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# Compromising the Craft: A Mixed-Methodological Analysis of the Products and Processes of Storytelling in Local Television and Digital News

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COMPROMISING THE CRAFT: A MIXED-METHODOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF  
THE PRODUCTS AND PROCESSES OF STORYTELLING IN LOCAL TELEVISION  
AND DIGITAL NEWS

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

The Manship School of Mass Communication

by  
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B.A., University of Toronto, 2000  
M.M.C., Louisiana State University, 2007  
May 2015

To my mother Yaffa Edenson, my brother Oren Edenson, my husband Kris Henderson,  
and our sons Kol and Kai.

And, in memory of Jerry Edenson and Haviva Baharav

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## ABSTRACT

Before the Telecommunications Act of 1996, station ownership was highly restricted to ensure that owners could not dominate in any one market nor own more than a handful of stations across all markets. The Act deregulated station ownership, redefining the role of the station owner from a financial supporter of public communication to an aggressive competitor in the television marketplace. With nearly three quarters of Americans citing local television and digital journalism as their top sources for information, this study serves two purposes: (1) to confirm the existence of storytelling as a professional, value-driven journalistic behavior in local television news and (2) to discuss the current state of the storytelling norm within the context of the larger crisis of journalism.

The data from this dissertation come from four methodological approaches to the study of local television news: (1) observations of 18 days of news packaging inside ten local television newsrooms across seven companies and six markets, (2) qualitative comparisons of 32 cases of news packaging for the 6:00 pm newscasts that aired during the observation days, (3) two content analyses of each of the television and web products published in connection to the 32 cases and (4) 62 long-form, semi-structured interviews with the managers, producers, reporters and photographers responsible for those 32 cases.

Findings indicate that journalistic norms are indeed vulnerable to corporate demands in particular when combined with a lack of meaningful managerial support. These data show that storytelling in local television news is a performance compromised by the search for economies of scale, where *whether* an event is covered is primarily the decision of people other than those who determine *how* an event should be covered.

## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

### **Competition and the Crisis of Journalism**

The lines of broadcast communication in America belong to the citizenry; split evenly, 320 million ways. Since Americans have opted not to accept public funding to support network news production, the Federal Government plays a complicated role in maintaining the free-flow of information through those channels by distributing licenses to for-profit organizations. Establishing the terms upon which it distributes and regularly renews those licenses, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) not only judges what is valuable public information, but also characterizes the political economy of broadcast news. For the first four decades of television news production, the FCC tightly restricted ownership of local television news stations, recognizing that economic priorities could outweigh social ones (Peterson, 1956). However, in 1996, the United States enacted a policy that tipped the scales of that relationship: Before the Telecommunications Act of 1996, station ownership was highly restricted to ensure that owners could not dominate in any one market nor own more than a handful of stations across all markets. The Act deregulated station ownership, redefining the role of the station owner from a financial supporter of public communication to an aggressive competitor in the television marketplace (McChesney, 2004; Bagdikian, 2004).

Today, 71% of Americans report local television news as their primary source for information about public issues (Hare, 2014). As such, there is good reason to be concerned about the decisions leading to the performance of local television news stations. Much research on American news in the past twenty years has focused on the effects of deregulation including the rapid conglomeration of the local television news

industry. Scholarly research on the political economy of news suggests that there is a gap, under the current ownership model, between socially responsible news products and the kind of news that is actually available to the American public. Academics have criticized television journalists, as the gatekeepers of public information (White, 1950; Shoemaker, 1997), for covering sensational topics in exchange for ratings regardless of their actual salience to the public's social and political needs, or what they describe as a crisis of American journalism (McChesney, 2012; McManus, 1994; Hamilton, 2004; Zaller, 2003; Grossman, 1997). In local television news, which is the subject of this dissertation, there are specific issues that academics have targeted as examples of this problematic relationship between news and profits: Firstly, the number of hours of local television news programming has increased (PEW staff, 2014), while issues of public interest including diversity, localism and public affairs (FCC, 2014) have decreased (Slattery et al., 2001; Yan & Napoli, 2006; Winseck, 2008). Instead, research shows that newscasts today are comprised greatly of redundant content (Boczkowski & De Santos 2007; Smith, 2008), live shots (Seib, 2001; Livingston & Bennett, 2003), soft news (Plasser, 2005), and isolated cases of crime and disasters (Belt and Just, 2008).

While the advertiser-funded business model affects content diversity, contemporary ownership structures face additional diversity issues. Today, local television journalists are working under fewer and larger corporate umbrellas: The five largest local television companies in America own more than 460 of the 952 stations across the country. Compare that to the 190 stations the same companies owned only one decade ago (Potter & Matsa, 2014). Researchers are finding that the amount of content in terms of local and public affairs programming is not improved by those particular

marketplace conditions (Yan & Napoli, 2006). Scholars also find that small news organizations with weaker corporate ties rely more heavily on local news content than do their larger counterparts (Powers & An, 2009). Corporations simply remain true to their economic responsibilities, finding ways to earn as much money as possible within their federally mandated confines. As these companies grow, diversity in terms of owners' voices logically decreases (Winseck, 2008). This changing landscape necessitates the continued understanding of how the political economy of local news affects all aspects of news production.

In economics terms, television news performance is the interplay between the macro, meso, and micro levels of production (McManus, 1994). Political economists have paid close attention to the impact of the macro levels of news production; describing the changing corporate structures in each decade and revealing their effects on news work (Young, 2000; Yan, 2006; Powers and An, 2009; Yanich, 2010). Both political economists and mass communication scholars have focused on the micro levels of news production, the "responses of journalists to market demand" (Jones & Salter, 2012, p.16) and how those conduct decisions impact performance (Winseck, 2008; Livingston & Bennett, 2003; Hamilton, 2004; McManus, 1994; McChesney, 2004). What are absent from the literature right now are investigations of the meso-levels of news production (Zelizer, 2004; Hanitzsch, 2009; Nielsen et al, 2013); an understanding of the relationship between the business needs of local broadcast news stations (Belt and Just, 2008; McManus, 1994) and the norms and routines of professional journalists (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Schudson, 2003).

## **Journalistic Norms and News Performance**

Academics measure local television news performance as the product of professional journalistic decisions about which issues to cover and how to cover them. For more than a century, objectivity has received the title of the dominant norm in American journalism (Mindich, 1998; Schudson, 2001; Hellmeuller et al., 2012; Skovsgaard et al., 2012). Several scholars have explained that the growth of the objectivity norm occurred in direct relation to the abandonment of the partisan press financial model in exchange for the current, advertiser-funded model (Mindich, 1998; Schudson, 2001). As such, scholars have demonstrated that journalists will predictably apply production techniques that improve the perceived objectivity of a news item such as a concerted effort to present information in a balanced way (Schudson, 2001) or the use of the inverted pyramid story structure (Mindich, 1998). What normative studies, such as those about objectivity, demonstrate is that journalistic norms are vulnerable to external forces. In particular, norms are vulnerable to changes in technology, society and political economy. Journalists, for example, have altered their normative gatekeeping behaviors along with the both technological and societal shifts that accompanied the adoption of social media (Lasorsa, 2012). Whereas journalists once actively sought to intercept messages from outside the news organization in order to uphold newsroom credibility (Shoemaker, 1997; Shoemaker and Vos, 2009), today's newsrooms incorporate contributions from outsiders in the form of social media interactions and website comments. Additionally, where journalists once normally conducted their work with a great deal of privacy, today's journalists commonly engage in deliberate acts of transparency, another norm receiving increased academic attention (Lasorsa, 2012).

Becker and Vlad (1997) recognized that, “news is both an individual product and an organizational product” (p.59). This is an oft-problematic duality as socially responsible norms of individual journalists come up against financially driven norms of the organization. In the example of objectivity, partisanship was the normative journalistic practice before the transition to the current advertise-funded model of news production. In the early days of American journalism, reporters would regularly seek out stories that advocated for the political party under which the newspaper operated. That business model necessitated news stories with clear political loyalties and, more to the point, likely required ignoring those angles unfavorable to the same party. Individual journalists may have not wished to ignore a particular story, but such was the expectation until the industry saw a significant change in financing. Even under the current financial model, journalists are criticized for conducting themselves in accordance with norms that perpetuate the status quo (McChesney, 2004; Chomsky & Herman, 2010). But what happens to a professional journalistic norm when it conflicts with the corporate agenda? Such is the subject of this dissertation.

### **The Storytelling Norm and Journalistic Compromise**

Traditionally, an important mark of professionalism in journalism is the ability to tell stories well. Journalists as well as academics who study journalism share two assertions regarding storytelling in news: (1) that storytelling is a professional journalistic norm (Barkin, 1984; Roeh, 1989; Bird & Dardenne, 1990; Dotson, 2000; Willis, 2010; Tompkins, 2012) and (2) that telling stories well is a necessary and socially responsible function of the American Press (Berkowitz, 1997; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). Where objectivity is the journalistic preference for presenting facts in as unbiased a way as

possible, journalists who value storytelling present those same facts along with context for a larger political or social issue. They do this by interviewing sources in a manner that garners emotional responses, by collecting audio-visuals that capture the experience of being at the news scene, by writing the story with narrative structures, and by editing the footage into meaning-laden sequences. Objective journalism is designed to present truth; storytelling is designed to promote engagement. Many studies support the assertion that the way journalists present news information, specifically in television news, importantly affects the way that viewers pay attention to, understand, remember and think about what they see and hear in a newscast (Grabe et al., 2000; Lang, 1989; Lang, 2000; Lang et al, 2003). This research in information processing confirms what professional television journalists have long understood: that storytelling is key to engaging viewers by providing the context for a set of disconnected facts. Storytelling is vulnerable to the same external forces of technology, society, and political economy as is any other norm. It just happens to be that storytelling is also one of the norms that leads to democratically useful news performance, or what the FCC would call news in the public interest.

While science supports that storytelling structures are desirable for increasing viewer engagement, they are not always an option for professionals to produce. Professional local television journalism is the result of three processes: (1) judging which information is newsworthy, (2) gathering news elements through routine research, interview and audio-visual techniques and (3) presenting the newsworthy information. In order for journalists to structure news presentations as narratives, they must consider their storytelling needs during all three of these steps (Dotson, 2000; Tompkins, 2012; B. Huppert, personal interview,

October 1, 2012). Journalists use narrative structures based on education and mentorship, personal style and ability, daily reporting circumstances and station-specific resource availability. When they wish to structure information as a narrative, journalists face compromises to the storytelling craft at each professional turn: They must first know how to structure news information as a narrative. They must also recognize how they can structure available information into such a narrative and convince management that they should be assigned to cover that information. Finally, they must know how to gather the research, interviews and video elements in a manner that enables them to organize the narrative. Meanwhile, journalists face the additional challenge of working for managers who are tasked with the search for economies of scale. While storytelling requires time, effort and skill to produce with any kind of quality, technology allows journalists to provide information to viewers at an unprecedented rate. By no coincidence, news companies have shown an overwhelming preference for breaking news and live shots, which produce more news with less money (Seib, 2001).

Telling stories in local television news is traditionally relegated to the production of news packages (Barnas & White, 2013; Papper, 2013; Tompkins, 2012; Dotson, 2000). In the professional newsroom, journalists come to work minimally expecting to be assigned to events, which they will produce (“turn”) as news packages. Since news is a deadline-driven product, journalists must make compromises throughout their workdays between their professional best practices and their workday circumstances (E. Kehe, personal interview, May 10, 2007; J. Sharify, personal interview, December 27, 2012; B. Dotson, personal interview, July 30, 2012). In order to provide the context that puts disconnected facts into perspective for the viewer, journalists need time to ask the “right”

people the “right” questions. However, television deadlines obligate journalists to provide information at particular times of the day, whether or not they are able to ask enough questions to write a full story. This study investigates whether journalists in their deadline-driven industry are compromising storytelling for immediacy.

In this era of manufactured breaking news coverage, storytelling is the method for creating socially and politically valuable news coverage that is both memorable and engaging to the viewer. But many scholars have warned that the current political economy is not conducive to such activities (McManus, 1994; Hamilton, 2004; McChesney, 2004). Moreover, leaders in profession say that the current business model threatens the storytelling norm in particular. NBC News Correspondent Bob Dotson, who has won more than 100 newswriting awards during his nearly fifty-year broadcasting career, explains how the demand for speed has overshadowed dedication to the storytelling craft:

There’s scant time these days in the last ten years or so because the people in our profession have had to master the technological changes which are constant. And that’s why... people aren’t trained...to do storytelling efficiently. [My generation] had time to learn the second part and the most essential part of the journalism craft, which is storytelling. (B. Dotson, personal interview, July 30, 2012)

This observation from an industry leader echoes the concern from other professional journalists that speed and efficiency in modern newsrooms could exist at the expense of some democratically responsible news. That is why this study investigates whether storytelling is still a professional priority and, if so, which individual, newsroom and industry-level variables are influencing that process.

The factors affecting storytelling in local television news in America are important to understand for three key reasons: Firstly, nearly three quarters of Americans

report local television news as their primary source for public information (Hare, 2014). Secondly, information processing research supports that viewers' abilities to deliberate effectively on information they receive from local television news is affected by presentation style (Grabe et al., 2000; Lang, 1989; Lang, 2000; Lang et al, 2003). Finally, the current political economy of local television news and all subsequent federal laws related to the same industry hinges upon the expectation that viewers as consumers can support or reject news products based on judgments of industry performance (Smith, 2008). This demands a fair and scientific overview of currently available news products and an analysis of which structural elements influence news conduct and performance for the sake of educating consumers and holding producers accountable.

### **The Seriousness of Storytelling**

This dissertation follows the advice of scholars James Carey (2009) and Barbie Zelizer (2004) in that it takes journalism seriously. The seriousness comes from the belief that citizens need journalists to give voice to people, issues, and events that might otherwise remain invisible to the public. The seriousness also comes from the belief that when companies dismiss professional values, the same citizens will become disengaged from professional journalistic communications. Where this study veers away from Carey and Zelizer's perspectives is in the suggestion that the problem is not with the way the academy treats journalists. That is a problem too, but this study focuses on the growing divide between journalistic and corporate values. Moreover, this study suggests that the way the news industry treats its news workers, indeed as news workers rather than professional mass communicators, is a far more pressing concern. Storytelling in this study represents the journalist's desire to behave professionally. Divergence from

storytelling, then, is a representation of the divide between what journalists want and what corporations want. And measuring that divide requires entering newsrooms.

There is a notable absence of meso-level newsroom study from this century explaining how newsroom workers and managers routinely conduct themselves as professional journalists (Zelizer, 2004). One reason for the gap in knowledge about the relationship between news norms and industrial organization is that scholars face challenges in accessing newsrooms. Comparative studies between stations pose perceived threats to corporations, giving them cause to be selective about who records their company policies. Journalists also have a particular way of thinking and talking about their professional work, which requires years of immersive study to emulate (Zelizer, 2004); another reason why most academics do not often conduct qualitative studies of newsrooms. Producing local television news in a “top 100” market newsroom between 2007 and 2010 helped to clear both of these hurdles. As a former practitioner, this researcher obtained access to ten newsrooms, observing behavior and interpreting those observations within the context of interviews with former colleagues.

The data in this dissertation come from four methodological approaches to the study of local television news: (1) observations of 18 days of news packaging inside ten local television newsrooms across seven companies and six markets, (2) qualitative comparisons of 32 cases of news packaging for the 6:00 pm newscasts that aired during the observation days, (3) two content analyses of each of the television and digital products published in connection to the 32 cases and (4) 62 long-form, semi-structured interviews with the managers, producers, reporters and photographers responsible for those 32 cases. Chapter Two reviews the literature currently available in the related areas

of norms and routines, political economy and broadcast news storytelling. This chapter also includes the research questions for this study. Chapter Three outlines the methodologies and data collection procedures used in this study. Chapter Four presents the findings and analyses of those results. Chapter Five, summarizes the findings from this dissertation, presents limitations to the research and offers considerations for future scholarship.

This dissertation serves two purposes: (1) to confirm the existence of storytelling as a professional, value-driven journalistic behavior in local television news and (2) to discuss the current state of the storytelling norm within the context of the larger crisis of journalism. By combining political economy and mass communication theories, this study reveals the factors influencing the normative behaviors of journalists in the modern local television newsroom, shaping the information traveling across America's shared lines of communication and affecting the ability of the citizenry to deliberate effectively on publically important matters.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This dissertation approaches local broadcast news as the result of the norms and routines of professional journalists (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Schudson, 2003) and the performance of industrialized workers under particular political economic conditions (McManus, 1994; Bagdikian, 2004; Hamilton, 2004; McChesney, 2004). As such, this research was designed and analyzed within a combination of two fields of study: mass communication and political economy.

### **Part I: Mass Communication**

The field of mass communication asks scholars to address Lasswell's (1948) questions of "who says what in what channel to whom with what effect." Since this field analyzes mass-mediated messages, as opposed to face-to-face or one-to-many communications, scholars have approached professional communicators as important arbiters of those messages, routinely going between information and understanding. Traditionally, researchers approached mass communication as a linear process where one transmits information through messages and the audience receives and interprets those messages (DeFleur, 2010). From that foundation, mass communication researchers connected the tangible social and political consequences of consuming certain types of and amounts of mass-mediated messages with the variables of audience demographics (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Shannon and Weaver's linear model also implied a need to measure the size and direction of the effects of consuming mass communicated messages based on the described passivity of the audience. While this dissertation was not designed to contribute to the discussion of audience effects, it did recognize that the contemporary news audience is not passive as once described: Digital

media have added avenues for including nonlinear models to conversations about the design, transmission, reception and effects of mass-communicated messages (Dominick, 2010). For mass communication research, this new technology required reevaluation of both the sending and receiving of information from, among others, journalists to news consumers. Indeed, this dissertation acknowledges that, while legacy media still produce traditional, linear communications, they do so in partnership with these new and interactive exchanges.

### **Norms and routines**

Many mass communication scholars have approached the study of journalistic work through Norms and Routines theory (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Schudson, 1989). The theory asserts that news production is not simply a matter of capturing reality on camera; news is rather the product of shared judgments of content and presentation as well as the compromise inherent in presenting that information under deadline. As a craft, norms and routines researchers say that news work is shaped by schooling, experience, and mentorship (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Schudson, 2003; Schaefer & Martinez, 2009). Scholars have also looked at news as a series of decisions about which events to notice and which to ignore (Molotch & Lester, 1974; Altheide, 1976; Fishman, 1980); and which people get a say in each matter and how much time journalists dedicate to each person (Gans, 1979; Nichols et al., 2006; Miller & Kurpius, 2010; Lacy et al., 2013). Since mass communication as a field of study also frames news presentations as effects-based, contributing to their audiences' political and cultural identities (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Iyengar, 1991; Bird & Dardenne, 1990; Roeh, 1989), its focus implies value in understanding which news norms and routines

contemporary workers adhere to in order to create professional news products. While they may not necessarily prefer to define their roles as interpretive (Willis, 2010; Zelizer, 1993), journalists do serve as mediators between information and understanding; people who shape our “collective memory” (Zandberg, 2010) by providing glimpses into society. Since, as stated earlier, nearly three-quarters of Americans report relying most heavily on local news to help shape this understanding, there is great cause for attention to which events journalists cover and how they cover them.

As a way of being and a way of doing, scholars have measured norms from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Quantitatively, normative expressions are measurable through content analyses. The presence or absence of transparency, for example, can be analyzed through word choice in both news presentations and surveys of professional journalists (Lasorsa, 2012; Hellmeuller et al., 2012). Traditionally, scholars measure objectivity through the use of the inverted pyramid in both print and broadcast news (Mindich, 1998). Some norms are less noticeable in the finished product and, therefore, require additional qualitative measures to reveal them. Gatekeeping, for example, is the behavior of filtering out content that is considered inappropriate by professional journalists for the sake of maintaining credibility (White, 1950; Shoemaker, 1997). Clearly, these topics are not evident in the finished news product and cannot be measured as such. Similarly, Fishman (1980) observed that by making determinations about what is newsworthy, journalists notice or ignore entire events. These “nonevents” cannot be part of a quantitative study as such. In one of the few contemporary studies of local television newsrooms, Casella (2013) showed how, when professional journalism norms and business norms intersect, business norms “alter the balance” of journalistic

normative loyalties. Specifically, he argued that, because the corporate value for live news presentations relates closely to the professional norm for timeliness, timeliness also appears most significant to the journalists in his study.

Schudson (2001) suggests a qualitative approach: observations of work and routines to notice expressed allegiance to the norm or resistance when the norm is challenged. More specifically, Schudson asserts that, “at least four conditions encourage the articulation of norms” (p.152). These conditions combine to reveal the norm and include: (1) support of the norm such as through awards ceremonies, (2) education, including university and on-the-job training in connection to the norm, (3) expressions of in and out group definitions related to the norm, and (4) managerial control that describes the desirability of the norm. Indeed, these social behaviors, supporting the storytelling norm, are available for observation in local television newsrooms.

### **News norms and news judgment**

While some social scientists measure norms in terms of society at large, norms are also an important factor in smaller human organizations including the workplace. The news industry has received much scholarly attention regarding their reliance on norms for making workplace decisions (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Schudson, 2003; Shoemaker, 1997). Scholars have long recognized that, by evaluating information with journalistic judgment, news workers function as gatekeepers to America’s understanding of public life (Lippmann, 1922; White, 1950, Shoemaker, 1997). News norms influence content selection in the television newsroom (Wenger & Potter, 2012; Papper, 2013). Despite the fact that American journalists have no professional governing body (Evet & Aldrige, 2003) academics still approach professionalism in news as

evident through shared, industry-wide norms (Altheide, 1976; Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Kaniss, 1991; Schudson, 2003; O’Neill and Harcup, 2009). Indeed, the industry standard for many journalism jobs includes professional training from accredited, four-year universities. Here, students become enculturated as professional journalists, learning to adopt the industry language, techniques and social expectations. The latter includes developing news consumption habits, forming relationships with public officials, as well as networking with industry professionals. Within the latter part of the enculturation process, student journalists will develop news judgment; a skill that is reinforced on the job (Willis, 2010; Schaefer & Martinez, 2009).

**Noticing events.** One area where journalists apply news judgment is in deciding *what* is newsworthy. These decisions stem from the education described above. Journalists learn in school, confirmed for them through newsroom experience, that professionals share a list of values when filtering through information. That list includes whether the information is timely, nearby and impactful, regards prominent and important people or issues, contains controversy, appeals to issues of human interest, or is just plain strange (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Bender, 2011; Papper, 2013). Scholars have recognized that this list of norms serves as a useful tool for analyzing news content and newsroom decisions. With those values in mind, some studies analyzed news content as a product of noticing or ignoring events (Molotch & Lester, 1974; Berkowitz, 1997; Sill et al., 2013). Many academics have speculated that this top-down, industry approach to information gathering requires ignoring stories that do not fit the mold (Molotch & Lester, 1974). As such, scholars today are particularly interested in the recent adoption of bottom-up, digital sources of information including social media (Hermida, 2010;

Lasorsa et al., 2011). This is also significant to academics in light of a lengthy push beginning in the nineties for more citizen-centric newsgathering (Friedland, 2000; Kurpius, 2002).

**Noticing people.** The other area where journalists apply news judgment is in deciding *who* is newsworthy. As with noticing events, news norms create industry definitions of preferred sources for journalistic interviews, which ultimately can serve as conceptual limitations for professionals (Lang, 2015). Academics interested in this effect of relying on industry norms tend to discuss content in terms of interview source diversity (Kurpius, 2002; Miller & Kurpius, 2010). Often these studies have isolated diversity in terms of social status (Livingston & Bennett, 2003; Reich, 2011), gender (Ross, 2007; Desmond and Danilewicz, 2010) and race or ethnicity (Entman, 1990; 1992; Heider, 2014). Digital journalism is also significant for this area of research as some scholars have suggested that technology may be challenging traditional news values by, among other things, diminishing the significance of elite-focused news stories (Gans, 2011).

### **The storytelling norm**

If gatekeeping achieves credibility, and objectivity achieves truth, then storytelling is the journalistic norm that achieves engagement. Just as Schudson (2001) characterized objectivity in American journalism, storytelling is, “at once a moral ideal, a set of reporting and editing practices, and an observable pattern of news writing” (p.149). Journalists understand that news consumers have divided and limited attention and, therefore, need to consume news presentations that are accessible, memorable, interesting, and engaging. In the prescriptive sense, journalists promoting the storytelling norm believe that emotions and narratives belong in television news presentations

(Dotson, 2000; Tompkins, 2012). As a process, storytelling creates engagement with the audience through particular production techniques, rather than treating audience members as passive recipients of information.

Since academics have focused so heavily in the past on the inverted pyramid and the objectivity norm, there is a perception both from some academics as well as practitioners that storytelling is partnered with a *subjectivity* norm (Roeh, 1989; Bird and Dardenne, 1990; Ytreberg, 2001). This is false. In fact, some scholars have acknowledged that narratives in news are no more subjective than are their inverted pyramid partners (Roeh, 1989). However, the staunch support for all things objective in past years certainly contributed to this division in the professional and academic realms. If objectivity is wrapped up in commitment to nonpartisanship and detachment of facts from feelings (Mindich, 1998; Schudson, 2001), then storytelling is the preference for embracing those feelings as a driving force in packaging television news information. If objectivity is the process of presenting the facts up front and favoring elite sources of information (Mindich, 1998; Livingston & Bennett, 2003; Reich, 2011), then storytelling in television news is the use of narrative forms, often writing around the experiences of everyday people. Both fit in the discussion of a search for truth; they simply prioritize different truths. As with any norm, storytelling can be observed in relation to Schudson's (2001) four categories of awards, education, group definitions and managerial control. The first two are outlined here; the second two require closing the gap in knowledge of meso-level newsroom behaviors.

**Storytelling awards.** Local television news journalists participate in several competitions, many of which judge content based on storytelling technique. The Radio

and Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) distributes an annual set of Murrow awards designed to recognize “outstanding achievements in electronic journalism...demonstrat[ing] the excellence that Edward R. Murrow made a standard for the electronic news profession ” (2015). While the organization’s description does not include the word “storytelling” specifically, the fact that the award is named for a journalist famous for his ability to tell stories is a clear indicator of the values expected of these contest judges. Similarly, the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) holds an annual competition called the Best of Photojournalism. As with the Murrow Award, the contest rules do not include the word “storytelling” as a requirement.

However, the organization describes itself as such:

The NPPA is the leading voice advocating for the work of visual journalists today...Our Code of Ethics stands for the highest integrity in visual storytelling. Our advocacy efforts put NPPA in the center of today’s thorniest issues of journalists’ rights to do their work — and to earn a living from their craft. (NPPA, 2015)

Again, clearly visual storytelling is a priority for this organization and is, presumably, a pillar of their most recognized competition.

**Storytelling education.** The industry standard for many journalism jobs includes professional training from accredited, four-year universities (Weaver et al., 2009). There students become enculturated as professional journalists, learning to adopt the industry language, techniques and social expectations. The latter includes developing news consumption habits, forming relationships with public officials, as well as networking with industry professionals. During the enculturation process, student journalists will develop news judgment; a skill that is reinforced on the job (Willis, 2010; Schaefer & Martinez, 2009). Several popular college journalism textbooks promote the storytelling

norm including Wenger and Potter's (2015) *Advancing the Story*, Dotson's (2000) *Make it Memorable* and Al Tompkins' (2012) *Aim for the Heart*.

In the industry, journalists continue their education through conferences, seminars, peer reviews, and mentorship (Schaeffer & Martinez, 2009). Poynter Institute is one of the leading resources for continuing education for working journalists. From their own website, the Poynter Institute, "...is the world's leading instructor, innovator, convener and resource for anyone who aspires to engage and inform citizens in 21st Century democracies" (Poynter, 2015). Many of their seminars are designed to increase awareness of changing industry norms in a competitive business that has very noticeable borders within markets and between companies. Similarly, the NPPA holds conferences for improving visual storytelling techniques for professional journalists including the annual *News Video* workshop, the *Ignite Your Passion* workshop and the *Advanced Storytelling* workshop, all of which attract journalists from around the country.

Additionally, there are a few well-known digital resources for journalists in terms of keeping up with current professional standards. Journalists and related scholars commonly access the Pew Research Center website for both interpreted and raw data about news consumption behaviors, business decisions, and professional presentations. Another online resource, NewsLab is what founder Deborah Potter refers to as a, "non-profit journalism resource center" (2015). Potter is also a regular contributor to the Pew site. One of the newest and very popular online industry resources for storytelling education is the closed group "Storytellers" on Facebook. The group, started and still managed by local television photojournalist Matt Mrozinski, has accumulated more than 6,500 members to date, including professionals who between them hold dozens of NPPA

and Murrow awards. The group is designed as a forum for industry-related discussion as well as a place to post stories for the sake of receiving constructive feedback from these experienced journalists.

**Group expressions and managerial control.** In order to establish that storytelling is also evident as part of workplace expressions, it is necessary to conduct observations and interviews from inside the station walls. In recent decades, scholars have generally veered away from the qualitative newsroom ethnographies and sociological studies of the nineteen seventies and eighties (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Schudson, 1989) in favor of quantitative effects research (Lang, 1989; Lang et al., 2003; Grabe et al., 2000; Reeves et al., 1999; Wise et al., 2009). This happened in part because the digital era brought about a significant transitional period for news production: For just over two decades, work routines in television newsrooms were changing practically on a daily basis thanks to the addition of the Internet, email, growing data repositories, increases in downloading and uploading speeds, developments in production equipment, social media, multimedia journalism, and new generations of digital native journalists. This is by no means an exhaustive list of changes. Recently, several scholars have called for more comparative studies of journalism practices to modernize news research (Zelizer, 2004; Hanitzsch, 2009; Nielsen et al, 2013). This dissertation serves as one such study.

### **News routines and news performance**

News routines refer to a different set of newsgathering concerns for journalists than do news norms. Since time is a key factor in news production, routines are necessary to produce reliable, efficient news stories for the sake of meeting deadlines (Tuchman,

1978; Fishman, 1980). Firstly, newsroom managers and workers hold daily meetings to establish available resources. Next, meeting attendees select from these available resources and assign stories to individual journalists. Reporters contact sources for interviews and make factual selections from those interviews in order to write their scripts. Reporters also conduct research in order to uncover information, to prepare for interviews and to provide information that cannot be obtained through interviews alone (Tompkins, 2012; Papper, 2013; Barnas & White, 2013).

When journalists use news judgment to decide how to write a story, additional production norms come into play such as objective (Tuchman, 1972; Schudson, 2001) and transparent language (Lasorsa, 2012), as well as selections of story structure (Roeh, 1989; Mindich, 1998; Zandberg, 2010). Mindich (1998) argued that the widely popular inverted pyramid structure attained its popularity due to its efficiency in a deadline-driven industry and not because of an inherent journalistic superiority, as many professionals believe it to have. The hourglass and diamond structures have attracted much interest from the academy over the years (Roeh, 1989; Bird & Dardenne, 1990; Ytreberg, 2001; Zandberg, 2010). As with the inverted pyramid, journalists apply value judgments to these storytelling structures as well, requiring a separate set of routines to collect the elements they need. These routine packaging behaviors are described here.

**Routine news packaging.** Of the television products available, the one that has the most time to present facts within a greater context is the Package. Other elements called Readers, VOs and VOSOTs can have storytelling elements (Tompkins, 2012), but ultimately are too short to provide as much context for the information in them as can packages. As such, packages are the focus of this particular study. TV packages are the

combined messages of three kinds of journalists: reporters, photographers, and editors. Reporters looking to put information into a greater context do so through the use of narrative story shapes. Narrative shapes are commonly described as having a diamond (Papper, 2013) or an hourglass design (Tompkins, 2012; Wenger & Potter, 2012) where the journalist organizes the information as having a beginning, middle, and end. The narrative structure is significant in contrast to the historically popular inverted pyramid structure, which ignores chronology in exchange for speed of information delivery (Tompkins, 2012; Mindich, 1998). The diamond-shaped story narrative introduces one storyline, the story of an individual or “character,” pulling out to the “bigger picture” in the middle, and ending with the opening storyline. This is similar to the A-B-A pattern in poetry, except with the added specificity that the B stanza relates the A stanza to the information. The hourglass narrative follows a similar A-B-A pattern, only here the story begins and ends with the bigger picture, leaving the individual experiences for the middle of the story. In some instances, writers use the narrow part of the story to reveal a surprise in the plot, effectively turning the story on its head (Tompkins, 2012). There is no research to suggest that journalists prefer one style over another. However, industry leaders do agree that the storytelling craft takes many years to hone (E. Kehe, personal interview, May 10, 2007; J. Sharify, personal interview, December 27, 2012; B. Dotson, personal interview, July 30, 2012; B. Chapman, personal interview, October 19, 2012). Additionally, there is an anecdotal convention as to which forms are considered preferable for which topics. Diamonds are typical formats for feature stories, which are commonly about characters, while inverted pyramids are popular for hard news, topics that affect public safety and, therefore, demand more immediacy (Tompkins, 2012).

Whether a reporter uses the hourglass depends on whether or not they have a character. The writer considers which facts are newsworthy and where they ought to be featured (Wenger & Potter, 2012).

While there is an obvious expectation that newsroom photographers and editors adhere to journalistic standards for non-fiction storytelling, techniques for “shooting” and editing video in news are similar to those of filmmaking. In order to tell a story, news photographers must consider in advance how their shots will be edited together (Berry & Brosius, 1993). This means adhering to a number of storytelling-specific, television news photography conventions: Firstly, they must shoot in sequences of wide, medium, close-up and extreme close up shots (Zettl, 1999; Tompkins, 2013; Briggs, 2013). Close ups and extreme close ups are particularly important to creating intimacy in a visual piece. Conventionally, photographers who wish to tell visual stories will identify the subject of a sequence and gather close up and extreme close up shots of that subject. Therefore, the subject of the sequence ought to be related to the script. Photographers who consider storytelling must also shoot both the action and the reaction in a scene such as an athlete shooting a basket and then the crowd cheering (Tompkins, 2012). Both of these photography techniques come in handy during the storytelling editing process.

Editing packages to tell a story means deliberately partnering shots, sounds, and scripts in order to send a message about the relationship between the three. Herbert Zettl (1999) described these relational statements in news editing as “montages.” A metric montage manipulates pacing to speed up or slow down the delivery of the story. An analytical montage allows the viewer to watch an action unfold. This is where the action-reaction shooting comes into play. An associative montage has images linger over other

images or matches images with the words to create meaningful connections for the viewer, something Zettl called a “tertium quid.” Editors can also add storytelling elements to news packages by using transitions such as dissolves which add to the mood of the piece. They can also draw attention to the natural sound in the story with techniques known as “nat pops” or “nat breaks.”

Newsrooms today do not all hire people specifically to edit video. With the abandonment of tape-to-tape editing and adoption of non-linear programs, stations have trained their workers over the past decade to do what is called “continuity editing” (Fiske & Hartley, 2003; Zettl, 1999). This means editing clips at a steady pace of 3-4 seconds each and with particular consideration for avoiding “unclean” editing, but without giving specific thought to adding deeper meaning to the story through narrative editing techniques. By teaching this “clean” video editing skill, many stations have absorbed editing responsibilities into the work routines of nearly every news worker (Henderson, 2012). While package editing is still primarily the responsibility of news photographers in many stations, other news workers such as reporters, anchors, producers, assistant producers, and interns commonly enter the editing booths at their stations to help produce videos for voice-overs (VOs) and voice-overs with interview clips (VOSOTs) read live on air and sometimes packages as well. Taking the responsibility of editing out of the hands of specialized workers has logically affected the quality of news video editing on television. Schaefer & Martinez (2009) found an increase in narrative editing techniques beyond continuity obligations in newsrooms over a forty-year period. This implied that editing as an art was on the rise. However, Henderson (2012) suggested that organizational demands inhibited the growth of this narrative editing technique in the

decade following Schaefer & Martinez's study. Henderson analyzed the work of NPPA editor-of-the-year winners and found, with the help of in-depth interviews with those editors, that recent generations of editors saw greater value in continuity editing over narrative techniques.

**Non-routine news packaging.** Breaking news for academics has traditionally referred to the coverage of non-routine events such as crime and disasters (Tuchman, 1978). Since there is a long-standing convention in local TV news that a breaking news story requires setting aside the scheduled story routines, scholars commonly see value in understanding the circumstances under which journalists cover breaking news (Tuchman, 1978; Berkowitz, 1997; Miller & Leshner, 2007). There is, however, some modern disagreement about whether breaking news ought to be studied in terms of its impact on quality (Plasser, 2005; Belt & Just, 2008) or in terms of its effect on audiences (Livingston & Bennett, 2003).

The news should be impactful and timely for both routine and breaking news. For that reason, there is some overlap in terms of what can be defined as breaking news. Twenty-four hour news channels have capitalized on that overlap by running breaking news warnings throughout their newscasts, suggesting that anything happening now is breaking news (Miller & Hatley-Major, 2005) and further complicating the conversation. In local news, there are two kinds of stories that require urgent news production routines: (1) traditional event-based breaking news, which means coverage of unexpected events, and (2) stories with same-day expiration; stories that are not relevant to run the next day. The latter, while still urgent, does not trigger breaking news routines in local newsrooms. Instead, it refers to the awareness on the part of the producing staff that a journalist

invested resources into creating a news product that cannot run at a later date. Breaking news triggers a routine in the newsroom that goes through three phases of coverage: breaking news, developing news, and continuing coverage (Tuchman, 1978). Breaking news originates with an unexpected event. Once the breaking and subsequent developing news coverage has ended, stations move on to continuing coverage.

### **Storytelling and television news**

There is not much point in creating mediations between information and understanding if they do not actually succeed in producing understanding. The simplest method, both in terms of cost and writing style, for imparting information onto an audience is to read a list of facts. However, research has shown that humans are not apt to recall long lists of facts (Slamecka & McElree, 1983). As such, the journalism craft includes not only the gathering of information but also the packaging of that information into a form that is most comfortably consumed by the audience. When news workers mediate events, they are trained to provide viewers with context beyond the literal content of the words and images in the story (Fiske & Hartley, 2003; Zettl, 1999; Schaefer & Martinez, 2009; Henderson, 2012).

Research in the psychology of news consumption has measured variables of consumer arousal, attention and memory in order to discuss the impact of a news product (Lang et al., 1999; Lang et al., 2000; Lang et al., 2010; Lang et al., 2014). Theoretically, if one is stimulated by either the content or the production style, watches it in its entirety and remembers most of the facts in the story, then scholars can reasonably consider this news product of high social and political value. The extent to which it is of economical value is addressed in Part II of this chapter.

All of these activities fall under the umbrella of the Limited Capacity Model Mediated Message Processing (LC3MP) – a leading theory for assessing whether news production is sufficiently arousing, interesting and memorable. Annie Lang, the theory's originator, explained that,

In order to process television messages, television viewers must encode the information contained in the message, retrieve already stored information from long term memory in order to make sense of the incoming message, and store the new information in long term memory. (2000, p.95)

Lang's theory posits that news consumers approach television news with divided attention and varying levels of interest, so it is up to news workers to create a product that eases information processing in order to ensure that it serves its democratic function. Lang and her colleagues have demonstrated that there is a point where production can be over-stimulating, suggesting a state of diminishing returns (Lang et al., 2000), however the message from this line of research remains the following: if consumers do not find news sufficiently arousing, interesting and memorable, it does not effectively contribute to their deliberation process in terms of political or social action. In other words, if news is important in a democratic society, but news workers are packaging information in a forgettable way, it fails to serve its purpose.

Information-processing research has shown that the following techniques are key to improving information attention, storage, retention, and retrieval: characters (Lang et al., 2010), chronology (Lang et al., 1989), emotion (Lang et al., 2003), pacing (Lang et al., 2014), surprises (Itti & Baldi, 2009), and natural sound (Lang et al., 2010). Characters and emotions help people find a point of connection to a story, a reason to pay attention to the piece (Dotson, 2000; Lang et al., 2003; Lang et al., 2010; Tompkins, 2012). Once they feel that connection, science has shown that viewers are more apt to store

information and successfully retrieve it later (Lang et al., 2010). Journalists create characters and provide emotions by reserving much of the factual information in an interview for their scripts, or “reporter tracks,” while selecting interview soundbites that contain emotions.

Chronology also eases information processing by simplifying the amount of thought needed to interpret a story. Research has shown that by presenting the story in order of events, viewers are apt to remember the information that comes with the story (Lang, 1989, Lang et al., 2010). This is relevant both to reporters who organize stories into narrative structures and to news photographers and editors who organize visual information into sequences. Both of these techniques are described in greater detail later in this chapter. Science has shown that, since viewers have come to expect chronology in storytelling, surprises are also a useful way to improve information processing. Itti and Baldi (2009) showed that including a surprise in a story increased the viewer’s attention to the piece, which is one step towards ensuring that the viewer receives a message.

Another photography technique that aids in information processing is the use of natural sound. Research has shown that including natural sound in a news piece improves memory for the facts in that piece (Lang et al., 2010). There is, however, a point of diminishing returns for some of these arousing storytelling techniques. Heavily produced stories can over-stimulate the viewer’s mind, reducing the amount of information a viewer will retain. For example, editors use pacing, or the manipulation of shot length, to affect viewers’ feelings of arousal. That is something information-processing researchers suggest is counterproductive for journalists once the pacing is overly arousing (Lang et al., 1999; Lang et al., 2000).

## **Storytelling and digital news**

Initially, the newsroom priority was clearly to the television product. Without committing money to employing web producers, stations would transfer their television scripts to the online platform in a process now known as shovelware (Chyi & Sylvie, 1998). The tide is turning in many local television newsrooms as well in terms of dedicating time and money to digital news needs. However, the strategies and attitudes still vary from place to place. In some newsrooms, digital responsibilities still fall on traditional workers such as producers or assignment editors, whereas other newsrooms have hired digital production staff. For stations without web producers, this shovelware ensured that the story had a web presence in the most basic sense.

Storytelling for digital journalism means something different than that of legacy news. Both seek engagement from the reader, however each provides that engagement differently: Television news engages viewers through the writing, shooting, and editing techniques described above. In this traditional, one-to-many, mass communication, journalists ask viewers to receive the information, retain it, and recall it in moments of social or political deliberation. Here the journalists control the amount of information presented and the context in which that information is placed. Digital journalism has the built-in opportunity to engage viewers differently than does television journalism: through interactivity. Because news sites are also published as a print medium, journalists are not restricted online to a time limit as they are when packaging television news. As such, not only can they write longer stories, they can also incorporate visual aids such as maps, graphs, and charts into their online pieces. Digital journalists can also use

hyperlinks to attribute information to an outside source or to provide readers with unfiltered documentation that would not belong in a narrative.

Today, industry researchers and practitioners have established digital-specific logic to expanding the web format from such shovelware to a piece of writing that better suits the digital consumer's needs (Tompkins, 2012; Briggs, 2013). This translates to four new, web-only elements: Firstly, it means writing a story with the "F-pattern" in mind. The "F-pattern" stems from eye-tracking research that shows digital readers overwhelmingly read online writing the same way (Nielsen, 2006): They scan the first paragraph or two and then they scan down the left side of the screen to search for additional cues to keep reading. The reason people read like this online, researchers speculate, is a matter of efficiency; weeding through high volume of stories online in a manner that establishes what is most valuable. That is why journalists interested in holding a reader's attention online must provide affirmation of value down the left hand side of a web story. They do this most commonly by including a bulleted list or some subheadings in the story. Storytelling in web journalism also includes the use of visual aids. Typically, this means adding a map, chart, graph, or additional still photos to the piece for visual interest. Thirdly, web journalists use hyperlinks to provide context and interactivity. In web journalism, hyperlinks are considered akin to the broadcast attribution; a way to demonstrate the validity of a statement. Finally, while broadcast packages are typically too short to offer a lot of detail, web writing is a convenient way to support broadcast stories by providing additional information. This additional information can include links to documents, raw interview footage, phone numbers to organizations, and specific locations of places. This dissertation considers the role of

norms and routines in the production of both legacy and digital news. However, it also acknowledges the impact of industrial organization and the conglomeration of station ownership on the local television and subsequent digital news products.

## **Part II: Political Economy**

The second theoretical foundation for this dissertation, political economy, is the study of a relationship between the supply of and demand for the goods of public life (Weingast & Wittman, 2008). According to Adam Smith, perceived widely as the founder of political economic thought in America, scholars in this field should analyze how well people in positions of related power supply these goods to the public. Similar to Shannon and Weaver's linear mass communication model, Smith's language placed consumers as recipients in this process. Subsequent scholars, such as James Mill, have insisted that this relationship is more like the nonlinear, interactive models of mass communication, focusing on the fact that consumers are also responsible in this process by demanding certain goods over others. Further still, Karl Marx and his disciples argued that these traditional conceptions of a political economy ignore how political economic conditions are first established: by considering only the needs of the elite and excluding the voice of the people, meaning that their role as consumers is restricted to only the products that elites make available. As such, Marxists believe that political economy research is valuable when it measures the extent to which these conditions exist (Weingast & Wittman, 2008). In light of these discussions, this dissertation frames broadcast news as existing within a political economy regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and, therefore, one that is primarily shaped by elites. This study also frames the role of journalists as news workers within this political

economy in order to assess the relationship between the news industry's current organization and news performance.

### **News as a commodity**

While mass communication provides much of the logic for analyzing news production as a process in this dissertation, political economy scholars also frame news stories as products within a larger industrial organization. Scholars from this field define contemporary local television news in the United States as a “commodified” product, meaning that it is not designed for its use-value as much as for its exchange value in the marketplace (Mosco, 1996; McManus, 1994). For news to succeed as a commodity, station owners must search for economies of scale; matching production efficiency with low production costs (Yan & Napoli, 2006). Many scholars studying news as products warn that this industrial organization, exacerbated by the recently deregulated marketplace, means viewers can expect to consume a lot of news that is not meaningful (McManus, 1994; Hamilton, 2004; McChesney, 2004; 2012; Chomsky & Herman, 2010).

The commodification of news has contributed to two factors that scholars say diminish the socially responsible role of local news: Firstly, research suggests that the commodification of news has contributed to the retrenchment of public affairs programming, demonstrating that this type of programming is simply not improved by competition alone (Yan & Napoli, 2006). Secondly, the scholars observe that the news is notably less local. Local television journalism is still a primary source of news for most Americans (Hare, 2014.), but news workers have become more reliant upon national content from news networks in order to produce more content without more staff support in order to fill the average five-and-a-half hours of news per day while producing content

across television, computer, and smartphone screens, known as “three screen” production (Boczkowski, 2007; Belt & Just, 2008; Powers & An, 2009; Yanich, 2010).

Some scholars found significant positive relationships between competition levels in a market and hours of news content produced (Powers, 1993). However, those hours of local news programming do not necessarily yield local news content. There is also consensus in the literature that conglomerate-run stations produce significantly less local news content than do independently owned newsrooms (Yanich, 2010).

Another research area that suggests a strong relationship between political economy and news content is the observation that much of what we see on television is redundant. Moreover, the focus of these studies changed over time: In the 1970s, research showed that content duplication between network newscasts was at 70% (Lemert, 1974). This served to demonstrate the power of news norms and routines as a uniform determination of what journalists of the time deemed worth reporting. Today, researchers are more concerned about content diversity in terms of how many local outlets are actually creating unique messages. PEW indicates that 235 of 952 local stations in America today do not even produce their own content (Potter & Matsa, 2014), suggesting that individual journalist’s news judgment is not a factor in some stations. The same study also indicates that nearly half of the nation’s markets have jointly-owned stations. Some companies have circumvented FCC policies on operating two stations in a single market by partnering with a second company and sharing the ownership while actually operating the station (Knox, 2012). In other words, the reason that stations produce so much of the same news across the country is that, while journalists do apply professional judgments to news production, stations are still organized much like factories (Bantz et

al, 1980) with their production streamlined down to what Ritzer (2000) called a “McDonalized” product.

### **Structure-conduct-performance**

A popular way to assess the news industry’s organization (Fu, 2003) is to separate it into three categories: structure, conduct and performance (SCP). Performance refers to the product resulting from the conduct of industry workers functioning under a combination of structural elements (Wirth & Blotch, 1995). In terms of structural variables, scholars have considered ownership, network affiliation, and market size to in terms of their impacts on news work (Young, 2000; Yan, 2006; Powers & An, 2009; Yanich, 2010). Other scholars have isolated conduct variables such as the amount of programming at a station or the staff size of a newsroom, measuring their effects on performance (Powers, 1993). For performance variables, scholars have measured content diversity (Winseck, 2008) and preference for live shots (Livingston & Bennett, 2003). Much of the discussion of these variables from the media economics community revolves around the validity of each of these industrial organizational elements (Young, 2000; Fu, 2003). However, it is not within the scope of this study to contribute to the debate. Therefore, this study frames news products within existing SCP categories with the understanding that this debate continues in that particular field of economic study. These structural, conduct, and performance variables used in this study are explained in detail below.

## **Structural variables**

**Markets.** There are 210 Nielsen ranked markets in the United States. These rankings refer to percentages of shares of the approximately 116 million homes that Nielsen recognizes as customers of various news products across the country. Stations are ranked both nationally and within markets. These ratings are crucial to the success of a station because they translate directly to money. Nielsen ratings are a signal to media buyers indicating the worth of advertising slots in a particular market or at a particular station within a market. While the logic here is that stations in a ratings-based funding system will compete to produce highly demanded programming, this also implies an incentive for stations to pander to the widest possible audience in exchange for socially responsible news if the same large audience deems the latter news unappealing. Journalists will commonly refer to this gap as the difference between what viewers want to know and what viewers need to know.

When researchers and practitioners have discussed market differences between the rankings, they commonly categorized stations in terms of large, medium and small markets (Matsa, 2013). There is no perfect categorization for this, but generally a large market refers to ranks 1-50, medium markets mean markets 51-100 and small markets are anywhere from 101 – 210 (Long et al., 2005). Often people will separate out the “top ten” or the “top twenty” as additional categories. These categories are helpful in terms of discussing advertising budgets or consumer impact. From the perspective of worker conduct, stations in the bottom ranks commonly follow the lead of larger market stations in terms of production decisions and news judgment as news is still considered a mentorship-based education (Schaefer & Martinez, 2009). As such, assessing the content

choices of a medium market, large market or top ten station allows academics to make generalizations about American news as a whole, since the smaller stations should eventually follow suit.

**Ownership.** The rapid consolidation of local television news stations makes it difficult to describe the contemporary ownership landscape. However, it is important to recognize that, even within this quickly changing landscape, the companies in this study have unique histories, varied sizes and, with that, varied styles of ownership (Cleary & Bloom, 2011). This study analyzes cases of news making across seven different companies: Gannett, Hearst, Raycom, Nexstar, Sinclair, one small company and one private company. “Small Co.” and “Private Co.,” both acquired pseudonyms for the sake of maintaining station and employee anonymity. Small Co. owns eight stations across the nation. Private Co. only owns one television station.

Companies today have greatly enveloped those regulation-era, small television groups. The largest company, Sinclair, now owns 165 stations across the country. Companies have also discovered a loophole in the regulations that police market saturation: they operate stations that are legally owned by other companies. Since they cannot buy stations from companies that own property in the same markets, they pay those companies to maintain their ownership while operating the stations themselves. While stations affiliate themselves with only four national networks (CBS, NBC, ABC and FOX), deregulation means that news workers must also select from increasingly fewer corporate employers as well.

Gannett is now significantly larger a company than it was two years ago. The 108-year-old company now owns 46 local television news stations after its recent

purchase of Belo's stations and its decision to funnel money away from its print media holdings (Jurkowitz, 2014). Gannett and Hearst, which itself owns 29 stations, are some of the older media companies in this study. Along with Gannett's long-standing news-making tradition comes a reputation for producing great storytelling and great storytellers. All three of the local stations consistently recognized by the RTNDA and the NPPA for excellence in storytelling are Gannett stations. In this study, Gannett and Hearst represent legacy media ownership.

Similarly-sized to Gannett, Raycom Media, which is only 18 years old, owns 53 stations, many of which are located in the southern and eastern United States. Because many of the stations analyzed in this dissertation are also located in those areas of the country, Raycom Media is most highly represented in this dissertation.

Sinclair and Nexstar are the corporate behemoths in this study. Nexstar owns a total of 74 stations across the country while Sinclair is clearly dominant with 165 stations. These companies frequently buy groups of stations at a time, sometimes distributing the collections between them (Niedt, 2012; Coleman, 2013). The expectation for this study was that if corporate structure has a direct influence on news performance, these two companies should have presented noticeable data to that effect.

**Networks.** This study focused on local television news produced in affiliation with the CBS, NBC, and ABC networks. Many of America's local television stations exist because of historic competition between networks dating back to the 1950s (Goedkoop, 1988). National network survival was traditionally based on the ability to acquire enough local affiliates to proliferate audiences for national news and entertainment programming. Such was the demise of the DuMont network and the basis

for the eventual existence of the Fox Network. However, CBS, NBC, and ABC networks, through this system of affiliated local stations, have competed for ratings and related advertising dollars for more than half a century.

In terms of news production, each network developed a reputation in the local markets based on national evening broadcasts. Stations owned and operated by the CBS network in particular were known for their storytelling prowess due greatly to the talents of the late Edward R. Murrow. A highly coveted storytelling journalism award is now named after Murrow. Local journalists built followings as well, thanks to the popularity of the television medium itself and the habitual, appointment television viewing that occurred for decades in most American homes. Corporations demonstrate little affection for networks, owning a variety of affiliates under their single company name. Since this study targets stories in the 6:00 pm newscast, the logic for which is explained later in this chapter, it includes no representation of the FOX network. Whereas CBS, NBC, and ABC all have early evening newscasts, FOX often has no 6:00 pm newscast, which was the case in every market included in this study.

**Trade unions.** Trade unions also have an important influence on the production styles of local television newsrooms. In general, unions exist to define and protect jobs in any field, including news. There are several stations and entire markets across the country requiring employees to join a variety of trade unions representing local television news writers and technicians including NABET-CWA and SAG-AFTRA. Union membership in news is a noticeably sparse area of academic study. Since these unions do not cater exclusively to television news, this topic seems to primarily attract researchers interested in news coverage of American labor rather than its effects on local news workers (Gans,

1979; Walsh, 1988). Within individual stations, employees sometimes belong to separate unions. To further complicate the issue, twenty-two states in America have also passed “right to work” laws that allow individual employees to opt out of union membership altogether.

For decades now, in local television news production, the traditional jobs have been those of reporters, photographers and editors. Union shops are very particular about photographers and reporters doing separate jobs. The main dividing line between the two is that reporters are not to touch camera or editing equipment and photographers are not to interview people. In non-union shops, the lists of responsibilities for these titles are more fluid. In unionized stations, an editor will handle the video for the show, cutting footage for VOs and VOSOTs. Photographers will typically edit the packages they shoot. However, in a pinch, an editor is permitted to jump in and work on someone else’s package. In non-unionized stations, producing staff also covers general editing responsibilities for VOs and VOSOTs. Usually, producers edit footage that comes from outside the station or footage that already aired, in a process known as “breaking down” a package to a VOSOT or a VO. Like their union-member counterparts, photographers in non-unionized stations commonly edit the stories they worked on that day.

Maintaining clear job descriptions has become particularly challenging in recent decades with the increased popularity of hiring multimedia journalists (MMJs). While nonunion stations can and do freely hire MMJs to write, shoot and edit packages, unionized stations must negotiate MMJs into the station’s union contracts by finding mutually acceptable definitions and conditions for these new jobs that do not immediately

threaten existing jobs descriptions. The result is that many union stations today have at most only one MMJ on staff.

### **Conduct variables**

**Reporting.** Reporters, as intermediaries between information and understanding for local television news consumers, are responsible for identifying newsworthy events, gathering information about their assignments, and organizing facts into various story structures. The fact that reporters “ask questions” is a general job description; a significant distinction in unionized stations in particular.

Although it is common today that stations hire MMJs who singlehandedly report and “shoot” the news, news photographers are responsible for shooting and editing scene and interview footage. Some photographers today are branching out into producing or reporting roles recognizing that, in many stations, there is less job security today for those news workers who only possess one skill. Photographers combine their technical schooling, work experience, and interactions with mentors to capture and arrange audio-visual information from their various news assignments. This includes footage of the scene as well as interviews with news sources.

Importantly, newsroom workers also mediate messages within the confines of their work schedules. Local television newsroom schedules are organized into three shifts: morning, “dayside” and “nightside.” As newscasts air at particular times of day, these shifts importantly interact with those scheduled deadlines. Additionally, since members of the public can now publish pictures and videos to social media with their smartphones, journalists must also publish news information as it becomes available

rather than hold it for the newscast and get “scooped” by a viewer (Broersma & Graham, 2012). As such, today’s reporters treat their entire work shift as one “rolling” or “moving” deadline (Wenger & Potter, 2012).

Dayside reporters typically come to work between 9:00 and 10:00 each morning. These journalists are primarily responsible for contributing to the shows airing in the early evening. For many stations, this can mean a block of news that runs between 4:00 pm and 6:30 pm at which point they air the national network newscasts. Because there is some overlap in the shifts, dayside reporters may cover breaking news stories for midday shows as well. In most markets, dayside reporters create (“turn”) one news package each day. Some markets require two package turns. While packages are pre-recorded news elements, reporters are typically expected to report their story as a live element in at least one other show (Seib, 2001; Rosenstiel et al., 2007). These live elements are called VOSOTs, meaning voice over video with a soundbite.

Dayside workers typically come to work for the morning story meeting. Once they have received a story assignment, these workers begin collecting story elements. This typically requires leaving the newsroom right away. Depending on how far away the story requires them to drive, dayside journalists will either write, shoot, and edit on a laptop in their news unit, or return to the station to work. Once they know to which evening shows they are assigned and whether or not they are presenting their story live from a remote location, dayside reporters will determine if they must leave the newsroom for a second time.

**Producing.** Producers are responsible for determining which stories belong in their newscasts and ranking them in order of significance. They also group stories

together by location or topic in order to create a newscast logic or flow. A producer writes every script that is not written by a reporter in a newscast. They are also responsible for deciding the presentation style for each story. Unlike reporters and photographers, news producers typically do not leave the newsroom during the workday. Rather, they work in-house to organize all of the available resources into one cohesive newscast.

Just as the most important information appears on the front page of the newspaper, the most important information in a newscast airs first. With this understanding, academics have targeted lead stories as fodder for content analyses (Chreighton et al., 2014) as well as the first one or two “blocks” of the newscast, which are known by professionals as the news blocks (Papper, 2013). Additionally, recognizing that professionals also organize newscasts based on which program preceded it (Boemer, 1987), scholars have also isolated newscast air times as variables in academic studies (Yanich, 2001; Armstrong et al., 2006). While the early evening and late night newscasts are very close in terms of ratings (Matsa, 2014), scholars tend to target different shows with different logic. Researchers who wish to analyze the content of the ratings leader will look at the late night news (Powers, 2001). However, interest in local content means paying attention to the 6:00 pm newscast (Slattery & Hakanen, 1996).

**Managing.** News directors make executive decisions and are liaisons between the newsroom, sales department, station managers and owners. Assistant news directors work with news directors to make executive decisions about newsroom activities including scheduling and technological needs. Executive producers manage the “line” producers by copy-editing and helping producers to come up with interesting or creative graphical

elements. In some nonunion stations, executive producers can also line produce when a need arises. Assignments desk editors are considered by scholars to be the traditional gatekeepers of the newsroom (White, 1950). In practice, they are the points of contact between sister stations and between local sources and the newsroom. They field phone calls, emails and faxes from sources and public relations professionals. They then take all of this information and establish topic priorities for story meetings. They are also commonly responsible for distributing human resources such as pairing reporters and photographers or assigning photographers to collect VOs or VOSOTs as needed throughout the day.

**Morning meetings.** The standard weekday news routine for a local, broadcast television newsroom begins with the morning meeting. Morning meetings start at the same time each day, ranging between stations from 9 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. If the meeting started any later, the journalists would be even more pressed for time than they already are to collect the needed elements to “turn” (write, shoot and edit) their stories by deadline. Since show assignments are not established until the afternoon meeting, reporters must assume that they are in the earliest show possible to be on the safe side. For many stations, that can mean a 4:00 p.m. deadline, which is significantly two hours before the traditional 6:00 p.m. newscast.

The purpose of the morning meeting is to determine the newsgathering plan for the day; to establish story priorities. Traditionally, every newsroom employee who is not otherwise occupied is expected to attend. Workers sometimes duck in and out of the meeting as work requires. Traditionally, a manager (the news director, assistant news director or assignment manager) runs the meeting. He or she will keep order and write

down story suggestions for the final discussion of story assignment. For decades, in many newsrooms (perhaps all), assignment editors spoke first. This is because, traditionally, their jobs required them to collect the most information in terms of volume and, some have argued, in terms of value (White, 1950). In other words, they have the most to say. The assignment editor leads the meeting by relaying to those in attendance the day's known events. The assignment editor may also present known in-house issues such as staffing or equipment status, both of which may affect the newsroom's ability to cover certain stories.

The next part of the meeting requires every member in attendance to provide additional information based on his or her own networks. Traditionally, this meant that each beat reporter would share what he or she knew was going on in relation to his or her designated reporting area (for example crime, education, or politics). Today, some stations maintain the news beat system while others do not. Still, everyone at the meeting offers as much information as they believe to be pertinent to organizing the day's work.

After everyone in the room has an opportunity to add to the sense of the day's events and issues, the manager running the meeting will distribute the story assignments. Some newsrooms let the reporters request stories first. Again, beat assignments make story distribution a simpler process in some newsrooms. However, with varying degrees of democracy, managers will establish which stories are the most valuable to the team, which reporters and photographers will go collect elements needed to present these stories, and what equipment might be necessary in order to best accomplish the newsroom's goals. The number of stories considered for assignment depends on the

individual newsroom's expectation that the reporters "turn" one or two stories in a day; something that varies across the country.

Whoever runs the meeting will record, or have someone else record, the assignments in a daily planner for the reference of anyone in the newsroom. Once everyone has his or her assignment, the meeting is adjourned, although reporters and photographers with particularly time-sensitive assignments may leave the meeting early to start working.

**Afternoon meetings.** Another standard local, broadcast television news routine is the afternoon meeting. As with the morning meeting, the afternoon meeting can vary in time, starting anywhere from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. All available employees are encouraged to attend this meeting as well. This meeting allows newsroom employees to receive updates about stories assigned in the morning and to share any new information that may have come up since the morning meeting adjourned. This is also when the afternoon and early evening producers, who commonly are not present for the morning meeting, learn what is on the agenda for the day and decide which stories will air in which newscast. This will also include any available afternoon anchors, early evening anchors and late-night newscast reporters (known as "nightside" reporters).

As with the morning meeting, a newsroom manager will run the afternoon meeting. Again, the assignment editor will commonly lead the meeting with a rundown of the day's assignments, information about the progress of each reporter, and new information that has come up since the morning meeting. Participants will then go around the room presenting story ideas that are not already on the agenda. The manager will then distribute stories to specific shows. As in the morning meeting, producers have an

opportunity to request certain stories. However, in many instances, there is a shared understanding of which types of stories suit which shows. This understanding is based on industry training and the belief that shows should cater to the viewers whose demographics match those of a newscast's preceding programs (called a "lead in" show). Producers will then specify if they would prefer to present the full package in their shows or if they would prefer to use a different element instead, while passing the package on to a different newscast producer. As with the "understanding" of which shows get which stories, some elements are determined by newsroom expectations such as the reporter presenting his or her package live from a particular location.

If there is breaking news, that will likely come up first along with a decision about how to redirect the reporters. Sometimes this will mean reassigning stories to the nightside reporters. Sometimes the nightside reporters will cover the breaking news in order to leave the original plan intact. Stories are then assigned to newscasts. As with the morning assignments, each newsroom manager works with varying degrees of democracy to distribute the available stories to each newscast. If a story is important enough, it may lead more than one newscast. This can mean that the reporter must "turn" more than one package (usually with two different news angles). The reporter can also turn one package for one newscast and provide a different product for other newscasts.

**Newsgathering.** The television newsgathering process has importantly changed since its introduction sixty years ago, due in great part to technological advances. For many decades, the most common routine for newsgathering required a team of four people: (1) the reporter who would ask the questions and write the scripts; (2) the photographer who would shoot the pictures; (3) the sound man who collected the sound

on tape (sometimes the sound man and the photographer were one person); and (4) the editor who would arrange the film to match the script with the available pictures and sound (Tuchman, 1978). In the eighties, videotape became widely available and it replaced film, which meant that soundmen were no longer needed. This reduced news crews to teams of two, once photographers edited their own videos (Goedkoop,1988) . As videotape gave way to digital tape, camera manufacturers produced smaller and lighter news cameras. With this convenience came the increased ability for journalists to “one-man-band,” which means that one single journalist does the work of what once took as many as four people to do in the past. By the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it became commonplace to hire one-man-bands, now known as multimedia journalists (MMJs).

Traditionally, journalists routinely engaged in the processes of “beat reporting” and “pounding the pavement.” Beat reporting is the process of determining which areas of public life in a given market require particular attention, since reporters cannot realistically be everywhere at once. Beats make the seemingly infinite number of events that can occur each day more manageable (Fishman, 1980). Beat reporters cultivate and maintain relationships with the major players related to their specialized such as the courthouse, the legislature or the school board by spending time in those places of business and also by socializing with these key players whenever possible. In instances where news was scarce reporters would walk around town, looking for events that might be worth reporting. This process is known as “pounding the pavement.” In the nineties, beat reporting fell under scrutiny as favoring the views of the elite members of society (Nichols et al., 2006). News critics (and presumably some reporters) recognized that journalists could satisfy the basic requirement of meeting deadlines by relying on beats

for topics and sources while ignoring a large segment of the population and public life. Today some stations maintain a beat system while many do not. The act of “pounding the pavement” has diminished dramatically in the Digital Age, thanks to the availability of social media. Today, journalists “crowdsource” some of their content; soliciting interviews and story ideas from social media followers and citizen journalists (Henderson & Miller, 2014; Jones & Salter, 2012).

**Live shots.** The ability to demonstrate that a station is “on the scene” with a “live shot” has been popular since the beginning of television news (Seib, 2001). However, regularly scheduled live shots in local news increased significantly at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when the general public widely adopted the Internet as a source of news information and television news wished to assert its omnipresence (Seib, 2001). Bulky and expensive technology used to limit the extent to which stations, in smaller markets in particular, could incorporate live shots into the daily routine. Specially trained journalists exclusively used to have to drive vans with satellite equipment to news scenes in order to provide live reports. The complicated and expensive signals required specially trained truck operators, took time to set up and break down, and were at the mercy of weather conditions. Crews had to cancel live shots during thunderstorms because the same mast that would send signals to space would also act as a lightning rod here on Earth. Today, in addition to satellite trucks, stations have access to three technologies for providing live footage from a news scene: portable live signal transmitters, video cameras with built-in wifi capabilities, and smartphones. These cheaper, more portable pieces of equipment that do not require setting up a mast or maintaining a bulky motor vehicle are particularly popular in conjunction with the trend of hiring MMJs in many local newsrooms.

However, the popularity of live television in local news today has created an academic concern for what information is compromised in exchange for this market-driven decision. As Seib (2001) described, the concern is that there is an “increased emphasis on speed of delivery of the news product, sometimes at the cost of traditional journalistic standards” (p.2).

### **Performance variables**

**Newscasts.** At the moment, the bulk of news work in a local broadcast station is designed specifically to appear in television newscasts. While stations are developing more digital news platforms, they are still dedicating the majority of the funding to the television products. There is notable variety between companies and affiliates in terms of how many hours of news a station produces each day. Stations will block out airtime for a minimum of 30 minutes at a time, sometimes slating shows back-to-back in a manner that seems like they are airing a single, long show when they are not. Typically, the actual longest show of the day is the morning show, which is commonly two hours long. Across the country, news can air between 4:00 am and 9:00 am, 11:00 am and 1:00 pm, 4:00 pm and 6:30 pm, 7:00 p.m. and 8:00 pm, and 9:00 pm through 11:30 pm. These are ranges of time not meant to suggest that any one station schedules newscasts to cover all of the more than ten hours of news on this list. The nightly news, which airs at 11:00 p.m. on the east coast and 10:00 pm everywhere else, is consistently the highest rated show in local programming. The 6:00 pm timeslot runs a close second (PEW, 2013). The 6:00 pm news is also unique because it is the only one traditionally designated to present all-local information (Papper, 2013).

**Television news products.** Television newscasts are comprised of a combination of four elements: readers, voice-overs (VOs), voice-overs with interview clips or “sound-on-tape” (VOSOTs) and packages. The simplest and usually shortest element in a newscast is a reader. In a reader, the viewer will see the anchor or the reporter’s face as he or she reads the information in the story. Typically producers avoid writing readers since they conflict with the need to write visually creative scripts for television. A reader is more likely to appear if there is breaking news and no time to present any visuals with the story. VOs and VOSOTs are the most common presentations in local television news productions as they are the most versatile. A VO is a reader that also includes a visual element such as video footage or a full-screen graphic that the viewer will see while the anchor or reporter reads the script information. If there is an accompanying interview, whomever writes the script will typically select a short “soundbite” or SOT and add an introduction to the speaker within the VO script. Given the option, journalists strive to write a VOSOT rather than a VO. However, they may “kill” the sound for the sake of saving time or if they deem the sound inaccurate, unnecessary or unappealing. VOs and VOSOTs can be read by anchors as part of the main newscast script. Alternatively, reporters, who are either on the set or in the field, can also present these elements. Many times, producers prefer to have the reporter who is assigned to the story read his or her own VO or VOSOT script. In those cases, the anchor will introduce the reporter and reference his or her location after which the reporter will read the VO or VOSOT. Again, this can change when producers must make compromises for time or technical issues. The product that typically takes up the most time in a newscast is the news package. There are varying philosophical perspectives among professional journalists as to what

makes a successful package. The elements deemed necessary to create a successful package also vary by individual educations, professional norms and routines, and newsroom styles. This variety aside, in the most basic sense, a package is a self-contained, pre-produced story. Packages combine the writing, shooting and editing techniques outlined earlier into a story lasting around one minute and thirty seconds. This amount varies from station to station and according to story type. Features, for example, are longer. When a journalist must compromise enough of the elements necessary to produce a package, he or she must provide a VOSOT, VO or reader instead. Because of the nature of those products, “reducing” a package to a VOSOT, VO or reader also means compromising much of the storytelling value of the product. That is why packages are the focus of this particular study.

**Digital news products.** Today, every local television news station has a website. Many also have a mobile phone app. The website provides print versions of the stories that air in the newscasts. When there is footage produced in-house, usually from a VO, VOSOT or package, someone is assigned to post it to the website either as part of the print version or by itself with an accompanying description. Producers will also publish stories online that did not make it into a newscast either because of time constraints or because they made for better print stories than television stories. The website also includes content produced outside the station. This most commonly includes stories from the Associated Press (AP). The AP service is convenient way to publish frequently online. Some stations require that employees rewrite the story before publishing it. However, many simply copy and paste the story onto the website along with an AP byline creating additional shovelware online. The news app does not provide content that

is unique from the website; the app mirrors the website. These stories are published to the website and are programmed to also appear in the app.

Stations also commonly have a presence on social media. There is no industry-wide standard for adopting this technology, but companies are requiring more participation from employees as they find ways to make it profitable. For many stations, social media is a combination of in-house and in-the-field routines. Stations will Tweet or post to Facebook when they wish to promote a story to their followers. Reporters and photographers use social media in the field to either offer updates on their newsgathering experiences, or to communicate the latest information to followers during a breaking or developing news situation. Web producers will sometimes take those social media elements and use them to build stories on the station website. PEW currently measures television and digital local news consumption under one heading, so it is difficult to say just how popular local television websites and mobile apps really are. However, since nearly three quarters of Americans consider local news to be their primary source for information, and since there is no question that websites and smartphones are widely popular technologies, this study looks at the current digital performance of local television newsrooms as well.

### **Research Questions**

This study is an answer to the call from Nielsen et al (2013) for more empirical, comparative analyses of news media systems and from Zelizer (2004) for more newsroom observations and interviews with professional journalists. This is also a response to the concern from scholars and professional journalists that the increased industrial demand for production speed in the Digital Age means compromising the

traditional storytelling craft. This study aimed to close the existing gap in the meso-level (McManus, 1994) understanding of news conduct and its effects on storytelling by asking the following research questions:

**RQ1:** What does storytelling (performance) look like for packages airing in the news blocks of contemporary 6:00pm newscasts?

*RQ1a:* What does storytelling (performance) look like for the online counterpart to those packages?

**RQ2:** Which observable relationships emerge when comparing television news performance (storytelling) across industrial structures?

*RQ2a:* Which observable relationships emerge when comparing related digital news performance (storytelling) across industrial structures?

**RQ3:** What do norms and routines (conduct) look like in the contemporary local television newsroom?

**RQ4:** How do workers and managers describe the relationship between the structure, conduct (norms and routines), and performance (storytelling) of contemporary local television newsrooms?

### **CHAPTER 3. DESIGN AND METHODS**

This study stemmed from both mass communication and political economy traditions, leading to the following assertions regarding local television news: (1) telling stories well is a socially and politically responsible function of the press, (2) professional journalists want to serve this function and (3) professional journalistic conduct is altered by both the political economic circumstances and subsequent industrial organization of local television newsrooms. To analyze cases of news production within the framework of those assertions, this study employs four methodologies: newsroom observations, in-depth interviews, content analysis and qualitative comparative analysis (QCA). Additionally, since the analyses serve to contextualize local newsroom behaviors within the industry's political economy, this study uses the language of industrial organizational research to discuss the results in terms of structure, conduct and performance.

In order to measure worker conduct, this study presents observations of two days of news work for each of ten top-100 newsrooms owned by seven companies in six markets across the United States. Since one company operates two stations out of one newsroom in one of the markets, there are 18 rather than 20 days of observations in total. These observation days resulted in a collection of 32 cases of local television news packaging from the news blocks of the 6:00 pm newscasts. Additionally, there are 62 in-depth interviews with the related managers, producers, reporters and photographers of those cases, allowing for an analysis of worker motivation as well as of the circumstances under which these cases came about. To demonstrate that storytelling actually existed in these cases, news performance, or more specifically television and digital storytelling techniques, were subject to a content analyses of the television news packages and their

related digital news presentations. A QCA truth table was then used to compare performance with conduct patterns across the industry's organizational structures. Together, these four methods work to paint a detailed picture of the contemporary news packaging process.

### **Matters of Validity**

Population size is arguably one of the more significant threats to external validity in this dissertation. Indeed, this is a study of only 32 cases of news making across ten stations; a sample that is not large enough to provide external validity to the comparative or content analyses (Long, 2005; Riffe et al., 1998). However, the theoretical findings from this study came primarily from the observations and interviews. The content and comparative analyses merely served to guide the larger discussion. Along with these 32 cases exist 18 days of newsroom observations spanning four months of news work and interviews with 62 of the professionals responsible for the conduct in the 32 cases. Additionally, one could argue that two days of observations in each newsroom are not sufficient data for understanding an industry. However, given the theoretically established nature of local news with its shared norms and routines (Altheide, 1976; Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Schudson, 2003; Kaniss, 1991), this dataset is analyzed two different ways: For RQ1, RQ1a and RQ2 and RQ2a, the data has an n of 32 cases of news packaging. However, for RQ3 and RQ4, which address the industry as a whole, these data are treated as part of a single study of newsmaking for which there are 18 days of observations of work over a four-month period and interviews with 62 managers and workers. This study triangulates methods with the intention of minimizing

the threat to internal validity (Cottle, 2007). However, since each method presents its own concerns regarding validity, they are addressed here individually:

There exists criticism of content analysis in general that bias is difficult to remove by virtue of the fact that the researcher selects the categories for analysis (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). However, in order to discuss the state of storytelling in local television newsrooms in this dissertation, it was necessary to confirm the actual presence of storytelling in news. As such, I designed a storytelling scale for writing, shooting, editing and digital presentation that is based on definitions from academic textbooks as well as my own professional expertise. Clearly, this opens the analysis to scrutiny. Therefore, rather than claim that the results of the content analyses alone should contribute to theories of news production, the analyses in this study serve as a storytelling “pulse” for the local television news industry (Sapolsky & Kaye, 2005). However, the same analyses are useful for shaping the overall discussion in conjunction with the other three methods by contributing to thematic areas of observation.

Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) is also open to judgment as biased because the investigator, while using theory to do so, calibrates the measurements. While there are some discussions of news narratives using QCA (Amenta et al., 2012; Morehouse & Sonnett, 2010), the data from those studies come from textual analyses rather than in-house observations and interviews. Indeed, few academics enter newsrooms in general because production studies require a unique set of skills on the part of the researcher: one must first be able to operationalize these techniques with little to no help from practitioners (Schaefer & Martinez, 2009). One must also have access to several newsrooms to establish patterns (Ragin, 2000). Finally, journalists, like any

“speech community” (Phillipsen, 1992) have their own vocabulary and it is easier to interview participants without the need for translation (Zelizer, 2004). For this kind of study, QCA is also time-consuming and can get expensive in terms of travel. However, this method is valuable in that it allows for “systematic cross-case comparisons, while at the same time giving justice to within-case complexity” (Rihoux & Ragin, 2009). As with the content analyses, this method provided a way to take a “pulse” or snapshot of these particular 32 cases of news making, which helped steer the thematic discussions in this study, alleviating some of the concerns to internal validity.

Case studies in general create issues of validity for investigators. Yin (2008) notes that construct validity is particularly important to critiquing case studies because common failings with this method can come from misreading social situations and interactions. Indeed, this was a concern in this dissertation. Coincidentally, the same trait that provided access to the newsrooms in this study also created a threat to its internal validity: I worked as a local, television news producer in a top 100 station for three years between 2007 and 2010. While some might argue that this newsroom experience creates bias, this is a worthwhile trade for the ability to both gain access to newsrooms in the first place and to possibly collect more honest and detailed responses from the participants. This is where the triangulation of methods strengthen the results: the observations are not the only method for interpreting behavior. The interviews and informal conversations helped to clarify the subjective circumstances identified during the visits. Additionally, combining personal experience with expectations set forth by past research helped to illuminate otherwise mundane activities as significant. For example, Kaniss (1991) lists the sources that assignment editors use to select coverage topics each day as scanners,

press releases, wires, viewer tips and newspapers. While it was evident that assignment editors used the same sources today, the observations in this study revealed an additional source for information: participation in daily conference calls. As a former producer, I know from experience that as ownership deregulation pulled dozens of stations under single corporate umbrellas, assignment editors needed to compare information with a greater number of sister stations than they had twenty-five years earlier. This organizational change increased the need for conference calls, an observation that is difficult to interpret meaningfully without newsroom experience.

### **Matters of Access**

Access was an important factor in determining the number of stations in this study as well as the stations themselves. The goal for this study was to present case diversity in terms of ownership, market size, network affiliation and storytelling reputation. Initially, the plan was to visit between twelve and fifteen stations. However, entry into newsrooms proved more difficult than anticipated in spite of personal work experience and related professional connections.

In order to gain access to the ten stations, sources were contacted by email, requesting permission to observe their newsrooms for two days each. The email included a description of the study, specific dates and times of interest and the reason why the particular station would fit into the study. Initially the email specified that anonymity was not necessary since the published findings did not appear harmful to participants. While the Institutional Review Board (IRB) agreed, news managers did not. The first two stations rejected the requests for visits, both based on this issue of anonymity. A new

email including an offer of anonymity for both the station and the individuals within each station changed the degree of receptiveness from management.

Sources who did not respond to the email within a week, received a second email. In two cases, the second email was enough to garner a response. In three more cases, managers received a phone call. This required calling the general newsroom number and asking to be transferred. The general news phone rings throughout any newsroom. The assignment desk may most likely answer the call, but it is common practice for anyone available to pick up and forward calls to the news director if one asks for him or her by name. In no case were there follow-up questions before being transferred. In some cases, committee members with newsroom connections as well as colleagues from outside the university with newsroom experience were asked to contact managers for this study. This ultimately granted access to six of the newsrooms in this study. Time and money provided additional hurdles for this study. Three of the stations visits required overnight travel. One visit required a hotel stay and taxicab rides. Another visit required a car rental.

### **Content Analysis**

The data for RQ1 and RQ1a come from two content analyses of the 30 cases of news packages that aired between June 25 and October 28, 2014. The first analysis is of packages that aired in the news blocks of the 6:00 pm newscasts during each of 18 days of observations across ten stations. The second is of web stories that accompanied those television packages.

### **Data collection**

Data for the content analyses come from computer software called Jaksta, which downloads videos that play on the Internet. This is not a free product, however, my employer had an available license and did not charge to use it. For each case in this study, I visited the company website, located the story on the site and downloaded the video to a folder on my laptop. I also saved the files to a jump drive as a backup. I then used the screen capture function on my laptop to save a copy of the web story to another folder. In seven cases, the videos were unavailable for online viewing. In those cases, I emailed participants from the study who had offered me their business cards and requested that they either upload the video to the web or send me a digital copy. While there are 32 observed cases of news packaging for this study, I received no response from two stations. Those cases are included in the observation results, but could not be included in the comparative or content analyses.

### **Coding**

For both analyses, I coded the 30 cases myself. I also trained a coder from outside the journalism profession to analyze all of the cases by having him read the storytelling definitions in Chapter Two of this dissertation and by explaining that this analysis does not look for quality of these elements but rather acknowledges any recognizable instance of these elements. I then had the coder watch two packages that have won awards for storytelling and pointed out all of the coding variables as they happened.

Inter-rater reliability for the television packages was calculated with a Scott's Pi. The web analysis resulted in perfect agreement and, therefore, did not require a Scott's Pi

calculation. This was an expected result since the categories in this analysis are not subjective in nature. Some of the categories for the broadcast analysis are subjective, in particular the editing categories of analytical and idea-associative montage and the writing category of surprise. There was disagreement between coders for these categories. Still, the Scott's Pi calculation for those cases was 0.949, suggesting that the training was successful and the categories are reliable.

**Writing.** Storytelling in writing was based on a four-point scale: Firstly, it measured whether or not the reporter wrote a narrative. Next, it noted whether they introduced a character to the viewer. Thirdly, the analysis looked at whether or not they incorporated any surprises into the script. And, finally, the study recorded whether the soundbites were only factual or if they also included references to the subject's feelings.

**Shooting.** Visual storytelling is more challenging to isolate for a content analysis. While there are clear industry expectations for storytelling techniques in photography, the editing determines how and if viewers see those elements. For that reason, this content analysis only used a two-point scale for shooting, which focused on the most basic requirements of a visual storyteller: close-up or extreme close-up shots and the inclusion of natural sound.

**Editing.** As editing so strongly affects whether or not a visual presentation can be considered storytelling, this section of the analysis enveloped some of the photography categories. As such, editing was judged on a six-point scale. Four of the categories are credited to Zettl (1999) and are described in greater detail in Chapter Two: Transitions, metric montage, analytical montage and idea-associative montage. Additionally, this study measured the editing variables of sequencing and natural sound breaks ("nat

breaks”). Sequencing could be considered a photography variable, however the absence of sequencing in editing would also mean the possibly false negative of sequencing in photography. The same is true of nat breaks: if an editor does not include nat breaks in a package, that does not mean that a photographer or reporter do not know them to be valuable storytelling techniques.

**Digital.** The analysis of digital storytelling is notably unique. This analysis compiles a list of four variables that encompass the contemporary best practices in digital journalism described in Chapter Two. The four-point scale consisted of web writing, additional information, hyperlinks and visual elements. Web writing meant that the format was not merely shovelware. A score in the writing column meant that the writer adhered to conventions of the F pattern. This required using bullet points, subheadings, or any other elements inserted to draw the reader’s eye down the page. If the story included any information that was not in the corresponding broadcast piece, it received a point in the “additional information” column. Hyperlinks also garnered a storytelling point in this analysis. There was one station that used Bing hyperlinks, which means that words the Bing software turned into links would direct the reader to the Bing site. These links were ignored in this analysis because they are actually advertising from Bing rather than attempts to educate the reader. Under a column for visual elements, coders acknowledged any addition of visual aids such as still photos, graphs, charts and maps on the page. All 30 stories included a video clip of the broadcast piece. Since this was a standard practice and not an effort to provide digitally minded interactivity to the reader, those video clips were excluded from this category. Finally, bylines were used determined whether

newsrooms required reporters to publish their own stories online or have a web producer work with them to meet digital expectations.

### **Qualitative Comparative Analysis**

The goal of the comparative portion of this study is to harness the complexity of the push and pull between journalists' best practices and corporations' market-driven demands. Between the levels of individual and organizational factors that influence journalism exist a series of conditions that could theoretically combine to create an outcome: a reduction in or absence of storytelling techniques. The data for RQ2, come from a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). While there are hundreds of QCA studies in publication across social scientific journals today (Basurto, 2012), this method is particularly popular in the study of politics across countries. Since politics and media coverage go hand-in-hand, it is easy to understand why scholars use QCA to compare countries' journalism techniques. Some of these newsroom studies look at journalism culture (Zelizer, 2005) or media coverage of political issues (Downey & Stayner, 2010), while others analyze newsroom practices and professionalism (Berkowitz et al., 2004; Woods, 2007).

As Ragin (2000) describes them, many societal variables are better measured by diversity than by similarity. However, case studies alone are typically considered externally invalid. Therefore, Ragin provides a method for comparing several similar cases, as in the study of television news production: truth tables. Truth tables are designed to further improve the value of case study research by adding a layer of interaction between cases. Whereas case studies provide deep understandings of very few isolated incidents, truth tables allow the researcher to step back from the research, ask

which variables best define each case, and search for reasoned differences between cases. Differences emerge by asking which conditions are either necessary or sufficient in order for each case to exist. The resulting list is then compared across cases, revealing relationships between the overarching conditions. Based on mass communication and political economic theory, this study isolates seven variables upon which to compare these 32 cases of news packaging. Those variables are: market size, network affiliation, company size, unionization, the use of MMJs, broadcast storytelling technique and digital storytelling technique. These variables are operationalized below under the headings of structure, conduct, and performance.

### **Variables**

**Structure.** Based on the market variables described in Chapter Two of this dissertation, the top 100 markets were divided into four sections: Large (1-20), large-medium (21-50), medium (51-74) and medium-small (75-100). Three columns indicated network affiliation in this truth table through a numeral one in the appropriate column for NBC, ABC, or CBS. The other two columns for each case received a zero. Since stations change hands so frequently today, it was necessary to establish three unique categories for company size: small (1-10 companies), medium (11-69 companies) and large (more than 70 companies). Additionally, the study marked cases as either having union associations or not.

**Conduct.** Since both scholars and practitioners have speculated that multimedia journalists are at a disadvantage by working alone, the truth table noted whether or not a case was the product of a single MMJ or a reporter/photographer team. Otherwise, the area of worker conduct was left to the observations and interviews in this study.

**Television performance.** Without an existing local television news storytelling scale available, I created my own by splitting the television storytelling category into three separate columns: high, medium and low storytelling. The categories indicate amounts of observable storytelling techniques, however they are not meant to imply a judgment of quality. When a case received a storytelling score in nine of the twelve columns or better, the high storytelling column received a one, and the other two columns received zeros. Scores in six to eight of the twelve columns warranted a one in the medium storytelling column. Low storytelling meant that the story earned recognition in five or fewer columns of the content analysis. Each of the writing, shooting and editing columns received individual storytelling scores. A story had to score more than half of the possible points in the scale to garner a one in the truth table. For writing, which employed a four-point scale, a package received a one if it had a score of three or better. Since shooting only used a two-point scale, only a score of two got a one in this column. Editing got a one where the package received a four or better out of a possible six points.

**Digital performance.** Digital storytelling cases were compared based on scores from the digital content analysis. High storytelling referred to a score of four out of a possible four points. Medium storytelling meant a score of two or three. A score of one meant low storytelling. Since, unlike broadcast storytelling, there were scores of zero in digital storytelling, it received a category as well.

### **Analysis**

The truth table for this study was built in Excel. The variables were color-coded and the “arrange data” tool in Excel was used to group the rows with ones together for each variable (See Appendix B). This made it possible to see if there were any patterns in

terms of which variables might have noticeably interacted with which storytelling outcomes. By arranging the high-level storytelling column in descending order and the low storytelling column in ascending order, all three categories of storytelling were grouped together and compared across other variables to see if any patterns emerged. If, for example, all of the high-level television storytelling cases came from large market stations, this would be considered a significant relationship between these conditions. Once each of the seven conditions was compared to the point of redundancy, the findings were then additionally analyzed against the observations and interviews.

### **Observations**

The data from RQ3 come from the newsroom observations. The 18 days of newsroom observations allowed for descriptions of the daily circumstances and noticeable decisions that went into selecting, interpreting, producing and presenting television news packages. All of the observations for this dissertation come from inside the television stations, primarily from inside the newsrooms. Neither reporters nor photographers were accompanied to news scenes. This study included observations of the production of two 6:00 pm packages per day for two days at each station. The expectation based on personal experience, colleague predictions, and textbook descriptions suggested that this newscast would yield a total of 40 cases of storytelling production. However there were in fact 32 cases of news packaging available for observation in the news blocks of the 6:00 pm newscasts in these stations on these days. Further explanation for why this is the case is available in Chapter Four. The significance of this finding is discussed in Chapter Five.

## **Protocol**

For each station, I arrived just before the morning meeting, at 9:00 am and left by 7:00 pm, just after the 6:00 pm newscast. I did this for two consecutive days for every station but one: scheduling required me to break up my visit to Channel Two between a Friday and a Monday.

As I approached my first of two observations days, I emailed my main contact, usually the news director or assistant news director, to remind him or her that I would be coming to the station. By the fourth station visit, I realized that it was also beneficial to include a short description of my study that the manager could choose to mail out to the newsroom before my arrival.

Each day, I would go to the reception desk and ask to page my contact. On the first day, I would arrive ten to fifteen minutes early. I did this to give my contact some time to show me around. However, I knew from my experience working in a newsroom that arriving too early would mean that the manager was not yet at work. In every case, the contact gave me a brief tour of the newsroom, introduced me to anyone who crossed our path and offered me a place to sit for the duration of my study. This was always a desk in the newsroom.

I began each day by attending the morning meeting. In every case but one, my contact introduced me to the people at the meeting. For those managers who had already sent out a memo to the newsroom explaining who I was, they referenced that memo. Otherwise, they explained who I was and what I was doing at the station as part of my introduction. In every case but the one where I was not formally introduced, I was also offered the opportunity to elaborate on my initial introduction. I explained that I was

there for research for my doctoral dissertation, that I am a former local news producer, that I study the diverse conditions that affect storytelling in local television news, that I was targeting packages in the 6:00 pm news and that any willing interview participants would not be identified nor would I identify the station in the study.

### **Data collection**

During the morning meeting, I took notes. I did not contribute to the decision-making process. At one point a manager was going around the room accepting story ideas and asked me to contribute, knowing that I was a former producer. I said that I would like to but that it would not be ethical to do so. Once the meeting adjourned, I approached the assignment editor for an interview, knowing that he or she might have a small window of time at that point in the day. I spent each morning interviewing as many managers as possible. The reporters and photographers left the building almost immediately after the meeting. The 6:00 pm producers were not yet at work.

Between interviews, I sat in the newsroom and took notes. I also took any opportunity to ask people if I could watch them work. When I did that, I would informally interview them about their professional experiences. This required engaging in conversations about my own work experience as well as my decision to leave the business and return to academia. I was forthcoming about both of those topics.

I took a lunch break outside of the station for every station but the two that were not within walking distance to a restaurant. When I did leave the building, I returned to the station for the afternoon meeting.

In the afternoon meeting, the managers asked me to reintroduce myself since many of the morning attendees were out covering stories and many new attendees

(mainly producers) had not yet met me. Again, I took notes during this meeting and did not participate in the story selection process.

After the meeting, I would approach reporters and photographers. I asked them if they would sit with me for an interview once they had completed their work and before they left again to report live from the scene. This time of day was the most challenging for a few reasons: (1) the impending newscast deadlines increased the sense of urgency and level of stress for the entire newsroom; (2) some reporters and producers were also anchors, so they had little to no time to spare; (3) and in some stations, photographers who had finished editing their packages were sent out to shoot VOs and VOSOTs as needed. In a few cases, I held informal interviews with photographers while they worked, rather than see if they could find time to sit with me in a separate room. In those cases, I informed the participants of their rights including the fact that they and their stations would not be named.

In many cases, I either asked or accepted an offer to sit in the control room with the 6:00 pm producer. I did this both to watch the targeted packages for this study and to pre-interview the producer. Once the show ended, I formally interviewed the producer before leaving for the day.

### **Analysis**

Observations were organized based on structure, conduct and performance variables. Specifically, I considered issues of ownership, network affiliation, unionization and market structure and placement. They were also cross-referenced with Schudson's (2001) normative elements of awards, education, group definitions, and managerial control. Each night I reviewed my field notes and made additional notes about my

experiences and observations that day along with any questions that I might address either in person or via email depending on whether it was the end of my first visit or my second.

After I finished my data collection, I transcribed my field notes onto Word documents. As I transcribed, I made notes on an additional document about the patterns that I noticed had emerged between the stations. For example, I had noted the demographics of morning meeting participants. I used that information to create a list of stations and their activities. In that same document, I compared my observations of routine news work to the expectations I had set up in the literature review. In some cases, my notebook contained direct quotes from newsroom workers that I had written down. When I saw reason to, I copied and pasted quotes into another Word document that I also used to collect quotes from the in-depth interviews.

### **In-Depth Interviews**

The data from RQ4 come from the in-depth interviews. For this method, all managers, producers, reporters and photographers involved in selecting and producing packages for the 6:00 pm newscast were included when possible.

#### **Instrument**

The questions in the interview instrument were organized in terms of what Ragin (2000) calls “sufficiency” and “necessity” for decreasing storytelling performance (see Appendix A). For reporters, photographers and show producers, the sufficiency questions established whether these workers recognized storytelling as a part of their work responsibilities. This section of questions also established the extent to which participants actively sought membership in storytelling organizations and, therefore, education and

mentorship in storytelling techniques. These questions helped to establish whether or not these workers knew how to tell stories and wanted to tell them well. Producers had the added job of explaining the logic of his or her overall show decisions in relation to the cases observed for this study.

In terms of necessity, the literature in this study outlined a need for better understanding of the roles of managers, corporations, markets, unions, breaking news and digital responsibilities in relation to the final product. This line of questions aimed to uncover which of these elements became factors in the production of each individual story. Managers, as representatives of both the newsrooms and corporations, answered a line of questions about the company's interest in storytelling including whether there is a company-wide position on its importance and whether or not the station budgets for storytelling efforts. Managers were also asked to describe the role of digital media in the newsroom.

### **Protocol**

All interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder. In most cases, I sat with each interviewee individually in an empty meeting room near the newsroom. Managers preferred to be interviewed in their private offices. Occasionally newsroom workers were too busy to step away from the newsroom. In those cases, I interviewed participants at their desks or in their editing bays.

Before beginning each interview, I discussed the general subject of my research. I also told participants that I used to work as a local television news producer. I was open throughout this process about which market, company and station I worked in. I did this to help participants understand that they did not need to treat me as a layperson,

explaining each detail of their jobs and defining work-related terms. I found this was also a way to signal to participants that they could speak somewhat freely without fear that I would naively share information with colleagues or, what I imagine was worse to them, competing stations. I informed participants that they had rights as academic interviewees (something that is not necessarily part of the journalistic process) and then asked them to sign two copies of an IRB consent form acknowledging that I would not compensate them, nor would I identify them or their station for this study. I also had participants fill out a demographic survey. Some participants did not wish to answer all of the questions on the survey. Specifically, some participants wished to avoid documenting their ages and years in news. This was true for both men and women.

Some reporters did not return to the station during the observation times. Photographers were particularly hard to locate as they commonly stayed outside of the newsroom, usually in the editing bays. They were also less enthusiastic than reporters and managers about being interviewed. In many cases, photographers who were done editing their packages were redirected to other news scenes to collect VOs and VOSOTs. Producers were willing to sit down for interviews, but in two cases, the producer was still busy working when my observation days ended. In one case, news broke and the person who was working as both executive producer (EP) and 6:00 pm producer that day could not reasonably add an interview to her workload. Every manager at every station was interviewed save for that same EP.

### **Analysis**

To analyze the interview data, each interview file was transferred to a laptop and saved to a jump drive. Each interview was then transcribed by playing the files and

typing the transcriptions into Word. During the transcription process, passages that connected to the themes in the literature received a bold font. Each interview was initially analyzed for references to normative support as outlined by Schudson (2001). Since there were only two days of observation for each station, the interviews served to further investigate conditions of storytelling education, participation in storytelling awards ceremonies, definitions of in and out groups, and managerial attitudes towards the storytelling norm. The bolded passages were transferred to another document and filed them by theme. Finally, the data was combed through a second time, looking for references to a relationship between industrial structure, management and worker conduct, and storytelling performance.

The next chapter is a summary of the results of all four of these methodological approaches to measuring storytelling performance in contemporary local television newsrooms. The first two sections reveal the degree to which the storytelling norm is evident both in television and digital news productions, including a discussion of the significance of the individual results. The next section reveals the results of the observations and interviews, describing the working conditions in the context of their effects on creating and presenting news packages. Those findings are also presented in relation to the explanations given by these professional journalists.

## CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### Television and Digital Storytelling Performance

**RQ1:** What does storytelling (performance) look like for packages airing in the television news blocks of contemporary 6:00pm newscasts?

*RQ1a:* What does storytelling (performance) look like for the online counterpart to those packages?

### News norms and story selection

Traditionally, scholars consider what journalists find valuable as reflected in both story placement and story length. In terms of topics, these cases demonstrated that a variety of hard and soft news issues received attention in the 6:00 pm newscasts as package presentations, meaning that they received more time, and therefore more prominence, in the show. Of the 32 total cases observed, eight stories (25%) were crime-related. Six (19%) fell under business and development or tourism. Six stories (19%) were about local politics. There were five profiles (16%). Four stories (12.5%) were community-related. Another four stories (12.5%) were about pets. Two stories (6%) were about car crashes. Two were related to the military (6%). Two stories (6%) were about education. Two more were about public safety (6%). There were two entertainment packages (6%). Additionally, there was one health story (3%), one technology story (3%) and one story about a public utility (3%). Some of these categories overlap in single cases. While six of the crime stories related to earlier instances of breaking news, by 6:00 pm they had already transitioned to developing or continuing coverage. In other words, there were no cases of packaged breaking news.

There was some notable overlap between cases in terms of the journalists responsible for each case. The trend of hiring multimedia journalists (MMJs) accounted for some of that overlap. In half of the stations, one reporter was responsible for packages on both observation days. Ten of the 32 cases (31%) involved only five reporters. However, with the exception of one MMJ, the other four reporters worked with different photographers each day. In nine of the 30 cases analyzed here (30%) the packages were shot, edited and written by MMJs. The other 21 (70%) were the products of a reporter and photographer team.

**Television Storytelling.** This study found that news workers routinely demonstrated some storytelling skills when they turned a package (See Table 1). The 30 cases presented storytelling techniques ranging from two out of 12 to nine out of 12 of the categories analyzed in this study. Twelve of the 30 cases (40%) scored a nine or higher, representing high levels of storytelling technique as defined in Chapter Three. Eight cases (27%) represented medium levels of storytelling. Ten cases (33%) exhibited low levels of storytelling techniques. Of 30 cases, none applied techniques in fewer than two of the 12 possible categories between writing, shooting and editing skills. In every case of high-level storytelling (40%), there was evidence of storytelling across all three of the categories of writing, shooting and editing. Similarly, only two of the low-level cases (10%) showed evidence of strong storytelling writing techniques, meaning that the storytelling in 80% of those cases came from the shooting and editing.

Table 1.  
Broadcast Storytelling Level Across Technique

Case	ST Hi	ST Med	ST Lo	Write	Shoot	Edit
1	1	0	0	1	1	1
6	1	0	0	1	1	1
7	1	0	0	1	1	1
9	1	0	0	1	1	1
10	1	0	0	1	1	1
11	1	0	0	1	1	1
13	1	0	0	1	1	1
14	1	0	0	1	1	1
16	1	0	0	1	1	1
18	1	0	0	1	1	1
19	1	0	0	1	1	1
30	1	0	0	1	1	1
2	0	1	0	1	0	1
3	0	1	0	0	1	1
8	0	1	0	1	1	0
12	0	1	0	1	1	0
20	0	1	0	0	1	1
23	0	1	0	1	1	1
24	0	1	0	1	1	0
25	0	1	0	0	0	1
4	0	0	1	0	0	0
5	0	0	1	0	0	1
15	0	0	1	0	1	0
17	0	0	1	0	0	0
21	0	0	1	1	0	0

(Table 1. Continued)

Case	ST Hi	ST Med	ST Lo	Write	Shoot	Edit
22	0	0	1	1	0	0
26	0	0	1	0	0	0
27	0	0	1	0	0	0
28	0	0	1	0	0	0
29	0	0	1	0	1	0

Writing. The four categories that established storytelling reporting are narrative writing, writing around a character, including a surprise in the story and providing emotional soundbites (See Table 2). Nine of these cases (30%) were not structured in a narrative way as defined by this study. Reporters here either used the inverted pyramid instead or did not employ a narrative structure identified in this study. More than half of the stories included a character (57%) and nearly all of the packages (90%) included at least one emotional soundbite. Six packages included an element of surprise in the script (20%). Only three of the 30 cases (10%) included elements from all four writing categories.

Table 2.  
Broadcast Writing Technique by Case

Case	Narrative	Character	Surprise	Feelings	Total
1	1	1	0	1	3
2	1	1	0	1	3
3	0	0	0	1	1
4	1	0	0	1	2
5	0	0	0	1	1

(Table 2. Continued)

Case	Narrative	Character	Surprise	Feelings	Total
6	1	1	0	1	3
7	1	1	0	1	3
8	1	1	0	1	3
9	1	1	0	1	3
10	1	1	1	1	4
11	1	1	1	1	4
12	1	1	0	1	3
13	1	0	1	1	3
14	1	1	0	1	3
15	0	0	0	1	1
16	1	1	0	1	3
17	0	1	0	1	2
18	1	1	1	1	4
19	1	1	0	1	3
20	1	0	0	1	2
21	1	1	0	1	3
22	0	0	0	1	1
23	1	1	0	1	3
24	0	1	1	1	3
25	1	0	0	1	2
26	0	0	0	0	0
27	0	0	0	0	0
28	0	0	0	0	0
29	1	0	0	1	2
30	1	0	1	1	3

Shooting. Audio-visual storytelling was separated into shooting and editing techniques. Because it is difficult to observe one without the other, and because the photographers all edited their own work, the shooting section only warranted two columns (See Table 3): The provision of close up and extreme close up shots (which implied the shooting of sequences) and the provision of natural sound (which would allow for audio storytelling). Twenty packages (67%) provided both elements. Only one had neither (3%) as it relied heavily on silent crime scene surveillance footage.

Table 3.  
Broadcast Shooting Technique by Case

Case	Close-up/Extreme	Natural Sound	Total
1	1	1	2
2	1	0	1
3	1	1	2
4	0	1	1
5	0	0	0
6	1	1	2
7	1	1	2
8	1	1	2
9	1	1	2
10	1	1	2
11	1	1	2
12	1	1	2
13	1	1	2
14	1	1	2
15	1	1	2

(Table 3. Continued)

Case	Close-up/Extreme	Natural Sound	Total
16	1	1	2
17	0	1	1
18	1	1	2
19	1	1	2
20	1	1	2
21	0	1	1
22	0	1	1
23	1	1	2
24	1	1	2
25	0	1	1
26	0	1	1
27	0	1	1
28	0	1	1
29	1	1	2
30	1	1	2

Editing. Storytelling in editing was analyzed on a six-point scale: the four montage techniques outlined by Zettl (1999) as well as editing in sequences and including natural sound breaks, or “nat breaks” (See Table 4). Transitions were the most popular editing technique as 21 packages (70%) included at least one transition. All but one of those was a dissolve. Notably, in some instances, the transitions served as a way to mask jumps in time, which may not be considered by some to be a storytelling technique. However, as with shooting techniques, it is difficult to ascertain intention from a content analysis. The photographers did not specify their editing logic in terms of transitions

during the observations of their work. Not a single editor employed the metric montage technique. Sixteen photographers (53%) used an analytical montage to tell a story. Fifteen photographers (50%) used some form of idea-associative montage in his or her story. While photographers can capture natural sound without awareness for its storytelling use, they will not edit nat breaks into a piece by accident. As such, nat breaks were considered an indication that these photographers understood the storytelling value of natural sound. Nine editors (30%) incorporated such nat breaks into their storytelling. Eight of those editors (89%) also contributed to a high-level storytelling package.

Table 4.  
Broadcast Editing Technique by Case

Case	Sequences	Nat Breaks	Transitions	Analytical	Associative	Metric	Total
1	1	0	1	1	1	0	4
2	1	0	1	1	1	0	4
3	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
4	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
5	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
6	1	0	1	1	1	0	4
7	1	1	1	1	0	0	4
8	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
9	1	1	1	1	0	0	4
10	1	1	1	0	1	0	4
11	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
12	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
13	1	0	1	1	1	0	4
14	1	1	1	0	1	0	4

(Table 4. Continued)

Case	Sequences	Nat Breaks	Transitions	Analytical	Associative	Metric	Total
15	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
16	1	1	0	1	1	0	4
17	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
18	1	1	1	1	0	0	4
19	1	1	0	1	1	0	4
20	1	1	1	0	1	0	4
21	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
23	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
24	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
25	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
26	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
27	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
28	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
29	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
30	1	1	0	1	1	0	4

Overall, the data from RQ1 showed that every newsroom valued storytelling on some level. Standard storytelling reporting techniques were evident across the board: Nearly every reporter (90%) saved the facts for their scripts and used the emotional soundbites to represent their sources. Twenty-one reporters (70%) employed a narrative structure. Narratives also existed across markets, companies, and years of experience, suggesting that these basic packaging techniques are indeed a matter of training and personal style. The fact that they also existed across story topic suggests that these

professionals considered narrative structures appropriate for both hard and soft news issues. However, these data also show that breaking news was not commonly structured as a narrative. Those stories were initially presented as live news with VOs or VOSOTs. Packaged stories for those issues appeared around the second or third iteration of the information, once the event had transitioned into developing or continuing coverage. The results from these data give an overview of storytelling in local television news production. However, they do not indicate the logic behind the story selection, production, and presentation decisions. Those will be discussed in relation to these results in the latter half of this chapter.

**Digital Storytelling.** Like their television counterparts, the web pieces in this analysis were subject to a storytelling scale (See Table 5). This time, the scale was only based on four techniques outlined in Chapters Two and Three of this dissertation: web writing, additional information, hyperlinks, and visual elements besides the television package. These scores were generally low. Of the 30 stories, ten (33%) scored a zero out of four on the storytelling scale. Six (20%) scored a two and four (13%) scored a three. None scored four points.

None of the web authors demonstrated an awareness of the F pattern, meaning that none included bullet points or subheadings along the left side of the screen to draw the reader's attention along the story. Only seven of the web stories (23%) included additional information that was not in the television package, meaning that these stories consisted greatly of shovelware. In nine of the cases (30%) writers added hyperlinks as companion information to the story. In only one category did writers provide a new visual element to the digital piece: 17 stories (56%) included visuals that did not air as

such in the television story. Most commonly this element came in the form of a still photo.

In some stations, reporters were responsible for writing their own web story; in other stations, web staff either posted the story or provided additional elements to the original piece. In 20 cases (66%), reporters appeared solely responsible for publishing their own stories to the web. Out of the remaining ten cases, three (30%) had a double byline for both a reporter and a web producer.

Table 5.  
Digital Storytelling Technique by Case

Case	Writing	Additional info	Hyperlinks	Visual Elements	Total
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	1	0	1
3	0	0	1	0	1
4	0	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	1	1
8	0	0	0	1	1
9	0	0	0	1	1
10	0	0	0	1	1
11	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0	0
13	0	0	0	0	0
14	0	0	0	0	0
15	0	0	1	0	1

(Table 5. Continued)

Case	Writing	Additional info	Hyperlinks	Visual Elements	Total
16	0	0	0	0	0
17	0	0	0	0	0
18	0	0	0	1	1
19	0	0	0	1	1
20	0	1	1	1	3
21	0	0	1	1	2
22	0	0	0	1	1
23	0	0	1	1	2
24	0	1	0	1	2
25	0	1	1	1	3
26	0	1	1	1	3
27	0	0	0	1	2
28	0	1	0	1	2
29	0	1	0	1	2
30	0	1	1	1	3

The results from RQ1a were far less encouraging than those measuring television performance. At least in terms of web stories published in conjunction with the legacy news, storytelling techniques were very low. In most cases, journalists continued to publish shovelware despite known consumer and academic criticism regarding that style of production. Since journalists have incorporated still photography into their work routines, web performance appears to benefit slightly from that arrangement. However, these data demonstrate the value of digital storytelling education as well as the

importance of employing full-time digital producers. The results from RQ2 and RQ2a provide more insight as to the industrial structures influencing performance in television and digital journalism, pointing to additional areas for improvement.

### **Storytelling Performance Across The Industry**

**RQ2:** Which observable relationships emerge when comparing television news performance (storytelling) across industry structures?

*RQ2a:* Which observable relationships emerge when comparing related digital news performance (storytelling) across industry structures?

### **Demographics**

The data for this section came from the 30 cases of television news packaging and related digital news publishing analyzed for RQ1 and RQ1a. Using a QCA truth table (Ragin, 2000), storytelling performance was compared across market size, market placement, company size, network affiliation, and union membership (See Appendix B). The three networks represented in this study are ABC, NBC, and CBS. As explained in the last chapter, FOX was not included in this study as all of the FOX stations in these markets did not have 6:00 pm newscasts. Seven of these cases (23%) came from ABC affiliates. Eleven of the cases (36%) came from NBC affiliates. Twelve cases (40%) came from CBS affiliates. Seventeen of these cases (56%) came from unionized stations. In terms of market size, six of the cases (20%) came from large markets. Four (14%) came from medium-large markets. Ten cases (33%) came from medium markets. Fourteen (47%) came from medium-small markets. In terms of market placement, 13 of the cases in this study (43%) came from the current leaders in their markets. While two

cases came from a small company that is operated by a large company, this study defers to the operating company for this analysis. As such, only three cases (10%) came from stations operated by small companies. Twenty cases (67%) came from stations operated by medium sized companies. Seven cases (23%) came from stations operated by large companies.

### **Television storytelling**

Breaking down the three elements of writing, shooting and editing into high, medium and low storytelling, the comparative analysis revealed some interesting patterns: Every story that scored high in storytelling had positive scores in all three of the writing, shooting and editing columns in the truth table. For the low storytelling cases, five of the ten cases (50%) had zeros across the board and the other five cases (50%) had only one positive column: two for writing, two for shooting, and one for editing. The eight medium storytelling cases had combinations of one and two positive columns with one single case of three columns and one case with only a score in the editing column. Of 12 high storytelling cases, five packages (42%) were produced by MMJs. Only one low storytelling package (10%) came from an MMJ as well.

The truth table suggested that a relationship may exist between performance and company size. One high-level story came from a large company (14%) and three stories came from small companies (33%), while the other ten cases came from medium-sized companies (83%). There was also evidence to suggest a relationship between storytelling performance and market size: small markets produced five high-level cases (42%) and medium markets produced another five (42%), leaving only two cases of high-level storytelling from the large market stations (16%). These data also depicted a relationship

between unionization and performance. Only four of the 12 cases (33%) of high-level storytelling came from a union shop. Conversely, eight of the ten low-level cases (80%) came from union shops. The truth table did not clearly indicate a relationship between market placement and storytelling, as market leaders were equally responsible for half of the stories from each of the high, medium, and low cases. In terms of network affiliation, CBS stations were responsible for five high-level cases (42%), and NBC stations were responsible for six high-level stories (50%), but ABC stations only produced one of the high-level case in this study (8%).

The data from RQ2 further support the importance of collaboration in storytelling performance. Photographers consistently elevated packages that were weak in storytelling writing. However, at the same time, two conflicting results emerged from this analysis: MMJs, who worked alone, produced many of the high-level packages (42%) and union shops, which had openly resisted hiring MMJs, and therefore continue to employ separate reporters and photographers, performed poorly overall in storytelling in these cases as 80% of the low-level cases came from union shops. The finding that high-level storytelling came primarily from the medium-sized companies and not from large companies suggests a continued need to track performance as media ownership continues to become more consolidated in this country. The FCC's deregulation of America's network media ownership laws could be doing what many scholars have warned against: consolidating station ownership to the point where what the company demands matters more than what the professionals want on behalf of the citizenry. These data confirm the effects of industrial variables on storytelling production. However, these results are better

contextualized in combination with the results from RQ3 and RQ4, therefore they received greater attention later in this chapter.

### **Digital storytelling**

The results from RQ2a confirm that broadcast journalists are dedicating more time to the television product than they are to the related web product. Twenty of the total 30 cases (66%) scored a one or a zero out of four categories for digital storytelling. All ten of the stories that scored a zero in digital storytelling (33%) had a reporter byline only. Of the ten stories that scored a two or better in digital storytelling (33%), seven included a web staff byline (70%). Of that same group of ten, all of those cases come from stations with dedicated web staff. MMJs consistently had low digital storytelling scores, although arguably this was true of these cases in general. None of the eight MMJs scored higher than a one out of four. Similarly, only one of the high-level broadcast storytelling cases (8%) exhibited higher-level digital storytelling; the case came from one of the stations with the dedicated web staff. None of the web stories adhered to known F pattern writing techniques such as subheadings and bulleted lists. None of the stories included graphic elements in the story body such as charts, graphs or maps, but, as mentioned in the results to RQ1a, many provided still images.

There was no evidence from this analysis to suggest that network affiliation is related to digital storytelling performance. However, every case of storytelling that earned a high web score in this study did come from a unionized shop. Additionally, whereas high-level television storytelling came primarily from medium sized companies, 70% of high-level web stories came from large companies, 30% from medium companies and none from small companies. Similarly, none of the high-level web stories came from

medium markets, while 30% came from large markets and 70% came from small markets.

The results from RQ2a built on those from RQ1a. While the content analysis revealed low storytelling scores in general, this comparative analysis showed where some of these issues originated. Firstly, these data further supported the importance of employing a dedicated web staff. Stations without web-only producers consistently placed the responsibility of web publishing on the reporters with, evidently, disastrous results. The fact that the same journalists who produced many of the low-level and no-level digital storytelling are the same people who produced high-level television storytelling shows that this is not a matter of dedication to the norm. While journalists express concerns about increased industrial expectations affecting their television performance, these data show that journalists in general and MMJs in particular are not performing well as digital storytellers. This is likely a matter of compromising the digital product for the television one under time constraints, or a lack of education about which storytelling techniques define best practices online. Finally, these data show that, for this kind of content, unionization thrives: digital employees who were clear about their job requirements appeared, by these data, apt to perform more effectively in terms of storytelling than did their non-union counterparts. The extent to which the conduct resulting in these data are observable in the local television newsroom, and how newsroom workers and managers explain their attitudes and behaviors in regards to the storytelling norm, are the subjects of this next section.

## **Storytelling at The Meso-Level of News Production**

**RQ3:** What do norms and routines (conduct) look like in the contemporary local television newsroom?

**RQ4:** How do workers and managers describe the relationship between the structure, conduct (norms and routines), and performance (storytelling) of contemporary local television newsrooms?

In partnership with the long-form interviews conducted in this study, two days of news work for each station (n = 18) were observed and interpreted. Though the observations come from ten stations, two of those stations are operated by the same company and share the same newsroom and many of the same staff. As such, the results are based on 18 days of observation and not 20. Between the observations, the interviews with 62 of the managers and workers responsible for these cases, and the theoretical expectations set up in Chapters Two, six themes emerged from the data regarding the relationship between the storytelling norm and the industrial organization of the local television newsroom. Those themes are:

- Changes to the traditional negotiation of newsworthiness
- Effects of economic decisions on normative behavior
- Support for storytelling in the modern newsroom
- Continued development of digital news routines
- Norm-supportive industrial demands
- Managers as moderators

### **Demographics**

The demographic breakdown of this group of newsroom workers and managers is very similar to those described by national newsroom surveys (Weaver et al., 2009). In

terms of race, gender and age, this group (n=62) heavily represented middle-aged, white males. This is likely because 30 of the participants (48%) were newsroom managers and, historically, that demographic holds management positions in local American television newsrooms. With 57 people reporting, ages in this study ranged from 22-65 with an average age of 40. All 62 participants reported their race and gender. Men well outnumbered women 43 (70%) to 19 (30%). Caucasians were by far the most represented race in this study with 50 participants (81%), while there were only eight African American participants (13%), two Asian American participants (3%), one Hispanic participant (1.5%) and one participant who self-identified as a mix of races (1.5%). Of 55 people reporting, experience ranged from zero to 44 years working in a newsroom with an average of 17 years. With 59 people reporting, 48 held a bachelor's degree (82%), six held a master's (9.5%) degree, and five either held an associate's degree or none at all (8.5%). Of all 62 participants, there were nine news directors (14.5%), four assistant news directors (6.5%), seven assignment editors (11%), eight executive producers (13%), two digital managers (3%), one web producer (2%), eight newscast producers (13%), five photographers (8%) and 18 reporters (29%). Six of the reporters (33%) were MMJs for these cases, meaning that they counted as reporters in the demographic survey, but they acted as photographers as well. The average age of the MMJs was 25.5. The MMJs had an average of 2.2 years of experience between them.

### **Negotiating newsworthiness**

**Meeting attendance.** Since the people who attend the editorial meetings exercise news judgment on behalf of the station, attendance and agendas were recorded for both meetings. Nearly every station scheduled the morning meeting for 9:30 am. Two

exceptions were Channel One, which met at 9:15 am and Channel Six, which met at 9:00 am. Half of the stations met in a boardroom next to the newsroom. The other half met in the newsroom itself. At two different stations, the morning meeting occurred in a meeting area contained within the newsroom. At every station, all available management attended the morning meeting. Stations with digital staff included them in the meeting as well. Indeed, there were noticeable differences across all stations in terms of numbers of morning meeting attendees ranging from four to 15 people. The average attendance across all stations was ten people. While only interviewees filled out the demographic survey, differences in the ratios of men to women in the morning meetings were also documented. In many cases, the managers and photographers were men and the reporters and producers were women. Since managers were sure to attend the morning meeting, stations with female management logically had a larger female population at the meeting. Female attendance ranged from two to ten, with an average of 5.5 women across all stations. In all cases, a manager oversaw the meeting. For four stations, this task belonged to the news director. The assistant news director managed the meeting at three other stations. At two other stations, the assignments editor led the proceedings. One station that typically had a news director-led meeting had the web producer take over on day two of observations because the news director was unable to attend the meeting and they had no assistant news director, no executive producer, and the assignment editor was new to the newsroom.

The same managers who ran the morning meetings also ran the afternoon meetings at these stations. The meetings were located in the same places as the morning meetings with one exception: while the two stations that are operated by one company

hold their morning meeting in the newsroom, they have their afternoon meeting in a boardroom. For this meeting, all available managers were in attendance. However, unlike the morning meeting, the assignments editor got priority on the agenda for every station but one, announcing which reporters and photographers were covering which stories and what they had collected at that point in the day. In the one exception, the executive producer led the afternoon meeting. Also unlike the morning meeting, dayside reporters and photographers were out on assignment, so evening anchors, producers, executive producers, and nightside reporters and producers were in attendance instead. In some stations, producers would “claim” stories, request story formats (packages or VOSOTs), and say whether they wanted the crew live on the scene or in the studio. In many cases, live shots were a given. However, occasionally producers would negotiate those logistics with assignment editors. In some stations, the story assignment process was less democratic. A manager would distribute the stories between shows with little to no discussion during the meeting about the decision-making process.

At seven of the ten stations (70%), no photographers attended the morning meeting during the observation days. Of the seven stations where no photographers attended the morning meeting, six of those stations (86%) were union shops. One station had neither reporters nor photographers at the morning meeting. The reason was not personal but rather logistical: Sometimes photographers came in to work in time to attend the meeting, but were redirected by the assignment editor to follow a news tip. In many cases, photographers were not scheduled to come in to work until after the meeting in order to avoid overtime pay. The most extreme example of this financial decision came from Channel Seven, which had neither photographers nor reporters in the story meeting.

At the unionized stations, where schedules were very closely monitored, managerial demands to go live at 6:00 pm meant that reporters and photographers were not present for the morning meeting. Instead, they came into work at 10:00 am or 10:30 am. While workers could choose to contribute to the story meeting via email, text, or phone calls as an unpaid effort, their physical absence from the meeting meant that their managers had greater control over the daily news content selection. A manager at Channel Seven confirmed the impact on story selection, saying, “Reporters...will either come in with their own idea...or they won’t have an idea and they’re just they’re left with an assignment. But at the end of the day the people in this room are making the decisions.” This arrangement existed in some non-union stations as well, but required a decision by newsroom management that, from observations in this dissertation, was not needed when the company was willing to pay for the extra thirty minutes or one hour of overtime.

This money-saving tactic affected photographers, diminishing their role in helping to decide what is newsworthy. This is particularly disconcerting in relation to the findings from RQ1 and RQ2 regarding the relationship between storytelling and collaboration. Moreover, the second stage of ensuring storytelling in news, as outlined in the introduction to this dissertation, requires recognizing how a story can be structured as a narrative and convincing management to assign the story to the interested reporter. If photographers, who commonly elevate packages in terms of narrative technique, are not present during the morning meeting, the chances of receiving assignments that lend themselves to narrative structuring are slim. At Channel Five, one reporter pitched a story with noticeable excitement. He described the story to managers as having a great character. He later explained in conversation that, in a station with a standing expectation

that reporters turn two stories each day, as was the case in his station, he felt that he rarely managed to collect quality storytelling elements. He happened to notice this character while covering a different story the day before. In an interview, a manager there helped to contextualize this reporter's excitement, saying,

He saw that as, 'This could be a great one story and I don't get this everyday. So for me to cram one soundbite into a minute-fifteen package on this greater issue is going to do a disservice to this goldmine that I've finally got.' And that's why he called and said, 'Let me tell this story in a different way today and let me save her for tomorrow and just do a story on her tomorrow.'

This reporter was able to communicate the value of his character-driven story to his managers. Conversely, when there are no journalists to serve as champions of the storytelling norm, these data show that storytelling is at risk. Reporters and photographers are underrepresented in some of these stations' content discussions. Instead of having a conversation about newsworthiness, managers in some of these corporatized stations are free to make decisions based on whatever loyalties they may have. The storytelling norm requires representation in order to thrive. Otherwise, financial responsibilities are left to outweigh social ones.

**Meeting agenda.** What gets priority on the morning meeting agenda reflects story selection behavior in the newsroom. For half of these stations, that top priority was weather. A manager at Channel Three explained,

I think the most important thing that any television station does is weather coverage. So we're very centered on weather and breaking weather and I always tell producers that weather can lead any newscast. You're never going to be wrong.

For several other stations, the morning meeting agenda spoke to the growing influence of digital media on story selection. One station led with the latest digital

numbers. Two other stations incorporated digital numbers into the meeting handout, but they did not read through them in the meeting itself. Several reporters, producers and managers explained that what ended up in the newscasts did so in great part because of an topic's online popularity. The web manager of jointly-operated Channels Nine and Ten said that a story with 30,000 web hits, whether produced in-house or not, was sure to garner newsroom attention, leading to follow-up stories or localized news in relation to the popular web piece. Covering what is popular online follows a market-driven journalistic tradition of covering what people are talking about. However, with the limited resources of local television newsrooms, allocating workers to cover those stories mean taking workers away from covering other kinds of news.

Journalists in this study attributed the increase in coverage of what people are talking about online to the recent ability to instantly track digital news consumption. When asked about this new routine, a manager at Channel Five said, "We look at things that trend and how they play...and say 'look this story's really doing well.' Maybe that's a story that perhaps had an earlier version of it. We follow up on it at ten o'clock...So, yeah, definite factor." This change in routine was a concern for one assignment editor who said, "Now people like a story on Facebook, or make comments on Facebook. That tends to dictate stories that we do. And sometimes they're not good news stories." Moreover, he recognized how this routine requires compromise for legacy journalists by describing what he felt was a common scenario:

When you have to make a decision because you don't have enough staff, like, okay, we can't really cover this the way we should, but we got five million likes on this cat...and then we wind up doing that story and I can't send a reporter to what would probably be something we want to cover.

The commitment to following digital trends was particularly visible at Channel Three. Newsrooms commonly have television sets tuned to their own station as well as to those of their competitors. At Channel Three, several television sets showed a software program that provided real-time statistics for website and mobile app traffic for the station. When a reporter or web producer published a story online and sent a tweet promoting it to viewers, the newsroom staff watched the numbers on the television sets jump like a digital version of the high-striker game at a carnival. Channel Three employees said the reason this program was on display in the newsroom is that they believed they were not competing with the other television stations in town as much as their television product was competing with their own digital products. In other words, they believed that they were now vying for their own viewers' attentions; customers who prefer to look at the two screens other than the television set. Since the current profit model relies more heavily on measuring television ratings to fund newsroom activities, a manager at Channel Three explained that,

Consultants [are] telling us that the viewers want the writing to be more 'now, now, now, flashy, flashy, flashy'...to get people off of their smart phones or their iPads...now that everybody's able to get their news from the second they wake up from their phone...TV stations have a lot of ground to cover now... to pull people back to the TV screen...We have actively started changing how we write some things.

In other words, even if journalists are concerned with finding the most important information and presenting it in the most democratically useful way, they can be asked to set aside their professional judgment and alter their performance to increase profitability. Whether or not managers actually asked journalists to apply these profit-driven strategies did not vary across industrial structures, but rather varied based on newsroom culture. Management at Channel Six, a station that employs many storytelling award-winning

journalists, phrased the same three-screen relationship as more of a partnership than did the other managers in this study. The news director there explained that this relationship between television, web, and mobile is, “the trifecta: that they’re interested in it is one thing; that they watch it is another thing; that they share it is everything.”

**Producing logic.** Producers use news judgment to determine which stories end up in their newscasts, in what order, and with what style of presentation. The decision over the past decade to expand programming has had a couple of observable effects on producing logic, in particular regarding what leads the newscast and which shows have packages in them. While affiliated networks used to provide the bulk of the day’s programming for local stations (Goedkeep, 1988), the decision to add several half-hours of news meant that many contemporary stations have replaced network shows with even more local news. Producers used to consider their newscast’s lead-in audience as an indication of which story ought to lead the show. The 5:00 pm news, for example, came after a block of soap operas for each network. Producers would then assume that their audience consisted primarily of the soap opera audience of stay-at-home moms and “stack” the show to accordingly attract that audience’s attention. Today, stations run up to two-and-a-half hours of news between 4:00 pm and 6:30 pm. So, rather than follow entertainment programming, these stations mostly follow themselves. This has shifted the logic for which story leads.

While many stations have added these newscasts, companies did not hire a comparable number of additional reporters and producers to create content for those shows. As a result, management teams at the stations in this study devised strategies for juggling available in-house products and resources, and spreading them across several

hours of news programming. Stations with 5:00 pm, 5:30 pm, and 6:00 pm shows distributed producing responsibilities between two producers by either treating the 5:00 pm and 5:30 pm shows as two separate half-hours or as one hour-long show. This affected which producer was responsible for which show. Stations with news at 4:00 pm, 4:30 pm, 5:00 pm, 5:30 pm and 6:00 pm had to fill two-and-a-half hours of news with somewhere between three and six reporters. At Channel Seven, they devised a chart to randomize story distribution so that two shows did not air the same rundown back-to-back. This still meant that the same eight topics (two for each reporter) aired multiple times throughout the afternoon as various presentations of VOSOTs and packages. What led the newscast at these stations, then, was as much a matter of logistics as of consideration for the audience's needs. This shift in producing norms had an important effect on storytelling in the 6:00 pm news: Between the expectation of live news at 6:00 pm and the already limited number of packages, the likelihood that the 6:00 pm show had more than one package, if any, was low. This likelihood increased for stations with fewer newscasts, but only if they have just as many reporters.

### **Storytelling and the Need for Speed**

Many of the reporters in this study described both an awareness of and a desire for the storytelling craft. In particular, reporters at these stations expressed an interest in writing around a character. A reporter at Channel Two said, "You're always looking for those characters. I think a good character can really drive a story." Reporters at Channel One agreed: "I think that if it's a story that affects people then obviously you need to get people." The decision to apply narrative techniques to a package was both a matter of style and of news judgment for these reporters. Additionally, many reporters agreed that

storytelling for its own sake was not a responsible way to select story formats; that its application demanded journalistic judgment. A Channel One reporter made such an observation saying,

While there is the ability to tell a story in journalism, I think that responsibility to the truth and to uncovering the truth and to informing sometimes can outweigh the creative juices that come with a creative storyteller. So it's a balance really. You have to figure out when you can be creative and when you can't.

The implication here is that the decision not to tell stories is a matter of propriety, however, the reporters in this study cited deadlines as the biggest influence on their performances. In many stations, new early afternoon newscasts meant new earlier package deadlines. Reporters in stations with news running from 4:00 pm through 6:30 pm commonly considered the 4:00 pm show as their deadline, whereas they used to only have newscasts as early as 5:00 pm. Naturally, these earlier deadlines meant having less time than before to put stories together. This change was more impactful in stations with two package turns each day. As a result of these changes, dayside workers consistently believed that the nightside crews had more time to craft a story. As a manager at Channel Five said about his nightside crew,

My team gets to tell stories. Our reporters on the day-to-day, they get to report news. And if they can find a way to tell a story inside the news, they do that. But under the time constraints that they are under, they can't always do that.

A Channel Eight reporter recognized that,

Dayside, you know, it's always kind of a crunch because you just never know what's gonna happen and you just have a shorter time frame to tell a story. But nightside, and I do nightside two times a week, I am always satisfied with my stories.

A Channel Two reporter explained that the difference in performance lies in the work

routines of the two shifts, saying, “It’s definitely a different process than if I were to come in at dayside or come in at night side and make calls and set up a story you know really kind of fine-tuning exactly what I want to focus on.” Despite this perspective from dayside workers, the night side crew, whose shift began with the afternoon meeting, consistently picked up stories during that meeting that management expected them to turn as a live VOSOT for the earlier shows. Even though dayside reporters believed that the night side crew had more time to work, this did not seem to always be the case.

Journalists cited story length as another factor affecting storytelling performance. Primarily because consultant research demonstrates a negative relationship between story length and viewer attention, managers have formally decided to cut down on package lengths to ninety seconds in most stations. Journalists typically referred to these stories as a “minute-thirty” package. One reporter believed that his many years of experience telling stories helped him to maintain his commitment to storytelling, saying, “Even with the 90 seconds time frame, I’m out there trying to figure out how best to tell the story.” However all of the journalists agreed that these restrictions on story length compromised their abilities to provide viewers with context in packages. As one reporter pointed out, “you can’t include less information.” At stations with a two-turn-a-day policy, reporters believed that they further compromised storytelling techniques in exchange for speed. One reporter explained that, “you’ve got an hour to do a story – you can only have facts.”

Many reporters in this study confirmed that corporate demands for breaking news coverage was another factor hindering storytelling performance since live shots demanded the abandonment of storytelling techniques in favor of VOSOTs. Reporting

breaking news, these journalists said, meant compromising storytelling elements for timeliness. One reporter described her coverage of breaking news as such:

It's all about how quickly you can process the information and how quickly you can put it in a chronological order of the most important facts you need to know right now and put it together in a cohesive comprehensive way that makes sense...I'm not really writing a script I'm just trying to figure out you know what order to put those facts in.

Although she used the word “chronological,” which implied a narrative structuring, she actually defined the word as putting the most important facts first, meaning that she used an inverted pyramid for breaking news stories.

Observing the newsgathering and presentation routines for reporters and photographers was particularly challenging in this study due to the noticeable popularity of live shots across all industrial structures. Since the parameters of this dissertation restricted observations to the inside of the television stations, there were limits in time to talk to reporters and photographers. For MMJs in particular, there was little opportunity for observation as many of them worked entirely from the field. Channel One, the privately owned station, was an exception as they allowed their MMJ to introduce his story at 6:00 pm from the studio. As such, he returned to the station to edit his work. Several managers at that station agreed that they were uninterested in being what they called, “live for the sake of live.”

In many cases, live shots had become routinized to the point where they were no longer debated in relation to particular stories. Rather, reporters at these stations understood that they would be live in most if not all shows. Management at one such station noticed the effect this routine had on storytelling, saying that,

There are a lot of days where I feel like we're just scratching the surface in this market. We're just putting on the day of news and we're really not getting to the enterprise stories... I've found that sometimes my goals are hard to reach because there's so much news going on in one day that we can't really sacrifice a reporter to be on an enterprise story. They really do need to be on day-of news.

Portable transmission equipment and video cameras with Wi-Fi capability allowed journalists to report live from remote locations, under more extreme weather conditions, without support crews. The stations with MMJs had already adopted this technology into the routine. The MMJ at Channel Five called into the newsroom to coordinate with the assignment editor and then headed out to cover a continuing story. He shot, wrote, and edited his package, posted to social media from the scene, and set up his own live shot for 6:00 pm with a LiveU system.

Speed, in particular during breaking news, was indeed a factor for MMJs who had to accomplish the same tasks as their reporter and photographer counterparts, with half the crew. An MMJ at Channel Two covered breaking news on the morning of one observation day. She described her shift as an MMJ the following way:

I ran my own live shots with Live U backpacks. I shot my own stuff. I...edited my own stuff. Sent it all back. You've gotta...get interviews, do your recording and do your photography, feed it all back and then set up your live shot...At that point I just had my notepad to go on and I would just collect my thoughts and kind of think of ways to get from one fact to the other...It's just like remembering everything and absorbing everything you've just been told and then resaying it simpler, easier, quicker, shorter.

This description supports the assertion that journalists today feel they are compromising performance for speed. For several MMJs, not all of whom produced the cases in this study, working alone meant taking a "LiveU" backpack, a camera, a smart phone and a laptop, and working a full workday out in the field before reporting live for

any number of newscasts. These technologies also allowed reporter-photographer teams to cover news from farther away than they used to be able to travel for a story since they did not have to be back at the station in order for the story to make deadline.

The data from RQ1 and RQ2 suggested that collaboration improved storytelling in cases where reporters did not apply storytelling techniques. However, the data also showed that unions, which maintained separate reporter and photographer titles, were responsible for many of the low-level storytelling cases. This appeared to be a case of work culture's moderating effect on the relationship between storytelling and collaboration. An MMJ at Channel Six said of the union station where he worked in the past:

The photographers that were there just were not really into visual storytelling. They were just really more about getting to the end of the day and printing my paycheck and they didn't really care too much about the quality of the video that they shot. I mean some of them did but overall as a generalization if you will that was the feeling that I had and that was actually one of the reasons why I wanted to leave. Cause it's frustrating for me.

In other words, even though the opportunity for collaboration was higher in union stations, union shops came across as less collaborative work environments. The unionized workers were not necessarily less friendly to each other than in the non-union shops, they were simply more concerned about the division of labor. According to the data from RQ1a and RQ2a, this same division of labor that appeared to have a negative effect on television performance had a positive effect on digital performance. Since the union stations in this study did a better job of isolating web-publishing responsibilities to their digital staff, union shops produced far less shovelware than did the nonunion stations.

In spite of the importance of collaboration for television performance, MMJs are adjusting to the heavy workloads just as well as the reporter and photographer teams. In fact, the journalists in this study demonstrated several strategies that they commonly used to ensure that they would meet production demands in terms of speed. One way that dayside reporters got around this issue of having little time to work was finding ways to make their routine newsgathering techniques pull double duty. This resulted in enough content for more than one package. For example, on two observation days at two different stations, reporters covered planned events because they actually needed soundbites from attendees for future stories. A reporter at Channel Five covered a fundraiser because she knew that the mayor would be in attendance. A reporter at Channel Two covered an event at a city park because she needed to get a hold of a park official for another piece. In many cases, stations used content from corporate or network affiliated stations that would have been too difficult to obtain in-house. Sometimes reporters used entire packages from other stations, removing the reporter track from the other market and replacing it with their own in a process known as “re-tracking.” Similarly, digital storage capabilities and advanced search tools allowed more reporters, photographers and producers to access more footage than ever before. Indeed, 17 of the packages in this study (57%) incorporated some file or shared footage. Speed, then, while possibly responsible for a decline in storytelling quality, a variable not measured in this dissertation, appears to be something that journalists can adjust to for the sake of meeting their deadlines.

## Support for Storytelling

### Awards

Not surprisingly, companies and journalists treated awards differently. Stations proudly displayed national and regional awards, lining the hallways leading to the newsrooms with various plaques signifying excellence in news. Meanwhile, when asked, many of the journalists immediately rejected the value of those accolades. In many cases, rejecting the awards system seemed to be economically motivated: In several cases, entering in these competitions costs money. Some companies, as a policy, will not cover the fee, leaving the journalists to pay the fee themselves. One reporter, who preferred not to have his station referenced in relation to this topic, explained that,

It's nice when you win em. Don't get me wrong. I won one and I didn't even go to the dinner and they call my name and I didn't go. And the other one...they asked me give...a hundred bucks and we'll put your name on the nomination form I said I don't care. And then we won.

In more than one conversation, reporters mentioned that the stations that did not pay their entry fees were still interested in taking credit for the award winner's success.

Additionally, several reporters and photographers remained unconvinced that the contests were fairly judged. However, on the whole, the journalists in this study demonstrated that they sought opportunities to hone their storytelling craft and to receive recognition from their colleagues, if only inside their immediate collegial network, that they were meeting professional expectations. At Channel Six, which had both the enshrined hallways as well as a national reputation for recruiting and retaining successful storytellers, the news director explained that a modicum of cynicism about awards is beneficial to the storytelling craft because, ultimately, awards are more beneficial to the company than to

the viewer saying, “You’re trying to win a trophy rather than trying to communicate with your audience. And when those two conflict, that’s a problem.”

### **Mentorship and education**

Mentorship and education played an important role in promoting storytelling inside these newsrooms, though they played out in a variety of different ways. In some cases education came from management. The news director at Channel One, for example, held regular discussions with reporters regarding their news angles and storytelling approaches to packages. Some managers said that they paid to have guest speakers come to the station to hold seminars or that even they created their own seminars. Some managers considered their consultants as educators. In several cases, journalists explained that their continued education in storytelling came from attending Poynter and NPPA conferences. While funding for conference travel and entry fees was a corporate decision, some managers offered support to journalists, who paid their own way, by allowing them to keep their vacation days in tact.

Managers who worked closely with workers on storytelling also saw value in their own continued education. The executive producer at Channel One said, “I went to Poynter and it was on my behalf that I asked to go...that was a request of mine going into my second contract [negotiation] here as executive producer.” He explained that he had negotiated Poynter conference attendance into his contract because he saw value in keeping his storytelling skills sharp for the sake of educating other writers. He also recognized that he was less likely to attend the conference if he would have had to incur the costs.

While they were scrambling to find their place in this changing industry, the data from RQ3 and RQ4 showed that photographers played an important role in upholding storytelling performance: mentorship. One photographer said the last station where she worked was a newsroom filled with NPPA members. She believed that they consistently did better work. When I asked her why she was unable to recreate that culture at her current station, she explained that her current station was behind in the ratings, less financially stable and, therefore, needed to prioritize profits over professional development. Similarly, a reporter at another station, also behind in the market ratings, said that her last station had many NPPA photographers. She attributed her award-winning packages to those photographers, saying,

I would give them the package, it would come back this amazing masterpiece because it was a photojournalist-driven market. And so what would happen is I would get stories back and they'll chop up your audio, they'll add nat sound. I mean they did everything to make these the most beautiful pieces. They owned them...I've never been up for more awards than I was at that station because it was competitive in that way. That's the first time I was ever nominated for an Emmy.

The results from RQ1 and RQ2 showed the importance of storytelling shooting and editing to elevating performance in these cases. Photographers were in a unique position in many newsrooms in this study because of the threat that MMJs posed to their job security. However, MMJs, who were on average around 25 years old, said they benefitted from having these older, more experienced photographers around. During the observation days, the photographer at Channel Three was in the process of critiquing two MMJ packages. In conversation, those MMJs both acknowledged the impact this storytelling education had on their performances. The results from RQ2 also demonstrated that nat breaks were related to high-level storytelling. Nearly every editor

using nat breaks (89%) contributed to a high-level piece. By no coincidence, storytelling training with organizations like Poynter and NPPA encourage the use of nat breaks. All of the photographers in this study who included nat breaks said they had either attended storytelling seminars or were mentored by storytelling organization members.

### **Developing Digital Routines**

Observing the routines of local television newsroom workers, it is clear that there is still a broad spectrum of behaviors and attitudes in regards to digital journalism. Out in the field, reporters incorporated digital media into their work routines. The participants in this study recognized how that routine fed into digital coverage back in the newsroom. One manager explained on the reporters' behalves that, "our basic structure is go out there, start tweeting and our digital producers will take your tweets and start writing stories with them." Internet technology also acted as time saving devices in these newsrooms, allowing journalists to produce broadcast and digital products from the news scene without having to return to the station. Reporters most commonly related questions about digital journalism with their social media responsibilities. When asked about the impact of digital journalism on her job, one reporter in one of the smaller markets explained that social media was very low on her and her photographer's priority lists:

...[my photographer] doesn't tweet out in the [field] cause he doesn't have a smart phone...so he'll do his stuff at home...and usually I don't do that, like I'm not good with social media because I'm so focused on the story...I feel like it's a distraction like live in the moment, you know? Enjoy the interview.

The fact that most reporters did not mention their online publishing responsibilities despite the fact that most of them were responsible for contributing to the online product was significant. Although many reporters expressed interests in producing storytelling

elements for their television packages, none spoke of digital publication as a priority. This explained the generally weak storytelling scores in these cases. Reporters and photographers expressed much more widely that social media is of value to their daily routines for both crowdsourcing and for reporting breaking news.

Inside the newsroom, producers were not responsible for posting the stories related to these particular cases. However, there was much overlap between digital popularity and producer performance. A manager at Channel Three explained that stations can no longer afford to let viewers decide where to look for news because they prefer digital platforms to legacy programming. When producers used the legacy, appointment television mindset, not looking ahead to offerings from the rest of the day, consultant-driven research suggested that viewers defaulted to using the other two screens available for news consumption rather than thinking to tune into the television product in the later hours. This manager added that the morning show is the first line of attack in the war against those distractions, saying,

Morning sets the tone for the day. If you can bring your viewers in with a morning show that's relevant, doesn't waste their time and catches them up for the day...in their minds [it is] almost like what the assignment sheet's gonna look like for the day. So they'll know what to follow.

This responsibility fell squarely on the producer's shoulders. While producers and executive producers have traditionally maintained an awareness of future newscasts for the sake of promoting in-house products, today they feel they must reliably think outside the borders of the individual newscasts for the sake of securing a television audience later in the day.

While workers were carrying out digital production orders, managers at these stations were developing strategies for improving digital journalism performance. The digital manager at Channel Eight explained that his platform increased engagement by improving transparency. He gave an example of a television story that appeared on the website in a manner that angered his readers until he took the time to explain the logic behind their report. At that point, he said, readers not only believed that the story was handled responsibly, but could also see that the station was taking the time to interact with the consumers. He attributed this type of interaction to their digital success in his market. Similarly, the digital manager at Channel Three explained that his company was starting to dedicate more resources to digital journalism saying,

The company has made an effort to improve what we do on the digital side by forming a department, an actual department. And it's grown so rapidly and is such a vital part of our news day-to-day news operation that our general managers feel like this is digital needs to have a seat at the table, at the department head table.

The results from RQ1a and RQ2a suggested that there is a great deal of shovelware on local television news sites. However, digital managers said they are thinking of ways to present news information online that is unique to the medium. The executive producer at Channel Six elaborated that the decision to apply narrative techniques was not only made within each television package but also within each of a station's three presentation formats,

You have to make different kinds of decisions. You are operating different platforms and you have to know what content belongs where...There is an appetite out there for all kinds of different news and storytelling definitely fits in that menu.

Demand for speed did, in general, affect digital performance for the online counterparts to these television packages. Performance dropped significantly where management expected journalists to publish their own stories to the web. Stations with web staff of two or more people had a much clearer plan for publishing to the digital platforms. They could meet the demand for speed from the newsroom while giving their reporters and photographers room to work on their television products. However, again, there is every reason to believe that workers are adaptable to new strategies.

### **When Journalism Norms Meet Business Demands**

In the summer of 2014, hundreds of stations across all markets, networks, and companies sent representatives to San Francisco for the annual Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) conference. In fact, more stations did so during that summer than had ever done it in the history of that conference (IRE Conference Blog, 2014). The conference came up time and again throughout every one of these station visits, in particular when journalists were asked about their experience with and opinions on storytelling. Two of the packages in this study are indeed investigative stories. Storytelling may be a matter of professional news judgment about which narrative structure is appropriate with which story, but companies are interested in determining what kinds of stories attract viewers regardless of presentation style. As one investigative reporter put it, “You can’t say in a 30-second promo what a storytelling story *is*.”

Investigative journalism has been the jewel of the print industry for decades – highlighted most famously by the Watergate scandal of the 1970s. In 2013, AR&D, a consulting firm, illuminated the value of investigative journalism to that year’s conference attendees (IRE Conference Blog, 2014). The study sparked a trend in

investigative journalism, not for its social value, but for its profitability. The result was clear: The news director at Channel Three noted that, “Stations are catching on that you have to really have unique content for your newscast that creates appointment viewing.” This recent eruption of investigative journalism is an example of broadcast news norms influenced by corporate demands because of the similarities between the two. The manager at Channel Four believed that the consultant study timed well with the increased conglomeration of news stations, saying,

I think part of what’s happened with the creation of these larger groups, the Gannetts, the Hearsts the Sinclairs, is there might be actually an impetus for those organizations to step up and support investigative reporting. I think a lot of them have...I think it’s a point of standing out from the crowd a little bit.

A manager at Channel Two agreed with the sentiment that investigative journalism pairs well with the market-driven need for product differentiation, saying, “That’s a way to distinguish yourself and to set you apart from a competitor. And it’s good stuff that a lot of time it’ll lead to government investigations and that kind of thing and make a real difference.” When asked about dedicating money in 2014 to storytelling, managers repeatedly associated that question with the budget for investigative reporting. The news director at Channel Five said, “We each year add to our investigator’s pile with Go Pro cameras, iPads, technology that will help us better tell stories.” In stations like Channel Six, where several reporters are already known for their storytelling skills, the news director there said, “We just did something non-traditional. I moved the most decorated storyteller in our newsroom into the investigative unit.” The presentation by AR&D was titled “Can investigative journalism save your newsroom?” (IRE, 2013) In these newsrooms, discussions on this issue were abundant and hopeful that it could. What this

result suggests is that storytelling, as a news value, suffers from a lack of profit-driven support whereas investigative journalism provides an opportunity to connect corporate values with journalistic ones.

### **Managers as Moderators**

Managers, as liaisons between journalists and financiers, described loyalty to either the craft or to the business of making news as two separate considerations during this study. In terms of the storytelling craft, managers referred to the inclusion of characters and emotions just as journalists did. The news director at Channel Six said that their goal was to produce, “stories about people where people are the main characters, where they’re the components of writing a story rather than a report.” The assignment desk editor at Channel Two recognized that storytelling was a priority at his station too, saying, “I know we want to, instead of doing stories with just public officials, we want to dig deeper and get people to express their emotions.” The executive producer at Channel Seven confirmed that,

The general principle is that we like to center every story around a person if at all possible. We really don’t like the official sound...you want the emotion to come through in the story and that just happens with people, not officials, generally speaking.

However, where the managers responded differently from the journalists was in explaining the motivation behind news performance. Reporters said that they used storytelling when it was the most responsible way to package the information they had. While some managers framed storytelling in terms of quality journalism, they also expressed a financial relationship between storytelling techniques and profit motives. The

news director at Channel Eight believed that the incentive to tell good stories was to attract viewers, saying, “people will watch emotion over straight facts everyday.”

Some stations are more aggressively seeking profit-driven strategies that are affecting news routines. Appealing to a particular demographic is one of those strategies. A local television station outside of this study recently applied this strategy in a very visual way: they photographed a woman in the station’s target demographic and printed out a cardboard cutout of this woman with her children, placing her in the newsroom to remind the workers to look for stories that appealed to this specific audience member (Jones, 2015). While the stations in this study did not display cardboard families, the executive producer at one station explained that the demand for emotional soundbites where he worked was less a matter of journalistic responsibility lately and more the direct influence of a recent round of consultant research. He said,

I think we’ve always wanted emotion in a story and we could always tell in the ratings if you had like a crying mama on TV what that would do for ratings as opposed to just, you know, the man on the street. But there is a concerted effort now to pick stories that we know are going to give us the emotional soundbite.

Indeed, while the same station did not have a physical reminder of their target demographic, they all individually admitted that a consultant had recently asked them to imagine a similar audience member, even giving her a name. Indeed, her name came up in every interview as shorthand for appeasing the company’s needs. Whether managers encouraged responsible journalism, then, had less to do with their beliefs and more to do with encouraging profitable behavior for the company.

In many cases, managers agreed that storytelling was valuable to viewers but, simultaneously, the notion of setting time and money aside for this type of performance

struck them as unrealistic. One manager said, “It’s hard to budget for just storytelling. There’s no line in a budget that says ‘storytelling.’” However, another manager explained that, at the same time, the lines in the budget are there for breaking news, saying, “But I mean you know if there’s a breaking news story, I don’t have to worry about overtime and that sort of stuff. It’s, ‘you guys tell the story, we’ll figure the other stuff out later.’” Managers in this study were clearly torn between company needs and journalistic norms. They were moderating between the company’s need to make money and the journalists’ desires to tell stories. Unfortunately, the two frequently conflict. Storytelling is time-consuming and costly both in terms of production time and training. However, the consequence to abandoning this role is clear: when managers did not moderate between the two variables, these data show that storytelling suffered.

If journalists had the same norms as their company owners, managers could simply mediate between the two. However, since the two are motivated by different goals – profitability for owners and public interest for journalists – managers must moderate between the two. Managers at Channel Six, which commonly competes for storytelling awards, did this by developing a newsroom ecology that favors storytelling mentorship. Most notably, they created and maintained a hold-for-release (HFR) newsgathering schedule. This decision to decrease staff support for day-turns in exchange for the higher likelihood of storytelling performance in the long-term was treated as an investment in worker enthusiasm more than anything else. This station tended to recruit journalists for their storytelling skills and set aside time for these craftspeople to satisfy their creative needs while still recognizing the station’s need to fill the daily news holes with day-turns. The assistant news director confirmed this observation, saying,

I think it energizes our staff. And what we get out of that is we get people here who are very talented and can do special things because we provide those opportunities. If we didn't provide those opportunities it might be harder to attract and retain those people who can do special things because they might go somewhere that did allow it or do something else for a living.

The news director at Channel Six explained that employing people dedicated to the storytelling craft is as much a preference for their individual performance as it is assurance that the newsroom has storytelling mentors:

It only takes one or two and pretty soon others are starting to look peripherally at those journalists going, 'Oh, I want to do that. That was interesting.' Or they would get praised for that work. Two people in a newsroom and the culture starts to change.

A reporter at Channel Six recognized that these managerial decisions were unique to his station. He said that they were particularly noticeable when a new employee joined the team:

You know it's funny, when people come here to this station for the first time, especially when they've come from other bigger markets and they're sizable, they'll be a murder that happens and they'll be, 'okay, we gotta go. You know, let's go cover that and let's we'll go live.' And, you know, we're going, 'Ahh...' We don't giggle cause it's, like, of course we cover murders but, you know, we ask the question: Well, why are we covering this? Why are we giving this more attention than something else? Why? You know we'll cover it and we'll shoot video of the scene and we'll cover it as a VO or get a soundbite and cover it as a VOSOT but why are we gonna go live? Why are we going to invest a reporter? Why are we going to, you know, invest extra resources to cover this?...I'm glad that we have those conversations.

What the data from RQ3 and RQ4 show is just how impactful is newsroom culture when it comes to supporting storytelling and just how important managers are to fostering this storytelling-supportive environment.

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This dissertation began with the assertion that storytelling performance in local television news is important both to professional journalists and to society. With nearly three quarters of Americans citing local television journalism as their top source for information, this study framed the performance of local TV journalists as instrumental in contributing to effective public discourse. Furthermore, past scientific data shows that storytelling techniques significantly aid in easing information processing and support the importance of understanding how journalists structure mass messages. Local news, however, is also a commodified product. As such, academics have voiced concerns about the quality of news in an advertiser-funded system. The questions they have posited surrounded whether the need to make money is degrading what professionals know to be socially responsible journalism. Similarly, today's journalism leaders describe a work environment where journalists' days are filled with profit-minded activities, causing them to compromise storytelling for industrial demands. This claim from the profession echoes the academic prediction that commodification affects the social value of news products.

The data in this dissertation confirm what scholars like Hamilton (2004), McManus (1994), Bagdikian (2004), and McChesney (2008) warned of years ago: news organizations cannot serve two masters. What is of high social and political value is the journalist's concern. What is of high economical value is the company owner's concern. Newsroom managers are caught in between those two camps. The fear among many professional journalists is that the individuals cannot keep up quality while maintaining speed. The extent to which this has affected quality over time is not in the purview of this study. However, what has also noticeably increased is a demand for volume. In the effort

to meet *this* expectation, these data show a shift in norms and routines and, subsequently, in performance.

What was missing from the literature was an understanding of the meso-level of contemporary news production; an explanation of the behaviors and attitudes connecting industrial structures to news performance. This study filled that gap, using four methodological approaches to the study of newsroom norms and routines, and painting a detailed picture of the contemporary local television newsroom and the conduct within. Specifically, this study provided content analyses for both television and digital storytelling techniques for 32 cases of television news packaging in the 6:00 pm newscasts of ten stations across six markets and seven companies. This study also provided qualitative comparative analyses of the same 32 cases across industrial structures. Additionally, this study applied methods of observations of 18 days of news work and in-depth interviews with 62 of the reporters, photographers, producers, and managers responsible for the cases included in this dissertation.

## **Key Findings**

### **Content analyses**

The data from RQ1 show that local television journalists do apply narrative structures and audio-visual techniques to packages airing in the news blocks of 6:00 pm newscasts. These data also demonstrated that journalists can and do use storytelling techniques across story topics. This supports the notion that, for journalists, storytelling, like the inverted pyramid, is a presentation norm selected with professional experience.

RQ1a found that the current process of transferring television information to the digital platform does not generally result in high levels of digital storytelling. The content analysis alone did not provide as much insight into this state of digital performance as did this analysis in combination with the comparisons from RQ2 and RQ2a.

### **Comparative analyses**

The data from RQ2 showed that, in cases where storytelling was lacking in storytelling writing, photographers closed the gap. As such, these data show that storytelling performance benefits from collaboration. This puts more pressure on MMJs to singlehandedly uphold storytelling quality in their work without the benefit of a second set of eyes and ears. Based on the results from this analysis, MMJs were up to the task.

The data from RQ2a demonstrated that assigning digital responsibilities to legacy reporters was bad for digital storytelling. This was particularly true for MMJs who are already bombarded with twice the workload of a reporter and photographer team. Unions seemed to handle this area of digital production more successfully than nonunion stations because unions were more rigid about outlining job responsibilities and because adding interactive elements to a web story takes more time than a television reporter is necessarily able or willing to give.

As with the content analysis, these comparative findings required more context in order to better understand the data that emerged. As such, the bulk of the findings as well as much of the context for all of these findings came out of the last two research questions from this dissertation.

## Observations and interviews

These data show that storytelling in local television news is a performance compromised by the search for economies of scale, in particular under a system that permits companies, rather than newsroom managers, to determine which cost-cutting measures to implement. Whether an event is covered is indeed a matter of news judgment. What these data show is that economic decisions are altering content decisions by leaving people out of the conversation altogether. Thanks to the increased normativity of planned live shots in the 6:00 pm news, stations that do not wish to pay for overtime work have shifted the dayside work schedule for reporters and photographers. In stations where 6:00 pm live shots are expected and either companies or unions require that those workers come to the office at 10:00 am or 10:30 am, managers primarily attend the story meetings. Profit motives affected setting the agenda for the editorial meeting as well. Managers prioritized the story selection discussion by leading the meetings with market-minded topics of weather, sports, and digital numbers. Therefore *whether* an event is covered is primarily the decision of people other than those who determine *how* an event should be covered.

How an event is covered is also a matter of news judgment. Reporters and photographers collaboratively, or MMJs singularly, consult personal, professional best practices to gather and present news information. These standards come from schooling, experience, mentorship and ability. There is no evidence in this study to suggest that MMJs are any less capable of producing television storytelling packages than their collaborative counterparts. However, norms are not the only influences on news presentations; journalists also rely on routines to efficiently meet deadlines. This is where

a separate set of expectations, those of the industry in general and the varied structures in combination come into play. Journalists compromise storytelling elements for production speed as they work to meet consumer expectations in the Digital Age. Here, again, MMJs make the biggest concessions by working alone. This seems to affect the digital product more than the legacy product.

Reporters confirmed that storytelling was indeed a matter of personal style and experience. However, they believed that the recent demand from management to increase speed of production resulted in compromises to the storytelling craft. Programming expansion meant tighter deadlines for dayside workers. Added digital responsibilities in recent years only increased the workload. Reporters and photographers also spent most of their time outside of the newsroom. Thanks to portable editing and live technologies, they were able to collect and package all of their information out in the field. In spite of all of these pressures on television journalists, these workers managed to find strategies for meeting deadlines while still producing some storytelling packages.

Photographers emerged as the storytelling ambassadors in this study. Several reporters and MMJs cited photographers as valuable mentors for the storytelling process. However, at the same time, this study found the role of photographers had diminished in several newsrooms. This was due to a lack of attendance at the morning meeting, reduced responsibilities due to the availability of new technologies, and the industry trend toward employing MMJs who serve as both reporters and photographers.

Producing logic had also shifted due to expansions in programming. In particular, the addition of more hours of news without adding many more reporters required new strategies for producers in terms of juggling available in-house resources. This has spread

the same number of packages across the increased number of shows. Managers sometimes determined this distribution. This also changed the decision of which story led the newscasts because producers no longer considered network show lead-in audiences in their stacking decisions. Instead, they relied more heavily on consultant research to define target audiences.

These data demonstrated that managers clearly play an important role as moderators between corporate demands and journalistic norms. Their jobs were to decide where to funnel resources whether for story selection or story presentation. In every case, managers had to decide how to apply the company allocated funds and, in turn, demonstrate where their loyalties lay.

The national trend of investigative journalism shows that when companies see profitability in a product, there is more of that product. The popularity of investigative reporting in recent years demonstrates how an appeal to corporate profit motives can influence performance due to the competitive nature of the business. The consultant-led research promoting the value of investigative journalism as a strategy for product differentiation resulted in the almost instantaneous proliferation of that particular product. Moreover, the observation that many journalists thought to equate storytelling with investigative journalism supports the assertion that business demands not only alter routines; they can alter normative priorities.

Finally, these data showed that for storytelling to thrive, journalists cannot be the only workers carrying the banner. Instead, storytelling success depends on managers and journalists working together to maintain a favorable workplace culture in the face of certain challenges in this commercialized industry.

## **Limitations and Future Considerations**

Access was the primary limitation to case diversity in this study. Researchers need to be aware of the importance of anonymity for ensuring access for modern newsroom studies. At the same time, newsrooms need to be more willing to allow outside researchers into their buildings. While threats to corporate security are valid reasons to restrict such visits, the lack of information about the current state of news production can only serve to benefit corporations while perpetuating problematic working conditions for journalists.

This study was also limited in that these results only described storytelling conditions for the 6:00 pm newscast. The results suggested that there is good reason to look at storytelling across the entire dayside reporting schedule instead. Furthermore, this study was limited to observations of news work within the station walls. However, much of the work happened outside of the newsroom. As such, these data come in part from reporter accounts of the concessions they made out in the field. Future research should include case studies comparing the work habits of reporter-photographer teams as well as those of MMJs. This would speak well to the relationship between news norms and collaboration.

In terms of measuring storytelling quality, this study had some important limitations: Firstly, this dissertation is not a comparative study of technique across time. Therefore, it could not say whether storytelling quality had declined since the new technologies and increased deregulation of station ownership came into play. This study was also not designed to look at storytelling across different work shifts. It may be the

case that storytelling is significantly more apparent and of higher quality during the late night newscast, as some participants suggested was the case.

The digital results in this study were also limited in that they were associated with the television packages in the 6:00 pm newscasts. In order to fairly describe storytelling techniques on local television news station websites, it is necessary to conduct larger content analyses that do not pose the same restrictions that existed in this study.

This dissertation was not designed to measure content outside of packaged news. However, these data show good cause to research the concern that local newscasts are becoming more redundant and less local. The observation that stations are producing the same number of stories across more hours of programming supports the need to know more about the breakdown of newscast content.

The significance of photographers for storytelling warrants further exploration into the future of this industry position for two reasons: (1) audio-visual storytelling can elevate a package that lacks narrative writing techniques and (2) photographers in this study regularly served as storytelling mentors to the rest of the newsroom. Additionally, with the threat of increased hiring of MMJs, several photographers described confusion about their personal futures and the futures of their colleagues. This deserves additional attention in the form of qualitative research.

The notion that cultural change could help journalists to uphold professional norms in the face of profit motives implies a need for case studies where those changes are already occurring or are soon set to occur. Some journalists are showing leadership in their reporting, producing, and photography fields by meeting with news directors to ask

for changes to their newsroom business models and subsequently to the newsroom ecology in relation to storytelling. These cases serve as examples of the bottom-up changes that journalists strive for in this commercialized industry.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

This dissertation argues that, more than any one brand, such as that of investigative journalism, engagement is actually the salvation of local television news. This is what will train the audience to once again think of news as an important part of their daily lives. Stations producing no engaging television content and no interactive web content are sending a clear message to their audience members: we do not care and neither should you.

Presenting a list of facts is a two-dimensional experience for a television news viewer. It is akin to the traditional perception of mass communication as a passive reception of information by the masses from an elite, singular source. By including feelings and applying narrative structures to a news piece, journalists add a third dimension to the list of facts: the story. Storytelling, as a norm, is the belief that one ought to engage the audience member as an active participant in the experience of receiving information. By writing about the human condition, television journalists are able to transport viewers from their homes and immerse them in the news. Rather than “talking at” the audience, storytelling is the desire to “talk with” the audience, to spark a conversation with the audience member so that he or she may carry on the discussion as a citizen.

Today, viewers also want a fourth dimension that only comes with digital platforms: interactivity. When journalists use their broadcast and digital abilities in tandem, they open the experience up for consumers to feel like they are holding the issue in their hands and inspecting it from many angles. Based on these data, stations are consistently doing the bare minimum in terms of creating interactive and engaging digital stories in conjunction with their news packages. As packages, these are stories that journalists are indicating to viewers require more of their attention. However, the same stories are not always presented in engaging ways on television nor in interactive ways online. Without engagement and interactivity, broadcast and digital news simply falls flat.

Corporations do not care about what is good for journalism; they care about what is good for getting people to watch advertising. That defines responsible business ownership in an advertiser-funded news industry. Nowhere does the Constitution say that corporations should care about what is good for news. However, journalists should care about what is good for news. They should care about what is good for news because the Constitution specifically says that they should as members of the Fourth Estate. Ironically, what companies and news directors seek from live shots and investigative journalism – product differentiation – appears to be creating a generic product across the country since everyone is attacking this project at once. Meanwhile, storytelling actually does create product differentiation. Every station covering a story in the same market will commonly have the same facts, but no two stations in a market will have the same story. The added bonus is that science shows storytelling structures also serve the public

interest in aiding information processing and improving the function of local television news in this deliberative democracy.

A solution for journalists, then, is not to just work faster, as so many appear to be doing, but rather to strive for cultural change in the newsroom. Journalists and managers need to consider how the cultural norms of their newsrooms impact performance. Improving storytelling performance is not necessarily a direct guarantee of higher ratings. Instead, it is one way to avoid compromising journalistic responsibilities for corporate demands. Inaction has consequences too: not every newsroom holds conversations about social responsibility as a long-term plan. However, companies most certainly have long-term financial plans. When journalists only accomplish daily goals, thinking about news on a small scale, these data show how they are vulnerable to owner's profit-driven motives. This dissertation demonstrates that what is good for business is not necessarily good for democracy. So long as journalists keep striving for professional best practices through education and mentorship, viewers will continue to reap the benefits. And, so long as managers see value in best journalistic practices, including storytelling, journalists will continue to serve as useful arbiters of our understanding of public life.

As news ownership is a commercial endeavor, stations represent companies, and those companies compete on a national scale, which, many scholars argue, continues to shift production priorities from journalistic ones to corporate ones along with the increasing conglomeration of the industry. The success of cable news, for example, has demonstrated to local news companies that breaking coverage is more engaging than routine coverage. PEW research indicates that cable news networks may have a smaller share of television viewership (38% as compared to local news' 71%), but those who

tune into cable news spend double the time actively consuming content than do their local counterparts (Olmstead et al., 2013). Local television station owners realize that creating a sense of urgency means compromising coverage of important, but perhaps less dramatic, occurrences of local public life. However, many stations still appear to be providing the same breaking news energy without any of the engaging elements. As award-winning local news reporter Bev Chapman says, the reward for manufacturing drama has only a short-term benefit:

It is the circus barker syndrome that you're getting them into the tent but, if you don't deliver, then after a while not only will it not be fulfilling your mission but people will be wise to it and won't watch it. (B. Chapman, personal interview, October 19, 2012)

Every form of mass media – news, movies, music – is going through this same crisis right now. Every one of these industries is struggling to find a way to tell stories while spending as little money as possible. The difference is that democracy does not rest its success on music or on film. Democracy does, however, rest upon a free press. And Democracy cannot function properly with an empty circus tent.

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**APPENDIX A.  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Reporters/photographers/editors:**

**Necessity** (Do you want/know how to be a storyteller?):

Tell me about your background in news – How many years have you been doing this?

Where did you go to school?

Where did you learn your storytelling skills? (School, mimicking, mentorship)

Do you affiliate yourself with any storytelling organizations (NPPA, RTNDA, Poynter, Facebook group)?

Do you cont. your storytelling education today? (Attend conferences, read texts, watch videos)

Have you ever won an award for your storytelling abilities?

Can journalists learn to tell good stories on the job?

Are news packages the only forms of storytelling in local TV news?

**Sufficiency** (What supports/inhibits storytelling?):

Was today's package something that reflects your storytelling abilities? How? Why Not?

What happened today that helped/hurt your ability to produce a good story?

How common is that?

Did you directly contribute anything to the web today?

Did you post anything to social media for work today?

Has [company name] expressed a company-wide position on the importance of good storytelling?

What about this station in particular?

Does the station win storytelling awards? (NPPA, RTNDA, EMMYS)

Why do you think that is?

Describe for me your best case scenario for producing an award-winning piece.

How often does that come together? Why?

In terms of storytelling, how is this station different from others where you have worked?

**Producers:**

**Necessity** (Do you want/know how to be a storyteller?):

Tell me about your background in news – How many years have you been doing this?

Where did you go to school? What is your degree in?

Would you say that storytelling is a necessary skill for producers?

How do you use storytelling in your daily work?

Where did you learn your storytelling skills? (School, books, mimicking, mentorship)

Do you affiliate yourself with any storytelling organizations (NPPA, RTNDA, Poynter, Facebook group)?

Do you cont. your storytelling education today? (Attend conferences, read texts, watch videos)

Have you ever won an award for your storytelling abilities?

Can producers learn to tell good stories on the job?

**Sufficiency:**

Has [company name] expressed a company-wide position on the importance of good storytelling?

What about this station in particular?

Does the station win storytelling awards? (NPPA, RTNDA, EMMYS)

Why do you think that is?

In terms of storytelling, how is this station different from others where you have worked?

Did you run a package today that is an example of good storytelling?

Do you do something special to ensure that storytelling packages end up in your newscast?

How many reporter packages do you usually run in your newscast?

**Managers** (GM, ND, AND, Assignment Editor, EP):

**Management background in news**

I'm interested in your work background – have you always worked in news?

How many years have you worked in news?

Where did you go to school? What is your degree in?

Could you describe for me your path to newsroom management?

***Company interest in storytelling***

Has XXX expressed a company-wide position on the importance of good storytelling?

What about this station in particular?

Does the station win storytelling awards? (NPPA, RTNDA, EMMYS)

Why do you think that is?

***Managerial support for storytelling***

What's your role in ensuring that storytelling happens in this newsroom? (enforce company policy, feedback/critique sessions, pay for conferences, hiring storytellers)

Is money an important factor in successful storytelling? How so?

How has digital media played into the way your newsroom tells stories?

What about social media?

**APPENDIX B.  
TRUTH TABLE ARRANGED BY TELEVISION STORYTELLING SCORE**

Case	ID	ST High	ST Med	ST Low	Write Score	Shoot Score	Edit Score	ST Web	ABC	CBS	NBC	Small market	Med market	Large market	Small Co	Med Co	Large Co	Market Leader	Union Shop	MMJ crew	File Video
1	CH1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
6	CH2	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
7	CH3	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
9	CH3	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
10	CH3	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
11	CH4	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
13	CH4	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
14	CH5	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
16	CH5	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
18	CH6	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
19	CH6	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
30	CH10	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
2	CH1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
3	CH1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
8	CH3	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0

Case	ID	ST High	ST Med	ST Low	Write Score	Shoot Score	Edit Score	ST Web	ABC	CBS	NBC	Small market	Med market	Large market	Small Co	Med Co	Large Co	Market Leader	Union Shop	MMJ crew	File Video
12	CH4	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
20	CH7	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
23	CH7	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
24	CH8	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
25	CH8	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
4	CH2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
5	CH2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
15	CH5	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
17	CH5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
21	CH7	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
22	CH7	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
26	CH8	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
27	CH8	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1
28	CH9	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
29	CH9	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1

**APPENDIX C.  
IRB APPROVAL**

**ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST**



Institutional Review Board  
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair  
130 David Boyd Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
P: 225.578.8692  
F: 225.578.5983  
[irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu) | [lsu.edu/irb](http://lsu.edu/irb)

**TO:** Keren Henderson  
Mass Communication

**FROM:** Dennis Landin  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

**DATE:** June 19, 2014

**RE:** IRB# E8833

**TITLE:** Compromising the craft: A qualitative comparative analysis of the organizational factors influencing storytelling journalism in local television news

**New Protocol/Modification/Continuation:** New Protocol

**Review Date:** 6/19/2014

**Approved**  X  **Disapproved** \_\_\_\_\_

**Approval Date:** 6/19/2014 **Approval Expiration Date:** 6/18/2017

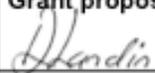
**Exemption Category/Paragraph:** 2a

**Signed Consent Waived?:** No

**Re-review frequency:** (three years unless otherwise stated)

**LSU Proposal Number** (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

**Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal:** (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

**By:** Dennis Landin, Chairman  \_\_\_\_\_

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –  
Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:**

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects\*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. SPECIAL NOTE:

*\*All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*

## VITA

Keren Henderson received her bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Toronto in 2000. After working in the entertainment side of television for five years, she returned to school for a Master's degree in broadcast journalism at Loyola University in New Orleans. Mother Nature had other plans for Henderson as, after only one semester, Hurricane Katrina blew her westward to Baton Rouge. There she transferred to the Manship School of Mass Communication, receiving her Master's degree in 2007. The same week, she began working as a local television news producer for WAFB-TV, the CBS affiliate for Baton Rouge. Three years later, Henderson decided that she would better serve the broadcast journalism industry as a scholar rather than a "stacker" and she returned to the Manship School for a PhD.

Professionally, Henderson has been a babysitter, a Hebrew teacher, an arts and crafts instructor, a waitress, a bartender, a production assistant, a ceramic flute maker, a celebrity wedding videographer, a video editor, an executive assistant, a freelance writer, a graduate assistant, and a television news producer. Today she is an assistant professor of Broadcast and Digital Journalism at Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.