from start to finish, meaning they cannot be packaged into neat hour-long or half hour-long slots. That makes putting together a broadcast schedule something like solving a puzzle and creates a need for filler material of varying lengths to make up the differences.

Production norms also vary from those of traditional media. So, for instance, the gavel-to-gavel coverage is minimally edited and unfiltered. What editing does take place usually is done to remove dead spots in the footage when the House stands at ease for an indefinite period, for example. Hours of operation also vary, unlike traditional media, which has an established standard for when the national evening news programs and the local evening news programs air. That is, every night at 5:30 one can find the *CBS Evening News* or the *NBC Nightly News*. Statewide public affairs television networks are constrained by legislative schedules and by the fact that events don't necessarily start when they are scheduled. Other production norms include the use of robotic cameras in most of the systems—Kentucky and Rhode Island are exceptions. Timeliness is a factor

in running legislative session programming, but other content can be run whenever there is room. So, committee hearings might be shown a few days after they occurred.

In California, the statewide public affairs television entity is a split system. The General Assembly and the Senate both have television operations and both use a system of robotic cameras for their coverage. Each chamber has two channels that it broadcasts internally, and the California Channel picks up two of the feeds and decides which one to air. “We try to maintain parity ... in terms of hours. We also try to make sure all the committees get equal shots,” said one network staff member.

The California Channel is on the air from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. In addition, it can stream all four feeds on its Web site. Floor sessions take precedence in the programming although the network also tries to run legislative committee hearings when possible. In general, the network relies on the Senate and Assembly operations to cover committee hearings. If they do not or cannot, the channel must send over a crew with a camera to record the event for later airing.

In Connecticut, the legislature owns all of the broadcast equipment and contracts with CT-N to operate the equipment and provide coverage. Programming decisions are the purview of CT-N, but legislative floor sessions are the priority. “We had an operating agreement that set up the parameters for our operation that was never signed. It was just ... the understanding that you’re not going to take reaction shots, or you’re going to use graphics to explain who the people are ... we always have to cover the House and Senate regardless of how long they are, those types of things,” said the director of the system.

CT-N has a fairly structured process for determining its broadcast schedule. Every week calls are made to legislative committee clerks, major state agencies, and the

executive offices to see what's being scheduled and what the important issues are. In addition, the legislative calendar is checked. After the information is gathered, the assignment editor compiles a list of possibilities for coverage and the staff holds a programming meeting. From there they decide crew availability, scheduling, and importance, and a schedule is drawn up. A show profile is prepared for each event which gives the basic information, who is doing the show, who the contacts are, all the numbers a producer might need, the time, place, and so forth. The profile also contains director's notes and the information for the graphics.

CT-N's broadcast runs from about 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon to the same time the next day. On a typical day, if both chambers are meeting, the House session is broadcast live because it comes in first. The Senate session is recorded and then when the House has adjourned, it is aired. Then the entire package is rebroadcast. CT-N also emphasizes graphics at the bottom of the screen. Beyond identifying who is speaking and what the topic is, the graphics also explain what the issue is and why it is important so viewers have some sort of context. The network records everything on a file server, which is also the automatic playback system. That allows the staff to maintain a 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. workday on most days.

In Rhode Island, the production routine is different. Capitol Television cannot go live until the afternoon because it shares a channel with some college educational programming. That programming airs until approximately noon. The earliest the network goes on the air is 1 p.m. when the House Finance Committee meets. The network stays with the committee until it adjourns for the House floor session at 4 p.m. At that point, the coverage shifts to the House. Since the Senate usually comes in at the same time as

the house, Capitol Television records the Senate proceedings. When the House adjourns, the network either goes back to the House Finance Committee if it reconvenes or it shows the Senate session on a delayed basis. The Senate programming may be delayed even further if other committees are meeting after the floor sessions adjourn because the network will go to them first.

From a civic engagement perspective, statewide public affairs television seems a viable solution to the problems of citizen apathy and ignorance. The networks provide gavel-to-gavel coverage of legislative floor sessions and committee hearings, thereby giving the public more access to state government than it has with the traditional media. Meeting coverage runs uninterrupted, allowing citizens more opportunity to see the process at work without the traditional media filter. Many of the networks also offer other public affairs programming to help put the process into some context, which is something local television stations and newspapers rarely do. And audience members generally can dip into the content as they see fit, rather than having to depend on the vagaries of traditional media coverage.

The norms and routines these statewide public affairs television networks have developed enable them to produce their programming in as efficient a manner as possible and in as consistent a manner as possible. The routines guarantee that gavel-to-gavel coverage is the centerpiece of network programming and the rest of the schedule is built around that. All of these systems also must create a process for deciding which chamber is shown live or which committee hearing is shown live when there are simultaneous meetings. Typically, the decision on the chambers revolves around which one comes in first. The decision on which committee hearing to show live is a little more problematic,

but network staff generally are able to head off any problems by conferring with legislative staff to get their input before deciding. In terms of equipment, the use of fixed robotic cameras means that the views the audience sees are generally the same from legislature to legislature. The cameras focus on whoever is speaking, while the rest of the chamber remains out of view. Limited informational graphics are another characteristic of most of the networks, as is the minimal editing of content. The result is that no matter which system someone is watching, there is a sameness to the type of programming that is aired and a sameness to the production values of that programming.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The primary research question for this project asked whether statewide public affairs television had achieved institutional status after nearly 30 years of existence. Selznick (1957) defined institutionalism as a process, while Hughes (1936) described an institution as having “some sort of establishment or relative permanence” (p. 180), and Meyer and Rowan (1977) offered this explanation: “Institutionalization involves the processes by which social processes, obligations, or actualities come to take on a rulelike status in social thought and action” (p. 341).

From the beginning, the development of statewide public affairs television has followed a process. First were the battles just to set up the networks. In almost every instance there has been resistance to establishing a network. Often that resistance has come from legislators who were afraid the network would give undue power to the governor or the majority power. Others feared the presence of the cameras would encourage grandstanding among legislators, thereby detracting from serious debate and making a mockery of the decorum needed to keep things running smoothly. And some legislators simply believed that the public did not need to be exposed to all of the machinations of the governing process. Sometimes the resistance came from the cable industry upon whom statewide public affairs television is dependent for carriage and channel allocation. In that case, cable executives were reluctant to give up precious channel space because of the loss of advertising revenue.

Eventually, however—at least in the 20 states that have networks—the objections were pushed aside, and the decision was made to open up the chambers to the possibility of more public scrutiny. Again, the process moved the development of the networks

along. Wiring was installed, cameras were placed in the legislative chambers, control room equipment was turned on, and the proceedings were broadcast unfiltered and uninterpreted over air waves or the Internet or both.

The process is the same whether one is describing TVW or CT-N, the Ohio Channel or the Florida Channel, MGTV or PCN. At some point—when networks executives and legislators are comfortable with the cameras and what they can do—the programming moves beyond the gavel-to-gavel coverage that forms the centerpiece of statewide public affairs television content. Legislative committee hearings typically are the next step in network coverage, followed by self-produced programming. The self-produced programming takes many forms but in general it includes interview shows focusing on legislators and other newsmakers, expert panels put together to discuss specific issues, and some type of non-legislative content to try to draw people in. The non-legislative content runs the gamut from book programs to cultural/tour programs to sports. As the networks gain credibility and trust, some work to expand their coverage to include state agency hearings and state Supreme Court oral arguments. The tipping point seems to be when network staff feel confident enough to cover legislative press conferences, which usually are one-sided affairs; develop legislative highlights programs, which necessarily involve some editing decisions; or set up election coverage, which must be balanced carefully to avoid accusations of partisanship.

Only a few of the networks have moved through all of these steps, in part because of the fear of offending legislator sensibilities, but also because of the constraints created by limited resources. What became clear in examining the data was that several elements affect a network's capacity to move beyond the basic gavel-to-gavel coverage of sessions

and committee hearings. Those elements include the credibility of the network, the receptiveness of legislators, and a secure funding source. For most of the networks in this study, structural constraints and concerns about funding continue to be obstacles to programming innovations. At the same time, even the most restricted systems try to work around those obstacles to provide viewers with something other than the often dull gavel-to-gavel coverage.

Selznick (1957) also described the process of institutionalization as “something that happens to an organization over time, reflecting the organization’s own distinctive history, the people who have been in it, the groups it embodies and the vested interests they have created, and the way it has adapted to its environment” (p. 16-17). The development patterns and variations among the networks dovetail neatly with Selznick’s description. The variations among the networks can be explained by the different abilities and visions of the people who run them, the particular interests of the legislatures they cover, the political and social cultures in which they were formed, and the ways in which they have adjusted their operations to fit the funding, operational, and distribution constraints imposed on them.

Meyer and Rowan (1977) talked about the “rulelike status” required for institutionalization, while North (1990) argued that institutions have both formal and informal rules of conduct, much like team sports. Statewide public affairs television has some clear rules of operation—norms and routines—that have developed over time and reflect both formal and informal guidelines. So, the cameras focus on whoever is speaking in the chamber or the committee room. They do not pan and they do not show reaction shots. The coverage is broadcast in its entirety with minimal editing of content.

The minimal editing happens in those states where the legislature has a penchant for standing at ease for a half-hour to an hour or more. In those instances, the networks will edit out the dead air, but otherwise the coverage airs intact. House and Senate floor sessions take precedence over all other types of programming. If the chambers in a state are meeting simultaneously, clear guidelines exist for which is shown live and which is taped and shown immediately afterward. The appearance of neutrality and balance is critical. So if a Republican legislator is quoted, a Democrat must be found to provide a different views. If a Democratic legislator is invited to appear on an interview show, a Republican legislator either must be invited to appear with him or must be the guest the next time an interview show is run. In addition, the content of the network coverage is not allowed to be used in political campaigns. While all of the networks have this rule on either a formal or an informal basis, the reality is that they can do little to stop would-be candidates from using the material once it has been broadcast.

Further, statewide public affairs television has affected the norms and routines of statehouse reporters, legislators, legislative staff members, and lobbyists. Reporters are able to spend less time on the chamber floors or in committee hearing rooms because they can watch the proceedings from their offices. That, in turn, allows them to be more efficient in their work because they can monitor the proceedings, write another story, and make phone calls on a third story. The trade-off is that they sometimes miss some of the sideline action out of the view of the cameras or some of the nuances of what is happening. Legislative staff members and lobbyists also have found that having access to statewide public affairs television allows them be more productive because they do not have to spend as much time sitting in committees or on the floor.

The biggest surprise in the data was the impact statewide public affairs television has had on the legislative process. The potential for increased grandstanding was not unexpected, but the somewhat chilling effect on debate was. Legislators' reluctance to vigorously debate controversial issues or bills is disturbing because the overriding mission of all of these networks is to open up the government process to citizens. Nevertheless, most of the people in these groups—statehouse reporters, legislators, legislative staff members, and lobbyists—said their lives would be much more difficult if their network were suddenly to go away.

Statewide public affairs television as it has developed also fits the early definition of institutionalism Hughes (1936) proposed. Hughes argued that an institution would have some sort of relative permanence over time. The earliest statewide public affairs television network was established in Kentucky in 1978, a year before C-SPAN began broadcasting. Since then the number of state networks has continued to grow. The number has increased in fits and starts, but it has grown steadily larger to today where 20 states have networks, one network is close to starting up, a couple of other operations are thinking about expanding into full-blown networks, and discussions have begun in at least two states without networks about how to set one up. In addition, the national organization for statewide public affairs television—the National Association of Public Affairs Networks—has its own initiative underway called “50 States, 50 Networks” to try to build support for a network in every state.

At the same time that these networks have become part of their state's institutional fabric, another phase in the process is taking place. Essentially, the norms and routines that these networks have developed and continue to develop have given

them a consistency across the states. That is, what shapes each of these networks is the peculiar mix of cultural and political elements that make each state unique. The norms and routines, on the other hand, foster a certain consistency across the networks so that the programming is predictable, as are the production values. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) had an explanation for why disparate units that share a common goal eventually change and evolve into a unified group. They argued that there are three ways in which institutions can change to become more like each other—through coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism, or normative isomorphism, or some combination of the three. Coercive isomorphism is the result of political influence or pressure and the cultural expectations of the society that surrounds the entity. Mimetic isomorphism stems from the tendency of organizations to copy the operations of entities similar to them in order to ensure success, and normative isomorphism comes from the development of professional standards for the organization.

The civic engagement and policy-making aspects of the data show the effects of coercive isomorphism on the process of institutionalization. Initially these networks were created in response to outside pressure for more access to state government. As noted previously, the mission of all of these networks is to open up the governmental process to members of the public and give them the means to take a more active role. Further, as the networks have developed, many have begun to move beyond the simple gavel-to-gavel coverage to look for more to foster civic engagement. Their programming has become more creative and innovative in response to the need to look for other avenues to reach the public and in response to requests from state officials who also are looking for more ways to get their message out to the public.

From a policy-making standpoint, statewide public affairs television at its best offers a more direct way for the public to see the process at work, and it enables them to have some input into the decision-making if they wish. At the same time, these networks are under tremendous pressure from legislators to make certain their coverage of the policy-making process is neutral and balanced. This takes on even more importance when the network operates in a state where the majority party in the legislature is different from the party the governor represents or when the chambers in the legislature are divided with one party controlling the House and the other controlling the Senate. As politics becomes increasingly polarized as a result of term limits and other factors, the pressure on these statewide public affairs television networks to be even-handed and fair becomes greater and the more they work to develop routines and practices to ensure their coverage of policy issues is politically neutral.

Mimetic isomorphism comes to light with an examination of how the data fit with the diffusion of innovation and social network analysis theories. The two essentially go hand in hand. Advances in broadcast technology and the lowering of the costs associated with that technology have made it more practical to establish statewide public affairs television networks. Commercial broadcast operations are expensive. Statewide public affairs television operations do not have to be as costly. For one thing, the equipment is less expensive and the networks do not need as much of it. For another, the number of staff members required to operate cameras and other equipment is smaller than that of commercial stations because of the robotics and automated systems involved. That means personnel costs are less. Finally, the newer equipment takes up less room, which is a

primary consideration when talking about old capitol buildings where space is always at a premium, and it can be installed in such a way as to minimize its intrusiveness.

In essence what happens is that as one network sets up an operation, managers at other networks look to see how it will be structured, what sort of equipment it will use, and what type of programming will be presented. The social network they have established then allows them to talk to each other to figure out the best practices and ideas and go back to their own networks to adapt what they have learned. The end result is a similarity in the look of the networks, the equipment they use, the staffing levels they maintain, and the content they offer.

The last piece of DiMaggio and Powell's framework is normative isomorphism, and norms and routines theory illuminates it. What the data show is that statewide public affairs television has developed its own norms and routines—its own standards—for covering state government, and they differ in some respects from traditional media norms and routines. Most notably, the networks engage in only minimal gatekeeping. Some gatekeeping is required simply by virtue of the fact that a decision must be made about which committees are covered live and which are not, or which chamber session is broadcast live and which delayed. Otherwise, the coverage runs unfiltered, which is in marked contrast to the traditional media model. Further, the networks will run the coverage in its entirety rather than just select excerpts of it. The networks also provide little in the way of explanatory information for viewers, which can be seen as a shortcoming in some ways, but it fits with the need to maintain strict neutrality. The same can be said of the camera work of these networks. The reaction shots that are so prized by the traditional media have no place in statewide public affairs television.

Taken together, the components of DiMaggio and Powell's framework show clearly that statewide public affairs television has achieved institutional status. The degree of institutionalism varies according to the state, with some networks more developed than others, but the fact remains that statewide public affairs television has found a place in state government. More importantly, it has become a viable alternative for the dissemination of public affairs information, particularly when compared with the more traditional institutions of commercial television and public broadcasting television.

The most important facets of all of these broadcast models are funding, operational procedures, programming, and production values. Statewide public affairs television gets its funding primarily from state government, the cable industry, and private foundations, which is in sharp contrast to commercial television. As a result, statewide public affairs television is not subject to the market pressures that drive commercial television. That leaves it free to ignore formal viewer counts and audience surveys purporting to determine what people want to watch. At the same time, statewide public affairs television differs from the public broadcasting model because very little of its programming is underwritten or paid for by viewer contributions. That also frees it from the prospect of having to program according to donor demands. As noted previously, statewide public affairs television is not immune to pressure since most of its funding comes from legislators and/or cable company executives. It is just that the pressures are different from what commercial television and public broadcasting television face.

The structure of its operating procedures also sets statewide public affairs television apart from commercial television and public broadcasting. Statewide public

affairs television networks vary markedly in their on-air time. Some run programming 24 hours a day; others are only on when their legislature is in session. In addition, the programming schedules for statewide public affairs television rarely conform to neat half-hour or hour-long time formats. Gavel-to-gavel coverage is unpredictable, and beginning and end times are uncertain. That means many scheduling decisions are made on short notice, which in turn makes it hard to promote the networks. Commercial television and public broadcasting, on the other hand, live and die by the clock. Everything is scheduled far in advance, and content is edited to fit into rigid time blocks. Most commercial and public broadcasting stations also program for a 24-hour cycle. They seldom go off the air.

Clear differences also exist among the models from a programming perspective. Statewide public affairs television's programming is aimed primarily at elite audiences with the goal of giving them both access to information about state government and a means of managing that information so that it can be used effectively in the governing process. Public broadcasting's programming also is aimed mostly at elite audiences, but its primary goals are to inform and to entertain. Hence the content is a mix of cultural and news programs. Commercial television's programming, on the other hand, is geared toward attracting the widest possible audience, and to that end, its content is designed more to entertain than inform.

Production values are the third area where the structural differences among statewide public affairs television, commercial television, and public broadcasting television emerge most clearly. Statewide public affairs television focuses on unfiltered, uninterrupted, minimally edited content. State government proceedings are covered from

start to finish, allowing all of the discussion and debate to be heard. Camera angles are limited, and in-house, studio productions are no-nonsense, minimalist affairs. Few of these networks provide on-screen graphics to give viewers any context for what they are watching. In addition, deciding which chamber or committee hearing to cover when several are meeting simultaneously involves diplomatic negotiation rather than arbitrary decision-making.

In sharp contrast, commercial television works with more elaborate sets, more on-screen graphics, and a wider variety of camera angles. Commercial television also measures its coverage of state government proceedings in terms of seconds rather than minutes and hours, and officials' comments are edited heavily to fit into short broadcast stories. Public broadcasting television falls somewhere between the two extremes in its news coverage. The time it has to devote to news coverage is more flexible than commercial television, but its content is still heavily edited.

All of these structural elements have developed over time, as institutional theory suggests. What has emerged among the statewide public affairs television networks is an institutional structure characterized by a consistency in funding, operating procedures, programming, and production values. The social network among the managers of these systems has helped reinforce this institutional structure, making it easier for managers to gather information, emulate best practices, and discard what does not work. The civic engagement component also has helped to build the institutional structure that governs programming because it creates certain expectations about content and the uses to which the content will be put. In other words, the same expectations exist regardless of which network one is discussing.

Diffusion of innovation has helped the networks build the institutional production structure by bringing a consistency to the equipment used, the types of programming offered, and the production values used to create the programming. Finally, the policy-making discussions preceding the creation of these networks and the debates surrounding their operating procedures have been the same across those states that have networks and have helped to give them their distinctive structure. The result is an evolving institutional structure that has helped statewide public affairs television become an important part of state government. This means elite audiences are making far more use of statewide public affairs television than members of the public, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. Rather, it fits with previous research that finds the public typically only pays attention to what government is doing when it feels a compelling need to so.

For the future, several issues suggest themselves for further investigation. One is the role of the Internet in statewide public affairs television. With one exception, all of the networks studied in this project have an Internet component. The Internet offers more accessibility and flexibility for these networks in that they can air simultaneous live sessions or hearings, they can make archives easily available, and they can promote a Web site more easily than specific channels. In the past few years, several other states have set up Internet-only coverage of their legislatures, but they were not part of this study because of its emphasis on the television component of these networks. An Internet-only operation, however, limits access to those who can afford a computer and the price of hooking up to the Web. That, in turn, would seem to fly in the face of the mission of these networks, which is to open up state government to the public.

Another issue that needs further exploration is the audience for statewide public affairs television. Although the survey that forms part of this project provided some clues about who is watching, much more needs to be determined before the audience can be accurately characterized and its use of the content of these networks gauged.

The programming expansion a few of the systems are undertaking also bears more investigation because they seem to be moving away from the state government niche and more toward a commercial broadcast model that looks to be all things to all people. If such a shift proves successful and the audience increases for these networks, then it is not too much of a stretch to believe that corporate America will take notice and try to determine how to make them profitable. CT-N in Connecticut already is feeling such pressure from the NBC affiliate in Hartford.

Another avenue of exploration would be an examination of the structures of the various statewide public affairs television networks and how they align with their state's political and commercial media cultures. This study has argued that the institutionalism of statewide public affairs television has led to a predictability in funding mechanisms, programming, operational procedures, and production values among the networks. At the same time, variations exist, and further research into these variations, why they exist, and what their impact is would seem to be warranted.

And finally, another issue that needs further research is the seeming step backward statewide public affairs television represents in the development of the communications transmission model and whether that helps or hinders its mission. Bennett (2003), for example, suggested that the Internet is changing the communications transmission model from one in which elites disseminate information to group members

to one in which information travels in distributed, patterned, and chaotic ways. In this context, statewide public affairs television would seem to be a step backward since the information put out by these systems travels from elites to group members—albeit without the commercial aspect—and not through any sort of distributed, patterned way. The question would be whether these networks truly represent a step backward or whether they represent a new model for journalism.

In the end, the value of statewide public affairs television lies in its potential to make information available, not in how many more members of the public it persuades to take an active role in the governing process. That is both the blessing and the curse of democracy. Ultimately, making the information available and accessible is all one can expect of government. What the public chooses to do with it is where the democratic process begins and ends.

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APPENDIX A: STATEWIDE PUBLIC AFFAIRS TELEVISION SYSTEMS

System	State
Gavel-to-Gavel Alaska	Alaska
The California Channel	California*
CT-N	Connecticut*
The Florida Channel	Florida*
Hawaii State Legislature Legislative Broadcasts	Hawaii
The Illinois Channel	Illinois
KET	Kentucky*
Gavel-to-Gavel	Massachusetts
MGTV	Michigan*
House Television and Senate Media Services	Minnesota*
TVMT	Montana
NET Television	Nebraska
Gavel-to-Gavel New Jersey	New Jersey
New York State Legislative Proceedings Channel	New York
The Ohio Channel	Ohio*
OPAN	Oregon
PCN	Pennsylvania*
Capitol Television	Rhode Island*
The South Carolina Channel	South Carolina
TVW	Washington*

* Systems studied for this project

**APPENDIX B: STATEWIDE PUBLIC AFFAIRS TELEVISION FUNDING
SOURCES**

State	Year Started	State Government	Private/ Foundation	Cable Industry	Sponsored Programs
Alaska	1996	X	X		
California	1991			X	
Connecticut	1994	X			
Florida	1996	X			
Hawaii	1993			X	
Illinois	2003		X		
Kentucky	1978	X	X		
Massachusetts	1984	X			
Michigan	1997			X	
Minnesota	1988	X			
Montana	2001	X			
Nebraska	1984	X			
New Jersey	1996			X	
New York	2006	X			
Ohio	1997	X			X
Oregon	1997	X			
Pennsylvania	1994			X	X
Rhode Island	1984	X			
S. Carolina	2003	X			
Washington	1995	X	X		X

**APPENDIX C: STATEWIDE PUBLIC AFFAIRS TELEVISION
PROGRAMMING**

State	House Gavel to Gavel	Senate Gavel to Gavel	Legis. Hearings	State Supreme Court	Exec. Branch	State Agencies	Public Affairs
Alaska	X	X	X	X	X		
California	X	X	X	X	Limited		X
Connecticut	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Florida	X	X		X		X	X
Hawaii	X	X	X				X
Illinois	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kentucky	X	X	X		Limited		X
Massachusetts	X	X					X
Michigan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Minnesota	X	X	X				X
Montana	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Nebraska	X	X					
New Jersey	X	X					
New York	X	X	X				
Ohio	X	X		X		X	X
Oregon	X	X		X	X	X	X
Pennsylvania	X	X	X		X		X
Rhode Island	X	X	Limited		Limited		
S. Carolina	X	X	X				X
Washington	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

APPENDIX D: INTERNAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date of interview:

Location of interview:

Description/notes about location:

Name of interviewee:

Title:

Years at network:

Professional background:

E-mail address:

1. How long has the network been in operation?
2. What do you see as the network's primary mission?
3. How did the network get started?
 - Legislative effort
 - Grass-roots citizen effort
 - Cable industry initiative
 - Local PBS station initiative
4. How many staff members does the network have?
 - Full-time
 - Part-time
5. How is the staff divided?
 - Who does what?
6. In general, what sort of professional background does your staff members have?
7. What is the network's primary funding source?
 - State
 - Cable industry
 - Private donations/foundations
8. Does the network have any other sources of funding?
 - Sponsorships/underwriting
9. What are the network's hours of operation?
10. What is the primary type of programming for the network?
 - Gavel-to-gavel
 - Legislative committee sessions
 - Supreme Court arguments
 - State agency hearings

11. Are there any other types of programming your network offers?
 - Interview programs
 - Journalist round tables
 - Candidate debates
 - Press conferences
 - Other
12. What sort of programming do you provide when your legislature is not in session?
13. Where are your cameras set up?
 - House and Senate chambers
 - Legislative committee rooms
 - Others
14. How are they set up?
 - Front of chamber/room
 - Back of chamber/room
 - Sides
15. How many cameras do you have in each chamber? In each committee room?
16. Why do you think the Legislature agreed to allow its proceedings to be televised?
17. Do you think the presence of cameras in the chambers has had any impact on how the Legislature conducts business?
18. What kind of cameras/equipment does the network use?
 - Same in both chambers?
19. Who controls the operation of the cameras?
20. Who makes the coverage decisions?
21. Where does the network's signal reach inside the capitol building?
22. Where does the signal reach outside the capitol?
 - Entire state?
 - Areas not reached?
23. How is the network's signal distributed?
 - Dedicated channel
 - Cable systems
 - Satellite
 - Internet

24. Who are the network's viewers?

- Elected officials
- Other government officials
- Journalists
- Lobbyists
- Members of the public

25. Can commercial television stations access your signal for carriage on their stations?
How?

26. Does the network have any sort of archiving system?

27. Does the network provide any sort of feedback mechanism for the public?

- Call-in shows
- E-mail
- Phone calls
- Mail
- Information at end of programming about where to go to get further information

28. What sort of pressures does the network face?

- Elected officials
- Public
- Funding
- Staffing
- Programming

29. How do you handle these pressures?

Are there specific response mechanisms in place?

30. How stable do you feel the network's operation is and how are you able to maintain stability?

31. What are your biggest concerns for the network?

32. What are your biggest hopes?

33. What are the key relationships you believe the network has established and how have they helped in building the network?

34. Ultimately, who do you feel has the most ability to shape the network's direction, programming, operation, etc.?

35. Where do you see the network going in the future?

- Future development
- Planning

36. Where do you look for new ideas?

Other state public affairs networks

National Association of Public Affairs Networks

Others

37. What role would you say the network has in the state government process?

38. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about the network?

APPENDIX E: LEGISLATOR/LEGISLATIVE STAFF INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date of interview:

Location of interview:

Description/notes about location:

Name of interviewee:

Title:

Years in state government:

Professional background:

E-mail address:

1. Have you ever watched any of the programming on (your state's public affairs network)?
2. How often would you say you watch the network?
 - More than once a week
 - Once a week
 - Once a month
 - Almost never
3. When do you watch the network?
 - Year-round
 - Only when the Legislature is in session
 - Only when I know there is a program of interest to me
 - Occasionally, for example, if I run across a program that interests me
4. What programs do you watch?
 - Gavel-to-gavel
 - Legislative committee sessions
 - Supreme Court arguments
 - State agency hearings
 - Interview programs
 - Journalist round tables
 - Candidate debates
 - Press conferences
 - Other
5. What programs would you like to see that are not offered?
6. Why do you watch the network?
7. Have you ever participated in any of the network's programming?
8. Have any of your constituents ever told you that they've seen you on the network?

9. What was their reaction?
10. Do you feel that the network's coverage of the Legislature and state government, in general, is balanced? What do you do if you believe it is not balanced?
11. Why do you think members of the Legislature agreed to allow their proceedings to be televised?
12. Do you feel that the existence of the cameras in the legislative chambers has had any impact on how the Legislature conducts business? If so, how?
13. What value do you see in the coverage provided by the network?
14. What role would you say the network has in the state government process?
15. Is there anything you'd like to add or anything else you think would be helpful for me to know?

APPENDIX F: MEDIA INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date of interview:

Location of interview:

Description/notes about location:

Name of interviewee:

Title:

Years at media outlet:

Professional background:

E-mail address:

1. Tell me how long you've been covering the legislature (general assembly, etc.).
2. How is your paper's/station's legislative coverage set up?
 - a. How many reporters assigned?
 - b. Has there been an increase or decrease in the past 5 years that you know of?
 - c. Do you have a separate bureau located at the capitol?
 - d. Are you reporting just for your organization or for a group of media outlets in the state?
 - e. Does your paper place a special emphasis on legislative coverage given that it is the state capital newspaper?
3. What seems to work best about this set-up? What doesn't work?
4. Tell me how the process works.
 - a. Cover from the floor with seats for reporters/cameramen?
 - b. Cover from a gallery area that overlooks the floor.
 - c. Cover from a common press room away from the floor.
5. Do you have access to the coverage of the state public affairs television network?
 - a. Do you have a feed?
 - b. Where do you have access?
6. How does it work?
 - a. Piped into your office?
 - b. The press room?
 - c. Via the Internet?
7. How do you use the feed?
 - a. To follow debates and votes on the floor?
 - b. To keep tabs on committee meetings/hearings?
 - c. As a source of footage for TV reports?
 - d. Has it helped with covering your beats? With generating enterprise stories?

8. If you don't use the feed, why not?
9. Has having access to the public affairs network feed changed the way you cover the legislature?
 - a. If yes, in what way?
 - b. Do you go to the floor/gallery/press room as often as before the coverage existed?
 - c. Are you able to follow issues and bills more efficiently? (i.e., not wasting time sitting in unproductive committee meetings or floor debates?)
 - d. Do you find that your level of contact with legislators has changed?
 - e. Have you become more selective about stories?
 - f. Has it changed the type of stories you write?
10. What do you like about the coverage?
11. What don't you like about it?
12. Do you think that having access to the network's coverage has helped you improve your coverage of the legislature?
 - a. If yes, why?
 - b. If no, why not?
13. What changes in the network's coverage would help your coverage? That is, if you were in charge, what would you like to see happen?
14. Is there anything you'd like to add or anything else you think would be helpful to know?

APPENDIX G: TELEPHONE SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. How much attention do you generally pay to news about POLITICS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS IN YOUR STATE? [Using a 10-point scale where 1 indicates paying little or no attention and 10 indicates paying very close attention]
2. How do you get most of your news about POLITICS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS IN YOUR STATE?
 1. Local news programming
 2. Local newspapers
 3. Radio
 4. The Internet
 5. A statewide public affairs television channel?
3. How confident are you in the ACCURACY of news coverage of POLITICS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS IN YOUR STATE? [Using a 10-point scale where 1 indicates little or no confidence and 10 indicates a great deal of confidence]
4. How would you rate the FAIRNESS of news coverage of POLITICS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS IN YOUR STATE? [Using a 10-point scale where 1 indicates that news coverage is generally fair to all sides and 10 indicates that news coverage strongly favors one side over another]
5. How would you rate news coverage of POLITICS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS IN YOUR STATE in terms of whether news coverage helps solve problems or makes problems more difficult to resolve? [Using a 10-point scale where 1 indicates news coverage helps to solve problems and 10 indicates that it makes problems more difficult to resolve]
6. Have you ever heard any public figure or political leader that you trust or agree with claim news coverage of POLITICS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS IN YOUR STATE was biased or inaccurate?
7. Does your state have a public affairs channel—that is, a state-level C-SPAN that covers your state legislature and state government?
 1. Yes
 2. No
8. How often do you watch the programming on NAME OF SYSTEM?
 1. More than once a week
 2. About once a week
 3. Once or twice a month
 4. Rarely or Hardly Ever
 5. Never

9. What type of programs do you watch on this channel? [Check all that apply]
1. Coverage of political events
 2. Legislative sessions
 3. Committee hearings
 4. Press conferences
 5. Cultural programs, such as book review programs or community cultural events
 6. Other

10. What is the primary reason you watch this channel?
1. Track specific bills or issues
 2. See what a specific legislator is doing
 3. To hear what experts or interested parties have to say about an issue
 4. To hear what journalists covering the legislature have to say
 5. To hear about the day's events

11. If your state provided a public affairs network covering state government and politics, how often would you watch?
1. More than once a week
 2. About once a week
 3. Once or twice a month
 4. Rarely or Hardly Ever
 5. Never

Now I would like to ask you some questions about your participation and involvement in the political process. In the past two years, have you ...

12. Written a letter to the editor or called into a public affairs talk show on an issue?
1. Yes
 2. No

13. Contacted a public official about a political issue?
1. Yes
 2. No

14. Persuaded someone you know to support or oppose a political issue?
1. Yes
 2. No

15. Contributed to a political candidate or organization?
1. Yes
 2. No

APPENDIX H: CODING CATEGORIES

Cameras

The Cameras category is a combination of the original Cameras category and the Legislator Behavior category. The original Cameras category contained coded data reflecting the specific placement of cameras within the Capitol buildings and other state government branches. The Legislator Behavior category focused on data that showed how legislators reacted to the presence of the cameras. The merged category was created because the data in the two original categories were intertwined. The presence of one—the camera—had an effect on the other—legislator behavior. This category is an example of the policy-making theory that forms part of the theoretical framework of this project, as well as the diffusion of innovation and norms and routines theories. The concern revealed in the data is that the presence of the cameras exacerbates some aspects of legislator behavior that are not necessarily conducive to sound policy-making, such as an unwillingness to speak when an issue is controversial, thereby keeping constituents from fully understanding a legislator's thinking, or grandstanding while speaking with the result being more focus on the theatrics and less on the policy issue under debate.

Criticism of Networks

The Criticism of Networks category examines data related to some of the shortcomings of statewide public affairs television. It is part of the civic engagement component of the project because these shortcomings affect both the access of citizens to information about their state governments and the quality of what information is provided.

Democratic Process

The Democratic Process category focuses specifically on civic engagement and how statewide public affairs television helps provide opportunities for citizens to become better informed about the legislative process and to make decisions about whether or how they wish to get involved.

Distribution of Networks

The Distribution of Networks category merged the original Distribution of Networks category, the Accessibility in the Capitol category, and the Web sites category. The original Distribution of Networks category focused on the availability of the signal outside the Capitol buildings; Accessibility in the Capitol examined the data related to the availability of the feed within the building. The Web sites node captured the data on the network's Internet presence, the content of the site, and how the site was or was not used. Combining the three brought the accessibility issue under one category and allowed for a more thorough comparison of the data. This category also is central to the civic engagement theory that is part of this project because obviously accessibility helps determine how engaged citizens can be.

Expansion of Networks

The Expansion of Networks category is a combination of the original Expansion of Networks category and the Future Goals of Networks category. The Expansion of Networks category examined the data to see how these statewide public affairs television networks moved their content beyond gavel-to-gavel coverage and looked at what areas the programming covered. The Future Goals category looked at what these networks want to do in the future with their programming and distribution. Both of these category

have to do with data that reflects how statewide public affairs television is moving beyond its original programming mission, expanding its reach, and becoming part of the state government institution.

Feedback from the Public

The Feedback from the Public category illustrates the **civic** engagement component of the project by gathering the data related to how citizens respond to the programming presented by statewide public affairs television.

Journalism Routines

The Journalism Routines category combines the Journalist Routines, Traditional Media, Use of Networks, and Media in the Capitol categories. The Journalist Routines category examined the data to see how they illustrated the norms and routines of traditional media and how they affect the way statehouse reporters do their work. Since the bureau set-ups and legislative access data reflect journalism norms and routines, it was merged into the routines category. The Traditional Media category focused on data that examined the presence of the commercial media in the statehouse—whether it is staying constant, increasing, or declining. A diminished media presence clearly has implications for how reporters are able to do their job, i.e., their norms and routines. But the larger impact is found in civic engagement and the growing inability of the traditional media to provide an adequate stream of information to the public. The Use of Networks category captured data that revealed how elites use the programming of statewide public affairs television. Elites would be legislators, legislative staff members, lobbyists, journalists, and avid followers of politics. This category illustrates several of the theoretical arguments underlying this project—civic engagement, norms and routines,

and institutionalism. The Media in Capitol category focused on data that revealed how the traditional media set up their statehouse bureaus and what access they had to legislative proceedings.

Legislative Process

The Legislative Process category is a combination of the Institutional Impact category and the Policy-Making category. Both focused on data that reveal how statewide public affairs television has affected the work of legislators and legislative staff. What the data showed were some subtle changes in how both groups do their work, which extends the norms and routines theory more commonly applied to journalists.

Lobbyist Routines

Like the Legislative Process category, the data in this category examined how the presence of statewide public affairs television has altered the work routines of lobbyists and also provided a way to extend the norms and routines theory of journalism.

Networking Among Systems

The Networking Among Systems category covered the data related to how executives at the various statewide public affairs television networks stay in contact with each other and what impact that contact has on their operations. The category also serves to illustrate the social networking and diffusion of innovation theories that are part of the theoretical framework for this study.

Network Norms and Routines

Network Norms and Routines is a category combining the Network Production Routines and Legislative vs. Network categories. The two categories were combined because both looked at data that revealed how the networks develop and provide content.

From a theoretical perspective, this node falls within the policy-making component, as well as expanding the norms and routines theoretical framework so that it can include statewide public affairs television.

Political Economy of Networks

The Political Economy of Networks category was created out of four others—Network History, Alternative Models for Networks, Set-up Problems, and Network Philosophy. The data in each of the four categories dealt with how the various networks were established, and offered a more comprehensive picture of the networks together instead of separately. The combined category also makes it easier to examine the data through the lenses of diffusion of innovation and policy-making theory. The Network Philosophy category looked at data pertaining to the mission of statewide public affairs television and what the staff members of these networks believe their mission to be.

Political Pressures

The Political Pressures category combines the original Political Pressures category and the SPAN Credibility category. It focuses on data that illustrate how the content of statewide public affairs television can be shaped by the demands of legislators and other state officials on the one hand and how these networks can resist such pressures as they put together their programming on the other hand. How a network responds to political pressure is one way of evaluating how institutionalized it has become, which is the central theme of this study. The SPAN Credibility category, in particular, examines data related to how credible members of the public and members of the elite—legislators, legislative staff members, lobbyists, and journalists—find statewide public affairs television's programming. Credibility is another component of institutionalism and the

data would be expected to help build the case for the institutionalism of statewide public affairs television.

Programming

The Programming category focuses on the content provided by statewide public affairs television. Merged into it was the category Questions about Programming Decisions. Since both categories dealt with content, they were combined into one so the data could be examined through the civic engagement framework.

Public Awareness of Networks

The Public Awareness category combines three others—SPAN Audience, Audience Use of SPANs, and SPAN Marketing. The data in all three focused on who watches statewide public affairs television, so it made more sense to combine them and see what they revealed about audiences within a civic engagement framework. SPAN Marketing focused on how the networks do or do not market themselves and the problems created by the lack of public awareness. These data also illustrate the civic engagement aspect of the project. If citizens don't know where to find the statewide public affairs television signal or aren't aware of what programs the networks offer, then the systems are not as effective a tool at fostering public participation as they might be.

APPENDIX I: PERMISSION LETTER



LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY
AND AGRICULTURAL MECHANICAL COLLEGE
Marshall School of Mass Communication

RECEIVED

10-4-06

Permission granted
No fee.

September 29, 2006

Mrs. Jennifer McGill
Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication
234 Outlet Pointe Blvd., Suite A
Columbia, SC 29210-5667

Please include in
your citation that
it is used by
permission and
that copyright is
held by
AEJMC.

Dear Ms. McGill:

I am a doctoral candidate at Louisiana State University and am currently writing my dissertation. As part of that I would like to quote from an article that ran in *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* in 2005. I was the lead author of that article, and it contains information that has a direct bearing on my dissertation.

I am writing to ask the journal's permission to reprint a portion of the article in my dissertation. The citation is:

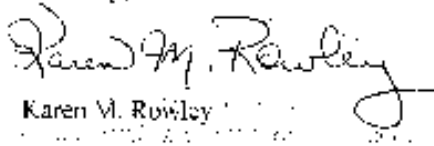
Rowley, K. M., & Karpus, D. D. (2005). There's a new gatekeeper in town: How statewide public affairs television creates the potential for an altered media model. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82(1), 167-180.

Jennifer
McGill
AEJMC
Executive
Director

LSU requires the permission of the journal before any part of the article can be used in the dissertation, and if the permission is forthcoming, the university also requires that it be in writing.

Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,


Karen M. Rowley

VITA

Karen Rowley is the special projects manager for the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, where she is overseeing a three-year project examining the impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita across 22 communities in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Her research interests include media and public policy

Before entering the doctoral program at The Manship School of Mass Communication, she served as managing editor of *The Greater Baton Rouge Business Report* for eight years. During her tenure, the paper won several awards from the national Association of Area Business Publications, as well as awards from the American Society of Business Publication Editors, the Society of American Business Editors and Writers, the National Federation of Press Women, the Louisiana Press Association, the Louisiana Press Women, the Louisiana State Medical Society, and the Louisiana State Bar Association.

Before taking the job at the *Business Report*, she worked as an assistant metro editor for *The Palm Beach Post* in West Palm Beach, Florida, overseeing the governmental reporters and the paper's regional bureaus. In addition, she worked as a copy editor for *The Post* and for the *Greensboro News & Record* in Greensboro, North Carolina.

She earned her master's degree in mass communication from Louisiana State University and her bachelor of arts degree in journalism from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.