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FRAMING 'REALITY'

**An exploration of how events
become news items on television.**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Media Studies at Massey University. Palmerston North. New Zealand.

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Abstract

Television news does not reflect all that happened on any particular day. It is a selection and reconstruction of some of the available and more newsworthy occurrences.

Drawing on the influential work of Herbert Gans this thesis explores and attempts to identify the relevant factors in news selection and the typical influences affecting the final content and form that a television news item takes in representing a news event.

Using the method of participant observation ten news events were followed from their initial selection, through the news production process to the final broadcast. This was undertaken over a two week period. The analysis and examination of the institutional and professional forces affecting a news item were supported by interviews, notes and video records.

The findings confirm many of the claims made by Gans and others that a television news item is a highly constructed event. Amongst the factors shown to be most significant in this process were conventional criteria of news worthiness, professional production codes and practices, gatekeeping decisions, institutional organisational routines, time constraints and cost benefit considerations.

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Contents

Topic	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of contents	iv
Chapter One: Introduction.	1
Chapter Two: Literature review.	10
Chapter Three: Methodology.	20
Chapter Four: Results	49
Chapter Five: Conclusions	79
Chapter Six: Appendices.	119
Bibliography	190

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

On any day of the week a great many potential news events and incidents occur. Many of these could, under the right circumstances become television news stories. However, what finally 'gets to air' on television news is influenced by a wide range of social, historical, political, economic, technical and cultural factors.

Television news is produced by professional news teams and as such is a social process subject to a variety of social, institutional and personal influences. News professionals employ a wide range of audio visual skills and technological techniques to construct and represent news to the television audience. These events are turned into "narratives" to take the form of stories that are 're-presented' to the television audience. Such stories have a beginning, middle and an end in keeping with the demands of the narrative form and they also assume other characteristics in accordance with the expectations of narrative structure. The professional practices and codes associated with television production also exert a significant influence over the form of the news item. There are many variables which can influence both the meaning and final representation of a television news event in addition to its news worthiness. Indeed the degree to which an event will be considered newsworthy is also subject to a range of influences.

The objective of this thesis was to study at first hand, the processes whereby an event became a television news story. An attempt was made to explore and identify factors relevant to the selection of news and the influences impacting on the final content. No news event is simply represented, in a pure, uncorrupted, transparent manner. Rather, in becoming a news item, all events are changed, modified, and their meaning influenced by a range of forces impinging on the process of news construction. For example, Hall et al (1978) maintained:

"the media do not simply and transparently report events which they see as newsworthy.... News is the end product of a complex process which begins

with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories". (1978:424)

They considered it is by virtue of this social process of construction and representation that an "event is made intelligible" to the audience. This process, also includes a number of specific journalistic practices, which embody crucial assumptions about society, its underlying beliefs, ideologies, and general ideas about how society works (1978:425).

BACKGROUND:

Originally this research began on a far more simple and unsophisticated basis .

The beginnings of this research can be traced back to a day spent shadowing a TVNZ television news crew as they researched and produced a story for the evening news programme. Initially I was interested in obtaining observational information for a student teaching resource, relevant to a unit on television news included in a course I teach on Television Production at Massey University. It was possible for me to video tape everything that took place throughout the period of a whole day, in relation to a television news team. During this time following a television news reporter and crew I obtained a wealth of information concerning the nature of the news production process. TVNZ also provided me with the raw footage of the story, together with the edited news item which finally ran to air.

In reconsidering the experience during the weeks which followed it became increasingly clear to me that this project had resulted in not only a valuable teaching resource, but had also provided an opportunity to observe at first hand the complex and intriguing process of news selection and construction. The experience thus raised the question of whether all news stories were subject to the same general forces that appeared to be operating in this initial experience. Factors such as the location and timing of the event, the constraints imposed by the time and resources available to the reporter, the particular personal characteristics of the crew, the editing team, the news editor, and the nature of the competing stories which occurred that day. Even the day of the week on which an

event occurred seemed to have all have an impact on the eventual form and meaning of the news story.

Herbert Gans (1979) discussed a number of theories about how he considered story selection occurred. He argued that selection of news could be journalist centred, where it was shaped by the professional judgement of the journalist. He considered that many of these judgements stem from the nature of the journalist's training and the set of expectations which a journalist brings to the process which derive from his judgement about proper journalistic practice. He also raised the issue of the degree to which the routines and formal organisational structures of television news impact on story selection and subsequent production. In his other approach he pondered how much the actual events themselves determine news item selection.

Other theories have explained story selection in terms of such concepts as negativity, meaningfulness, personalization and threshold (Galtung and Ruge , 1973. McQueen, 1998) Others (Cohen,A.1987, Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989, Harrison 1985, Palmer 2000) saw the news as being determined by forces,(sources) outside the news organisation, or by global forces embodied in technology resulting in "electronic colonialism" (McPhail, 2002). Still further theorists regard the news as largely determined by technological, ideological, and political forces outside of the news organisation itself. (Jones 1986, , Maltese 1998, Tuchman 1978)

Issues such as balance and fairness also play an important role in finally determining the actual content of a news item, especially where the event is contentious or controversial (Goodwin , 1990).

Cultural theorists such as Hall (1999) saw journalists as also selecting stories in accord with the value of the national culture.

Thus it is apparent that news selection is subject to a wide range of agenda-setting strategies and news values which operate both within and outside the news organisation itself. These are embodied in a wide range of forces and influences that may impinge on

the news selection process at any one time and ultimately exert a powerful influence over the final meaning and representation of the event. It is beyond the scope of this present study to provide a comprehensive account of all these theories and the factors influencing television news which is undeniably the result of a large range of complex forces that are both implicit and explicit in the news production process.

However, the objective of this thesis is largely confined to identifying the day to day influences operating on a news event within the confines of a TVNZ news production team and the associated news production process. This will begin with the initial selection of the actual event and continue through to its final broadcast form, or not, as the case may be.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW.

The research literature on television news is particularly large and covers a wide range of topics, including the investigation of the complex factors which may influence the selection and production of the news. These factors extend from initial news selection through to the final form of the broadcast news. However, with the exception of a few studies outlined below, there is relatively little observational data of what actually occurs within a news team context and the complex social interactions which take place throughout the entire production process. Despite this, it is widely agreed that there exists a complicated set of powerful influences, often only implicit, which operate throughout the process, to select and shape a news item.

A review of the literature in this area indicates that what causes an event to become a television news story involves more than the simple occurrence of that event. Tuchman's (1978) notion of 'events-as-news' distinguishes **events** as 'happenings' in the everyday world and **news** as accounts and explanations of those events as presented by a news organisation. The selection of 'happenings' likely to become television news, and their subsequent production into stories, is acknowledged as a social process which involves a range of people, all with their own particular ideas and judgements about what constitutes an appropriate news event. They in turn are constrained by the application of guidelines, standards and schedules which are designed to ensure the news is produced as rapidly and as efficiently as possible in order to fill a pre-determined time slot precisely. The news item, therefore, must fulfil the requirements of space and time, perceived newsworthiness and value regardless of what kind of event it may be. It is clear then, that the construction of the news item represents complex interactions at the many levels of organisational and social processes but which assume the familiarity and acceptance of routines.

Herbert Gans' book *Deciding What is News* (1979), widely regarded as a classic work in this area, was the starting point and primary motivation for this project. Gans sought to discover and explain the underlying routines which govern and ultimately give rise to what a society says about itself, through the news media. He undertook an observational study of American newsrooms (both print and electronic) during the 1970s and highlighted a number of organisational and social class factors which he regarded as particularly significant in determining the nature of news. For example, he maintained that journalism was primarily a profession of the middle-classes and as such, news production (in America at least), reflected middle-class values and ideology. Gans regarded news selection, therefore, as a two part process involving considerations and judgements about both 'what is available' and 'what is suitable'. These two concerns stood at the heart of the initial selection of an event as a potential newsworthy item with the media personnel themselves, he believed, ultimately determining what counts as a 'suitable' news event. Since news professionals generally have more information than can be used in any one particular item, they must make 'suitability' judgements, by which the available material is sifted and certain detail screened out to ensure that the remaining information can be covered easily, effectively and within both time and budget constraints. This means that,

“Journalists reporting news about a nation of over 200 million people (USA), could in theory choose from billions of potential activities each day. In fact, however, they can learn about only a tiny fraction of actors and activities and due to limitations of airtime and column space must select an even tinier fraction. More importantly, they cannot decide anew every day how to select the fraction that will appear on the news; instead, they must routinize their task in order to make it manageable.”(1979:78)

Gans identified four main criteria which he felt explained the basis on which a news event is selected. These were: **journalist-centred**, where the event is shaped by the professional judgement of the journalist; **routinized**, where the organisational

requirements, commercial and ideological imperatives, institutional arrangements and the division of labour influence the process of selecting and producing news; **event-centred**, where the events themselves largely determine their significance and are mostly just reflected to the audience; and lastly, **outside forces**, in which factors such as technology, economics, government policy and external sources (eg, spokespeople and press agents) are most influential in deciding which stories get selected.

In reality, all these influences might operate at different times for different events with journalists applying a measure of professional news judgement, both in their role as journalists but also with their individual values. What is apparent however, is that they are not entirely free agents when deciding what events they may cover or how they may present them. Because they work in organisations which provide only a limited amount of leeway, journalists have clearly defined criteria to which they must adhere when submitting stories for broadcast. In order to cover stories, journalists can only comprehend them within the framework of their own professional concepts and values. Accordingly, stories are produced in accordance with what journalists deem to be an 'empirically graspable external reality' and this leads them to constructing the event in keeping with their own understanding of that reality. In other words, journalists essentially reconstruct news events in a way that can readily be understood within their own meaning systems.

While 'events' might popularly be assumed to be the main determinant of what is in the news, these appear to be, in fact, only the starting point. It is the ways events are selected and shaped, or mediated, which really determine the final 'product' that is broadcast. Gans' three other categories above, therefore, reflect the main themes of much of the literature in this area.

ORGANISATIONAL ROUTINES

The organisational characteristics of news production seem to be one of the primary factors when addressing both issues relevant to this study; that is, what becomes news and the significance of those involved in the process. The **routines** which ensure news is a product able to be produced fresh each day appear as vital components by many writers on the topic and how the production of news is managed and organised are constantly recurring themes in much of the literature. These routines include both standardised processes and the 'taken for granted' understandings about what is appropriate when selecting content.

Epstein (1973), for example, suggested that the news production process has a set of routines that are familiar to everyone in the news team:

“Assignment editors, who select the events to be covered, must have a clear set of criteria and advance preferences, to reduce the virtually limitless barrage of information to manageable proportions while choosing stories of the type required by the producers. Reporters require some formula for putting together their story, to enable their reports to mesh smoothly into the program (*sic*). Similarly, editors, camera operators and sound crews must have clear precepts about the requisite format of their pieces. Producers, finally, must impose guidelines on all those involved in the production of news stories so that they can meet the budget schedules and standards which must be maintained.”

(P1973: 42)

In an earlier work, *Journalists at Work*, Tunstall (1971) had also noted that reporters are typically oriented towards their sources and professional practices, while editors are more strongly attuned to organisational goals and audience interest. However, Shook (1996) maintained that in television news, the roles of the reporter, photographer and

editor are equally important in forming a “partnership of storytelling skills and talents that contribute equally in reaching out to touch television viewers.”(1996: 277)

Whatever the nature of this division of labour, it is, nevertheless, one of the features of the organisational routines allowing all participants to know their own established roles in the process.

Lippman, an early writer on print journalism, also recognised that the process of producing news was very much rule bound with ‘standardised routines’. He argued that “news is not a mirror of social conditions, but the report of an aspect that has obtruded itself” (1929:341) and that news stories were “the outcome of organisationally determined interests and practices”.(1929; 344). An example of such practices are ‘beat reporters’ or journalists who have an established contact with particular sources and therefore get to cover certain stories because it is quicker to do it that way.

Lippman’s ideas can be traced through the writing of many later authors on the topic such as McQuail (1987) who came to similar conclusions after analysing a number of studies dealing with news content. He suggested that news exhibits a rather stable and predictable overall pattern and that one of the most valuable explanatory concepts in relation to news selection was that of ‘news values’ developed by Galtung and Ruge in 1965. Their work is certainly seminal in understanding the process of news selection.

Galtung and Ruge’s analysis was carried out by examining the output of four newspapers covering crises in the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus in the 1960s. They concluded that the more similar an event’s frequency (timespan) to that of the news medium, the more probable it would become news. Sudden death and dramatic climaxes are thus more newsworthy than slowly developing and long term events. There is also a ‘threshold of amplitude’ where a certain level of violence, size, or numbers, is required before an item is seen as newsworthy and the less ambiguity, the

more likely an event will be noticed. Similarly, the more meaningful in the sense of 'culturally proximate' or relevant to the audience and the more expected, in the sense both of predicted and wanted, the more likely an event will become news. However, the more unexpected or rare, within a certain range of what is meaningful and consonant, the more newsworthy an event also becomes. Events will continue to be news for some time even after the amplitude is reduced and there is an element of composition of producing a balanced diet with little repetition - of news for the audience. Finally events concerning elite nations, elite people and events that can be seen in personal or negative terms will be more likely to become news items. (Galtung and Ruge, 1965).

Tunstall (1971:22) felt that even though Galtung and Ruge's original study was confined to newspapers, the ideas could be adapted to television news' content with the addition of a number of other criteria. In television, for example, the 'visual' is always given preference so that the acquisition of new visual material will often greatly increase the prominence given to an item and news items which include visuals of 'our own reporters', either interviewing a prominent protagonist or talking straight to camera, are preferred. Television uses only a small fraction of the number of stories which newspapers use and even major items tend to be relatively short (approximately 3-6 minutes). There is also a strong preference for 'hard' stories or actuality on television news.

In a later study, Galtung and Ruge (1973) further identified what they saw were the three interrelated factors influencing the selection of news. These were organisational, genre-related, and socio-cultural elements. They claimed that **organisational** factors were the most universal and least flexible since they are deeply embedded in the news institution's own organisational structures. Also, they have particular 'ideological consequences' in the sense that they serve to reinforce existing notions of efficient economies of scale and time. Thus, according to Galtung and Ruge, the news media

prefer 'big' events which are clear and unambiguous and which occur in the time frame of the normal production period of twenty four hours. These events most readily lend themselves to the demands of news values and news worthiness and have an element of cultural proximity that makes them more easily recognised and accepted by the audience.

Genre-related criteria on the other hand, prescribe a preference for some measure of consonance with past news, and a bias towards what is unexpected and novel within the limits of what is familiar to audiences. This further establishes a continuity with audience expectations about what constitutes a news event. As well, some 'balance' among news events is considered necessary in a programme format to ensure that a reasonable variety of news items is presented and repetition of similar stories avoided.

Finally, Galtung and Ruge suggested that 'socio-cultural' influences predispose the audience toward a preference for news events which make sense within the socio cultural context in question. However Biggs and Cobley (1998: 388) point out that while such concepts as 'cultural proximity' and 'consonance' indicate that news must relate to the local context, this says nothing about the nature of the relationship between the portrayal of news and that cultural context. They maintain that Gans (1980: 39-69) himself addresses this topic more directly by indicating, for instance, that American news characteristically affirms American fundamental values. Such 'enduring values', which underpin American news' selection and production, include ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small town pastoralism, individualism, modernism, social order and national leadership. (1979:42) and it is the belief that there is a consensus about these values that underlines their importance in the 'standardising' process.

Shoemaker and Reese (1991) studied television in general, including the news, and found that television content (both news and entertainment) contains a high level of

violence that is consistent over time although much of the violence in news is discussed, rather than portrayed, unless it relates to wars and other conflicts. They also argue that most news is about people already prominent within society and that non-prominent people, what Gans (1979:9) refers to as 'unknowns', are included only because of some sort of deviance or if they have witnessed an 'event'. They also agree that since news tends to reflect the power relations within society, it often comes from 'official' (primarily government and business) channels, and it is left to journalists to find other sources when they are available.

They also considered the influence of organisational processes on news production and concluded, for example, that the longer people work for a media organisation, the more institutionally socialised they become. Media workers learn what their organisation expect of them through feedback from superiors and by observing what stories make it into the finished bulletin. The more effectively they follow the routines of their organisation, the more likely their content is to be used and the more 'professional' they are rated by co-workers. Stories or events which do not have established routines associated with them will be more susceptible to individual influences in the early stages of an issue but events that are congruent with media routines or the definition of 'newsworthiness' are more likely to be covered. **Events** themselves, are also favoured over ambiguous or controversial issues. Ironically, the more powerful or successful people or groups are, the more negative the news coverage of them will often be - somewhat akin to the popular notion of the 'tall poppy' syndrome.

Hartley (1982) maintained that events need to be recognisable or to come from a known, trusted or representative source. He agreed that journalists do use the informal paradigm of 'news values' to determine what is worthy of becoming news, but once items are selected they are also assigned their 'proper place' (1982: 81) in the order of things. He agreed with Hall *et al* (1978) that news reporters rely on 'cultural maps of the social world' (1982:54) in order to make sense for the audience of the unusual and

unexpected events which form the basic content of news. Hall *et al* felt these maps assumed society to be fragmented into distinct spheres of activities such as sport, politics, family life, etc and composed of individuals whose actions are the result of their personal intentions, motives and choices. They maintained that people defined as newsworthy are usually only associated with that sphere of society which is seen as more important than others. And while there is an implicit hierarchical order, therefore, the maps are nevertheless assumed to be consensual. This assumed consensus becomes then, a basic organising principle in news production. (Hartley, 1982:335)

Tuchman (1978), was also interested in the organisational, bureaucratic and professional nature of news production and processing. She concluded that the production of news had to be 'routinised' to ensure that the large number of potential stories available at any one time could be managed. Even though news needs to be produced every day, events of similar magnitude or importance do not necessarily occur so regularly. Some days, events may become news which the previous day would not have been considered. Conversely, there are days when so much happens that some potentially important items are excluded or given relatively little coverage. While journalists were required to report on facts they often had little prior knowledge of them and seldom had adequate time to develop a considered analysis or to locate and interview those involved. These circumstances often increased the risks of mis-reporting or insufficiently covering all the facts:

“ In sum, every story entails dangers for news personnel and for the organisation. Each story potentially affects the newsmen's ability to accomplish their daily tasks, affects their standing in the eyes of their superiors, and affects the ability of the news organisation to make a profit. Inasmuch as the bulletin/newspaper is made up of many stories, these dangers are multiplied and omnipresent.” (1978: 662)

Because of these chronic conditions of uncertainty under which journalists operate, they often employ routine strategies or rituals to minimise the risks inherent in assessing 'facts' and 'objectivity'; for example, forms of reporting that have (traditionally) withstood criticism are routinely adhered to as one form of defence as are certain procedures for verifying facts and 'knowing the truth', attributing contentious interpretations to others and the routine identification of facts which are easily observable.

Another significant mechanism that may be used by newswriters is the categorisation or 'typification' of events in a way that enables them to 'routinise' the task of making sense of the large amount of information that is available and thus being able to control it better. Tuchman described five categories which newswriters use to differentiate the various types of stories they encounter. **Hard** news are events which consist of factual presentations such as a parliamentary debate or a murder, whereas **soft** news contains more human interest: a bus driver who greets every passenger or the birth of quintuplets. **Spot** news is defined as an unexpected event, whereas **developing** news is a story which unfolds more slowly. For example, a fire is spot news, whereas a protest demonstration is a developing story since it is a planned event which is known in advance. **Continuing** news represents a series of stories based on the same subject or event occurring over a period of time. Despite these distinctions the separation is often difficult to apply in reality since they often overlap. Stories may contain elements of several and it is clear the distinction is not adhered to rigidly in many instances. Nevertheless, they provide a sense of control for newswriters when faced with a plethora of material to select from.

Gans (1979) also discussed a form of news control which he called 'nonjournalistic bureaucracy' where 'seniority principles' are applied when reporters are assigned to cover particular stories. In other words, senior journalists are assigned to those stories that are expected to have greater survival, while less experienced journalists are more

often assigned stories which are less likely to be included in the final bulletin. (1979:107).

Another 'defence' mechanism relates to the concept of 'objectivity', which Tuchman felt many journalists hid behind. In a later article, *Objectivity as Strategic Ritual*, she observed that journalists believed that:

“they may be able to mitigate such continual pressures as deadlines, possible libel suits and anticipated reprimands of superiors by being able to claim that their work is ‘objective’”. (1997:660)

In this article she examined three factors, form, content and interorganizational relationships, which she felt helped journalists define an objective fact. These factors, she argued fitted into the organisational definition of what would constitute a 'newsworthy' story so that the reporter could claim objectivity by arguing that appropriate procedures had been followed, such as quoting other people instead of offering a personal opinion, and thereby reducing the risk of libel or misquoting.

Another early observational study by Epstein (1973) of three major US television networks found that:

“...the level of journalism in network news was more or less fixed by the time, money and manpower that can be allocated to it, and that these resources are ultimately determined not by mean or public -spirited broadcasters, but by the requisites which the news division must meet in order to maintain their operations.” (1973: 268).

Epstien identified the primary determinants of news as a combination of the requirements of the media organisation and practical constraints such as time, personnel, equipment and money and suggested that :

“network news is shaped and constrained by certain structures imposed from without, such as government regulation of broadcasting and the economic realities of networks, certain uniform procedures for filtering and evaluating

information and reaching decisions, and certain practices of recruiting journalists who hold, or accept, values that are consistent with organisational needs, and rejects others- all of which are open to analysis.” (1973: 42)

The Glasgow Media Group (1976) noted that television, more than print, is constrained by time factors and that this can be used to exclude stories which might run over time. Newspapers they claimed, can add extra pages, whereas TV is bound by a preset time frame where the only way to include more stories, is to reduce others.

Bennett (1996) writing about what he considered were the paradoxes of the organisational routines involved in news production asserted that:

“economic pressures increasingly drive the news business, while sophisticated communications methods developed by politicians and their communications consultants increasingly shape news content. This, on the back of the budget cuts that have swept through the news industry have made way for low cost, popular infotainment approaches to journalism.” (1996: 169)

Bennett felt that news was caught in a dilemma. Even if a news organisation wanted to change the format of how news is constructed (in an effort to overcome the power of media managers and press agents, for example), there was a business risk of disrupting “the brand identities for a product which was established with an audience.” (1973:169) Similarly, being aware that any change, such as covering stories in greater depth, had a cost increase resulting in reduced profit, also made such changes unlikely. It is interesting to note that Television New Zealand put up similar arguments in their response to the current Government’s proposed charter.(Templeton, 2001)

McQueen (1998) also suggested that, because news is tightly controlled by ideological conventions and deep rooted traditions, it is difficult to change quickly or radically. There is a belief that any violation of the ‘rules’ would disrupt the expectation of the regular news viewers, who might change the channel. (1998:235) These rules become a

clichéd notion of 'a nose for news' which, in reality, trainees develop by working with experienced journalists or editors until they can recognise the type of stories that are acceptable and which can be packaged in ways which the organisation approves of. They come to employ 'self censorship' whereby they are unwilling to waste time on stories they know are divergent from the norm because of likely rejection.

Clayman and Reisener (1998) concluded that the daily editorial meeting, where journalists 'pitch' their stories, is the main mechanism used by editors to manage and control what is acceptable as news, while Winter (1994) claimed that the ability of individual journalists to exercise the news values of their organisation effectively, provides the basis for how their competence is judged by colleagues and superiors. The newsroom can be conceived, therefore, as a cultural milieu or setting, dominated by a particular 'news-culture' which has a 'patterning' effect upon activities and what counts as current news.

Langer in *Tabloid Television* (1998) suggested that much of current news is actually 'non-news, about non-events' and that this 'other news' has come to be as important as 'hard' news. This is because stories which fall into the 'other' category, such as fires, floods, accidents, celebrity lifestyles, heroic acts of humble people, communities in crisis, reversals of fortune and the weather, most often present the best opportunities for visual images of an event. Moreover, they represent a kind of cultural discourse associated with factors such as story telling, gossip, social memory and national identity. This has led, he believes, to links between 'other news' and the growth of the emerging genre of reality television, which has a significant cultural meaning in terms of replicating social reality for the viewer. Reality programmes, such as *Hard Copy*, *Funniest Home Video* and *Police Stop*, he suggests, are a direct spin off from 'other news' and suggests a reason for its growing importance in the news itself.

Langer agreed with Fiske (1992) that this 'tabloid journalism' places the emphasis on topics produced at the intersection of fiction and documentary, by incorporating greater entertainment value as opposed to information at a factual level. This reflected the influence on the news of a market economy philosophy and neo-liberal thinking in the structure of television broadcasting. News has become governed, therefore, by what is primarily a commodity enterprise run by market oriented managers who place particular importance on outflanking the competition above journalistic responsibility and integrity. They see news as being in the 'business of entertainment', like any other television product, and attempt to capture audiences for commercial, not journalistic reasons. This has meant setting aside the values of professional journalism in order to indulge in the "presentation of gratuitous spectacles... overly dependent on filmed images, which create superficiality and lack of information content". This has led, Langer believes, to "trafficking in trivialities and [exploiting] dubious emotionalism". (1998: 67)

A number of other writers have also likened television news to different television genres, such as soap operas and series type programmes. McQuail (1996), for example, saw news as a commodity and as a television genre with features of 'segmentation', 'open ended series format', 'repetition', and a sense of 'nowness'. These features mean that the news has more in common with the soap opera genre and other forms of television production which deal with fiction. (1996: 401). Winch (1997) noted that while journalists themselves distinguished news from entertainment, the fact that television journalism evolves within a medium designed for entertainment, makes it inevitable that such elements will be incorporated into the news:

Fiske(1987) regarded the news as a 'discourse', involving a set of conventions which strive to control and limit the meanings of the events it conveys in an effort to ensure that there is a perceived difference between news and fiction. Despite constantly utilising the devices which entertainment television uses to tell stories, television news

tries to ensure that it continues to be seen as non-fiction. He claimed, though, that textually there was little difference between television news and drama and noted how easily docudrama, in particular, can blur the distinctions. He maintained that as a form of realism, news is generally considered to work through 'metonymy', a basic sense-making mechanism whereby a careful selection of people and incidents can stand for, or represent, a more complex and fuller version of reality.

Further, he suggested that because news was expensive to gather and distribute, it needed to be popular enough to attract an audience of an appropriate size and composition so that audience could be 'sold' on to advertisers. This was particularly important during the prime time period which television news commonly occupies, when advertisements become "wedged apart by programmes"(1987: 281). Fiske also discussed the struggle newsmakers face when trying to make randomly occurring, daily events fit into a predetermined schedule driven by the 'tyranny of the deadline'. The defining factor in the way news is presented is that events have to become ordered and reduced to a short duration. This is achieved by the construction of a 'conceptual grid' into which raw events can be instantly categorised and located.

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF JOURNALISTS: GATEKEEPING

Between questions of what causes an event to become news and who produces it, sits the concept of 'gatekeeping'. This is the process in newsmaking where information, once discovered, is either accepted or rejected at each stage. Items taken further could become news, but are then subjected to further 'gates', through which they may or may not pass. Lewin (1951) suggested that there are forces in front of and behind each gate and as an item passes through it is subjected to further tests or barriers. An example is a story which is defined as important and so gets through the first gate. The problem is the story is in another location and will require extra resources such as travel, meals etc, to enable it to proceed. This becomes another gate, but once through

this, the level of resources, people and equipment committed to the story ensure that it is likely to be aired regardless of what is discovered. Shoemaker refers to this as 'cost becoming value' (1991:23) leading to the story passing easily through all subsequent gates because of the investment. However, gates do not only let stories through, but also operate to ensure that overzealous reporters can not go back and 'dig up' undesirable data!

One form of gatekeeping, as we have seen, relates to the way organisational processes can influence the viability or not of a potential story. However, it is in the role played by newsmakers themselves, and especially journalists, in 'shaping the news' that the concept of gatekeeping has its most useful explanatory function. Shoemaker referred to gatekeeping as 'the oldest construction in communication'(1991: 87), in which messages are,

“selected, created and controlled by various institutional and professional mechanisms designed to order and structure news events. Gatekeeping, is a multi-layered activity where a number of players intervene in the process and each has an impact on the outcome”. (1991: vii.)

Shoemaker and Reese, in *Mediating the Message* (1991), noted that the personal and professional backgrounds and attitudes of journalists can influence media output although it is difficult to determine the extent of this influence. The fact that, as a group, journalists are generally middle class and educated, however, does seem to have an impact on the news product. As they often have substantial discretion in the selection of the words and visuals which they choose to include in a story, their conception of their own role as professionals may also affect content. This is dependent on whether they see their role as interpreting what others do, disseminating information or serving as adversaries to the powerful. Again, gatekeeping, is inextricably linked to routine practices for these ensure that personnel will respond in predictable ways that are

difficult to avoid because, “they form a cohesive set of rules and become integral parts of what it means to be a media professional.” (1991:106).

Ericson *et.al*, (1987) believed that journalists become, in fact, central agents in the reproduction of order in that they actively participate in defining and shaping social deviance and control:

“In terms of their ability to choose what to convey, and the huge audience to whom they convey it, journalists possibly have more influence in designating deviance and in contributing to control than do some of the more obvious agents of control...As such journalists play a key role in constituting visions of order, stability and change” (1978:3)

Schlesinger (1998) concluded, therefore, that journalism was more than a job; it was a **belief system** that underpinned journalists’ conception of their task so that,

“News does not select itself, but is rather the product of judgements concerning the social relevance of given elements and situations based on assumptions concerning their interest and importance”.(1989:165)

The ‘reality’ portrayed, therefore, is always at least in one sense fundamentally biased, simply because of the decision to designate an issue or event newsworthy, and then to construct an account of it in a specific framework of interpretation. News, therefore,

“must be assessed as a cultural product which embodies journalistic, social and political values. It cannot be, and certainly is not, a neutral, impartial, or totally objective perception of the real world”.(1989:167)

The notion of objectivity in the news, therefore, becomes highly problematic since what is included may be contrasting and contesting notions of reality and the journalist may be required to acknowledge, both implicitly and explicitly, the various views of the world which both the journalist and the audience can be assumed to embrace. Whatever the final outcome of this dynamic, it is clear that a journalist’s view of the world is

seldom totally detached from the journalistic practices engaged in. The ideal of professional objectivity and neutrality is therefore largely a myth since journalists are most often called upon to interpret the event and this inevitably activates their own views of the world.

This is exacerbated by the requirements of the daily news cycle where most news is prepared in advance. In other words, a news event is seldom spontaneous or unanticipated. Rather, it is meticulously planned and structured, often leaving little scope for critical comment or investigative journalism. Although events comprising the news are often 'disorderly' and ambiguous, the picture of them which is finally presented in a news item itself, tends to be tidier, simplified and unambiguous, in order to be coherent with an existing and predetermined world view.

Morrison (1999), also questioned the concept of objectivity and claimed it had little actual validity. Journalism, he said, was not about facts alone, but about selecting some facts from others and giving them context. In his view, reporting was a subjective activity by nature and the notion of objectivity,

“no more than a deflection from a selective process that the news media industry has given far too little attention to distilling and explaining...

It is not the facts that are sacred, those are free for anyone to pick up and throw around. The key bit is what you do with them. Far from being free, informed comment, professional analysis as opposed to personal viewpoints, is a complex business which is the stuff of journalism. That is what ought to be free. (1999:5)

Gans (1978) also maintained that journalists apply news judgements, both as professionals and as citizens but that they were not 'free agents' in the process, for they worked in organisations which provided them only limited leeway in selection decisions. This was further reduced by their allegiance to professionally shared values.

Indeed, producing the news is a somewhat circular process, in which material is transmitted from sources to audiences, by broadcasters who have journalists summarising, refining and altering the material in order to make it suitable for reception. This relationship is interdependent, as sources cannot easily get information out unless they rely on the news organisation, who in turn are in a position to mediate the material before it is transmitted to an audience. The audience have in their turn, been 'sold' to advertisers which provides the income for the process to be viable in the first place.

Hoggart (1975) also claimed that the news is biased or at least 'artificially shaped':

"the news is the result of a process of selection so speedy and habitual as to seem almost instinctive. There is so much possible material there have to be filters, devices to select what will be shown and in what order, at what length and with what stress." (1975: 126)

These devices which determine the selection of news items must come to be 'in the blood' because there is no time in the daily routine for each item to be examined using 'first principles'.

Tuchman (1978) also discussed the issue of what she called 'framing' the news or the degree to which the news event is contextualised within the culture and society.

Because news organisations seek to disseminate information that people want and need, they are therefore in a position to shape that knowledge and through this frame citizens learn about themselves and others, of their institutions, leaders and lifestyles.

Tuchman went on to suggest that news imparts 'public character' which transforms mere happenings into publicly discussable events and used the metaphor of 'sacred knowledge' to describes the tacit nature of news values.

Many of the journalists she studied were unable to define or categorise what these news values were, other than to indicate that they were something one acquires 'a nose for'. They seemed to regard news values, and the criteria for them, as a form of intuition

which was gained from experience on the job, or an almost 'inherited' knowledge about what was of interest, or relevance, to the viewer. In her view, though, newswriters, themselves, take an active and influential role in shaping news. Their daily task, she maintained, was the construction of reality itself and in her opinion, it was the front line journalists who made those initial constructions. While social structure produces a set of norms, newswriters, she maintains, then cover, select and disseminate stories about items either identified as interesting or important.

Golding and Elliot (1979) defined news values as "qualities of events, or of their journalistic construction, whose relative absence or presence recommends them for inclusion in the news product". They agree that the more a story embodies accepted news values, the greater chance its inclusion in a bulletin. However, such values do not act as prior guarantors of journalistic objectivity and impartiality. Rather they are "as much the resultant explanation or justification of necessary procedures as their source" (1979: 119). They become working rules guiding the organisation's response to the two immediate determinants of news making, - the perceptions of the audience and the availability of material. (1979:119)

Abel (1997) found that in any newsroom there are many commonly recognised news values, although, she felt, newswriters were not necessarily able to articulate them. Often it was a case of, 'I know a good story when I see one'. Nor do all newswriters agree that such areas as conflict and negativity are emphasised in the news, despite empirical evidence to the contrary. She says that in practical terms, news values and formula are essential for newswriters to do their job effectively. They need to process large amounts of material quickly, sort out the salient information and present it in such a way that the audience will understand it. Underlying news values, therefore, serve to give structure to the chaos of events and provide newswriters with essential guidelines for selection, construction and presentation.

However, Fuller (1996) questioned how much the media (although he was only talking about print) actually reflect the beliefs of the communities which they serve and whether they should aim to provide moral leadership, what the proper relationship between journalism and marketing was, and by association, between journalism and profit making. He suggested that since advertisers pay for most of the news output they are therefore in a strong position to dictate at least what is not in their interests. He discussed the decline in audience share as new technologies come on stream and asked what providers might do to counter this momentum as, for example, interactive mediums threaten the status quo and promise an exciting way of learning about the world for audiences. The future, he suggested will allow the audience more choice and a greater say over content. He maintained the audience will be presented with opportunities to choose exactly what they find interesting, while rejecting material which they don't want to see. The internet and developments in interactive technologies available via cable and satellite will permit viewers to be selective. What Fuller failed to do was acknowledge the power held by the monopolies created to provide this next era of news / entertainment, many of whom are merely amalgamations and partnerships of existing providers.

The Glasgow University Media Group (1976) also explored the idea of television images being manufactured, involving, they said, "a process of extreme technological refinement relying for its communication effectiveness on complex systems of culturally determined message coding" (1976: 39) where there is a clear conflict between the claim of a neutrality of the news and this manufacturing process. News is not a 'value free' exercise because the priorities in the broadcasters' agenda tend to be set by priorities assigned to topics or themes in the wider mass media. Some areas or topics are, therefore, neglected, although not necessarily deliberately:

"The informal daily education of the population is conducted by the mass media which tends to select some topics and ignore others, give precedence to some and not others, frame context and select content, all according to standards

which owe more to custom than malevolent design, and more to unconscious synchronisation of decisions than to conspiracy.” (1976:9)

Cohen and Young (1981) found evidence of this agenda setting in their analysis of how issues of race relations were reported in news while Hall (1980) maintained that agenda setting derives from the belief, within the media, that society operates on the basis of a shared common culture and that the majority of members of any society are in agreement as to what is reasonable and acceptable in terms of a range of norms, values, and ideas:

“It is assumed that we share a common stock of cultural knowledge. This ‘consensual’ viewpoint has important political consequences, when used as the taken-for-granted basis of communication. It carries the assumption that we also all have roughly the same interests in the society, and that we all roughly have an equal share of power in the society...the media are among the institutions whose practices are most widely and consistently predicated upon the assumption of a national consensus”. (1980:55)

However, Hall *et al* (1978) suggested that the news is effectively controlled by those with the most economic and political power in society. Others, such as Hartley (1982), maintain that this view does not take sufficient account of the ‘negotiation’ which takes place within a society over these values and of the background of ‘consensus’ and agreement about what constitutes ‘normality’ in contrast to which events are defined as ‘negative or ‘disruptive’. Biggs and Cobley (1998: 388:99) questioned, however, whether news does not simply reproduce the *status quo* by reinforcing the validity of these values so that the news should more appropriately be understood as the outcome of both professional journalistic skills and the need to maintain and reinforce a consensus within a society.

In the end, as Schlesinger (1987) pointed out, we can acknowledge that news is likely to be constructed within a framework of firm expectations which are used to guide the deployment of available technical and personnel resources and which largely determine what gets covered. It was his contention that “the doings of the world are tamed to meet the needs of a production system, which is bureaucratically organised” (1987: 74)

EXTERNAL FORCES

The external forces influencing news content and selection, such as technology, government policies and outside sources, have come to be essential components for television news because without them viewers would be limited to the presentation of ‘tell stories’ (Tuchman, 1978) where studio presenters simply relate the story to camera, sometimes, as in the early days of television, with the aid of maps, diagrams or stills.

Gans (1979) believed that the news was strongly influenced by audiences and organisational standards, but in the final analysis, he identified the news source as exerting the most powerful influence. He maintained, that in the perpetual tug-of-war that is news gathering, powerful sources outmanoeuvre the media apparatus and, in particular, journalists, more often than *vice versa*, and that as the suppliers of raw material for news, these sources tend to have the greatest impact on content because,

“...access reflects the social structure outside the newsroom and because that structure is hierarchical, the extent to which information about various parts of America is available to journalists is differentially distributed”. (1979: 81).

He concluded, therefore, that he had “not so much written about journalists as about the political and economic underpinnings of the dominant culture in America.” (1979: XV)

Gans argued that this was because the availability of an event depended largely on the accessibility of appropriate sources, or what he termed ‘actors’. Otherwise, news

would be more difficult to produce and much less interesting. He also thought the process was symbiotic, for if reporters could not gain access to informed sources, much of the content of news stories could not be covered and disseminated but sources who could not gain access to the media would not, in turn, have their message heard. This symbiotic relationship worked in the interests of both parties who shared a common concern in selecting a news event which equally served their purposes. However, this 'game' did not take place on an even playing field. Economically and politically more powerful sources, for example, had easier access to the news media, and were sought out for comment more readily than those seen as less powerful or influential. Politicians, 'experts' and those in other positions of power, were more likely to be consulted and ultimately reported, than sources that were less advantaged or who possessed lower status and power.

Herman and Chomsky (1997) similarly argued that the news is dominated by the interests of the socially powerful. The news, they maintained, is so subordinated to corporate and conservative interests, that its function can only be described as that of 'elite propaganda'. In order to understand how the news works in this way, they developed the metaphor of 'filters' which operate to legitimate and promote dominant interests. By observing the institutional structure and how it is organised, controlled and funded, it is possible to tease out more clearly whose interests it serves.

The first 'filter' relates to the **ownership** of the news media which has become concentrated in the hands of a few large corporations owned by the wealthy, and whose conservative, corporate interests are reflected over those of other social groups. Examples include more prominent coverage of business as compared with labour issues, with business coverage tending to focus on the share market, managerialism, productivity and corporate activity. Labour reporting is generally in negative terms such as strikes and wage claims which are represented as expenses against business.

The second filter, **advertising**, recognises that advertisers can exert considerable influence over news content and style if it is deemed unfavourable to them. Advertisers expect 'a proper environment' in which to promote products and services and, if this is not provided, may threaten to withdraw to more 'agreeable' media outlets. The result is pressure on news' content to conform to the requirements of advertisers.

The third filter, **newsmakers**, refers to the use of regular 'beats' or sources to gain expert comment which can be used to provide a context of meaning for the news item. This is often regarded as more 'objective' because it comes from what Herman and Chomsky call 'primary definers' but, of course, these tend to be selected from a narrow range of people who are most likely to represent dominant interests.

The final type of filter, **flak**, refers to the negative feedback pressure groups may exert by complaining about news content as being, for example, 'inaccurate' or 'unbalanced'. Herman and Chomsky noted that it is mostly used by corporations and government agencies to obtain apologies and control content which they feel has been harmful to them. They noted that the 'general population' are seldom given voice through these means.

These filters, then, operate to sustain powerful interests so that journalists, especially, find they lack any real power in the process and can be likened, according to Herman and Chomsky, to workers on an assembly line who have no control over the final form of the product they are involved in producing.

McQueen (1998) explored the notion of powerful ideological pressures existing both in and outside broadcasting institutions and pointed to issues such as the selection policy for staff, (which favours middle class, educated people), the process where journalists quickly learn what stories to concentrate on by recalling rejection statistics, and the outside pressures applied by both advertisers and sources as to what is acceptable, as

some of the factors which exert these pressures. McQueen saw that the growing dependence on official, 'legitimate' sources for news, causes a compromise in independence and objectivity in that there is a danger of "reproducing the definitions of the rich and powerful, almost by mistake, or at least by complacency, brought about by the regular reliance on such sources for material" (1998: 16).

He suggested that television news universally depends on a number of sources such as large news agencies, governments and their agencies, political parties, emergency services and a large number of other 'recognised' institutions, to provide a 'uniform agenda' which its editors regard as 'interesting' or 'important'. What becomes news on television, therefore, will be determined by this agenda but who sets the agenda is a complex and problematic question. Not only have the criteria for 'importance' changed over time, but also the ways in which the news is packaged. It is bought and sold like any other product and news organisations compete with each other in their dependency on regular news sources.

Fowler (1991) also supported the contention that the news is heavily influenced by external economic and political forces:

"News is not a natural phenomenon emerging from 'reality', but a product. It is produced by an industry, shaped by the bureaucratic and economic structure of that industry, by the relations between the media and other industries and, most importantly, by relations with government and with other political organisations [so that it] reflects, and in return shapes, the prevailing values of a society in a particular historical context". (1991: 222)

Ericson *et al* (1989) looked specifically at one set of powerful sources: those representing the law and criminal justice system such as the police and courts, as well as legislators. They found that it is the news organisation, not the events, that create the news and that this organisation included not only the news media institutions,

themselves, but also news sources, who work out an ongoing relationship with journalists and decide what information they are willing to provide routinely. While these news sources must conform to recognised news discourse if they wish to maintain ongoing access, the relationship is interdependent because each party becomes reliant on the other to provide either information or the channels of dissemination.

Palmer (2000) also explored the relationship between journalists and their sources and argued that it has two essential components. The first is the reason why journalists approach sources and how they choose between them, and the second is why sources approach journalists and allow (or do not allow) themselves to be approached. A fundamental issue in the relationship related to the values which determined which events would be selected as newsworthy, and which would be neglected. He claimed that:

“the landscape of news is changing. Increasing competition, brought about by the use of new technologies have enabled print based media to often beat broadcast media to breaking stories. The use of internet, web sites and the ability to include digital, on- line pictures in text stories has caused the media to rethink how to best maintain their positions in the market. The growth of the role of press agents or ‘spin doctors’ has also had an impact on how the news is constructed. It is becoming a site of struggle for who determines what constitutes news. The nature of the news source, or provider of information for a story, has significantly altered. It is now common for a news source to control the shape and content of information flow by providing it in a form which is readily usable, at a time when little editorial influence is possible.” (2000:vii)

An example of how news can be externally controlled by sources is described by Tulley and Fountain (1995). They explored the difficulties faced by journalists who were actively obstructed, when trying to cover the issue of the reform of the New Zealand health system, by what should have been a legitimate source of information: the

government. Tulley and Fountain claim that the challenge, and indeed the responsibility of the media is not merely to inform, but also to explain and evaluate and to assist the public to make sense of an issue. Journalists on this story, however, faced the 'drying up' of information from traditional news sources, combined with an extensive advertising campaign, on behalf of the government, disguised as documentary. They discovered that the dissolution of elected Health Boards meant the flow of public information from such sources ceased and was replaced with a process by which health managers were able to control the flow of information on the grounds of 'commercial sensitivity'. Journalists were forced to resort to using the Official Information Act with all the associated delays and difficulties that entailed. This also led to delays in the publishing of research data about the situation, further frustrating attempts to construct alternative views on the issue. This study, then, showed in detail the strategies powerful political forces can employ to manipulate and control information for their own purposes.

Roth (1998) examined how news interviewers 'conceive' of their sources in the course of questioning them and that the public persona of interviewees is actually constructed during the process. The interview, produced for and addressed to, an 'overhearing audience', is a mechanism which enables the source to be legitimated in the eyes of the viewer. Reporters are inclined to recruit new sources for this purpose, who have official bureaucratic status primarily because these 'social actors' fulfil the criteria for 'reliable' sources.

Cohen (1987) also discussed the ways in which the interview is used in news stories to ensure information is presented in an authoritative manner and to give the story its credibility. He maintained that news interviews were not, as Tuchman (1974) had earlier suggested merely 'routinizing the unexpected' but were in fact devices for collecting material for news stories ensuring the voice of authority could be maintained. It was his contention, however, that even though much of the information collected by

journalists in the course of their work was obtained by interviewing experts, the material could subsequently be utilised in a number of ways.

However, Sigal (1987) noted that ordinary people are not included in the news unless they do something which makes them 'not ordinary', such as rescuing a child from a fire or witnessing a murder which has not been seen by anyone else with 'more credibility'. Even though Sigal was writing about print journalism it is interesting to note that he also found a clear tendency for reporters to rely on 'routine channels of information' even in organisations who could afford to gather news through whatever channels they chose. The four primary sources they relied on were **official proceedings** such as trials, legislative hearings, press releases, press conferences; **'non-spontaneous events'** such as speeches, ceremonies etc; **informal channels** including background briefings, leaks, non-governmental proceedings and meetings and reports from other news media; and finally, **the reporter's enterprise** or those activities reporters engaged in on their own initiative such as some interviews, spontaneous events witnessed firsthand and independent research. Only the latter is not a 'routine' channel of information but it tends only to be used as a last resort.

The Glasgow University Media Group (1976) mapped and decoded all television news broadcasts in the United Kingdom over a six month period to discover how the topic of 'industrial relations' news was handled. Their analysis suggested that news favoured certain individuals and institutions, giving them more time and status:

"The news is produced on a day to day basis by professional media elite who whilst doing their best, embody in their routine practice ideological assumptions which reinforce certain stratified cultural perceptions of society and how it should, ought and does work". (1976: 2)

They came to the conclusion (reinforced in later studies in 1980, 1982, 1985, 1993) that television news tends to be biased in the sense that it often violates its formal

obligation to give a 'balanced account' despite the fact, for example, that the BBC's licence required it to refrain from editorialising on its news programmes.

Harrison, (1985) supported the Glasgow group's findings that television news is concerned with "the reproduction of information within the realms of dominant consciousness" where, he says, it plays the 'front-runner' role of cultural legitimisation and Jones (1985) also explored how the news media are used with increasing effect during industrial disputes. He argued that both employers and trade unions have used the media in their efforts to communicate with the public, and that there have been times when the media were used as the best, and often the only means, of rapid contact between the parties.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) further explored the impact the relationship between journalists and their sources, has on content. They maintained that because journalists seldom witness the event on which they are reporting, they must rely heavily on other sources of information in order to tell the story. It is then the journalist's task to sift through the data and construct a news story which is accurate and complete. However, although there are many different sources available, they are not all equally likely to be contacted for information.

Indeed, Bennett (1996) reported that,

"in most newsrooms, journalists now have little licence to investigate, and even less incentive to write detailed critical stories... while politicians and their consultants have acquired more sophisticated techniques for reading the public mind and managing the information flow of government and interest organisations." (1996: ix)

Even a casual look at the nightly news shows, for example, reveals that the bulk of important news is devoted to the official actions of the government.

Roshco (1975), an ex-journalist, in describing his 'journey' from newsman to news source to a sociologist studying the news, maintained that:

“the interplay between news media and the rest of society is a matter of practical concern to those who wager their careers on the ploys and by-play of newsmaking. This fascinating game, wherein the stakes can become dangerously high for some players, is governed by rules that for the most part are unwritten.”(1975: 34)

His claim was that institutional pressures were a more powerful influence on news output than individual behaviour or choice and that news sources, in particular, are an important influence on the news. Since journalists seldom actually witness a news event unfolding, they are forced into a heavy reliance on other 'official' news sources.

Atkinson (1994) suggested, however, that the media play an active role in the construction of reality. Because news is increasingly reliant on official and institutional sources, events have become a weaker constraint on content. The structure of television news programmes, therefore, has become the dominant factor:

“The structure of the nightly news does not result from iron-clad technological determinism, or from free choice, but from a convoluted series of pressures - historical, political, economic, legal, technological, bureaucratic and cultural, which evolve out of ongoing attempts to balance opposing forces and exploit the distinctive strengths of an audio visual and telegraphic medium.”(1994:11)

Broadcasting and television news are subject, therefore, to a wide variety of political and cultural influences which inevitably impose constraints upon the news production process and in turn the 'routines' under which professional newsmakers operate. In recent years the influence of restructuring and economic rationalism have created a climate in which commercial interests and the generation of income have become an overwhelming influence on the nature of television news (Day, 1994, 2000; Smith, 1996; Spicer *et al* , 1996) The move away from a predominantly 'public service' model

towards a state owned enterprise in New Zealand, for example, has required TVNZ to compete with other broadcasters in the market and has also dramatically changed the nature of the tasks and the general orientation of news professionals (Edwards, 1992; Winter, 1989; Geary, 1999; Cook, 2000; Johnstone, 1999). Although these political influences are not the main focus of this thesis, they must, at least, be acknowledged here as the foundation of the context in which news production processes are undertaken.

Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study was essentially a participant observation approach. The observational phase was supplemented by informal, unstructured interviews combined with the video recording of selected incidents, the collection of a range of studio and production paperwork, plus the video taping of news bulletins broadcast during the study. Newspapers for each day of the study were also collected in order to cross reference details in the stories. Much of the supplementary material was also used to carry out some content analysis on the data.

The method was chosen in order to maximise the accuracy of the written account while optimising the factual details associated with news selection and construction.

Ethnographers have long used the method to examine the practices of other cultures and as such the methodology of ethnography is ideally suited to coping with the examination of oral, aural and visual experiences, which are the components in most news stories.

Much seminal work on a range of social organisations and cultures has been undertaken by observers who have according to McCall and Simmons (1969), “abided in the organisations through the course of their studies” (1969:1). They maintain that the conceptual framework and empirical data of fields such as sociology, anthropology, criminology, social work and political science are heavily indebted to this type of field study. Travers (1964) also discusses the use of participant observation in educational research. He maintains that “Faith in the value of observing behaviour would appear to be the cornerstone in teacher education” (1964: 215). It is his view that observation without an understanding of the environment in which it is carried out is not a useful device by which to collect qualitative data. He endorses the idea of the researcher being more than an observer and the importance of participating fully in the activities which are the object of the observation. Likewise, Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) explore

the issue of the merits of where observers place themselves in relation to the subject(s) being studied. They maintain that contemporary sociological fieldwork has its origins in the social reform movement, which found its strongest expression in the Chicago School of at the turn of the twentieth century. They relate how reformers believed that descriptions of the conditions in which the poor lived would call attention to their plight and lead to social change and improvements in those conditions. Robert Park, (1996) a leading figure in the Chicago School was clearly an advocate of participant observation as he urged his students to observe life firsthand saying,

“Go sit in the lounges of the luxury hotels and on the doorsteps of the flophouses; sit in on the Gold Coast settees and on the slum shake-downs; sit in Orchestral Hall and in the Star and Garter Burlesk. In short gentlemen, go get the seat of your pants dirty in real research” (1996: 281)

A number of strengths in participant observation, are discussed by McCall and Simmons (1969), who maintain that despite the appearance of being largely unstructured, actually makes use of a number of methods and techniques which maximise discovery and description, rather than a systematic theory testing of preconceived hypothesis.

Given that on any day, the television news stories which finally go to air are significantly influenced by a wide variety of formal and informal factors, participant observation provided the most appropriate method for acquiring relevant information and data.

A further underlying theoretical assumption which influenced the choice of research methodology was that in the current commercial climate, conventional newsworthiness criteria are sometimes in competition with economic factors as a result of the need for TVNZ to return a profit to Government. The TVNZ news must now compete with other television news broadcasts from the independent channel Television Three. State owned television channel (TVNZ) is required by legislation to return a dividend to the government as well as fund other aspects of broadcasting. Thus the need to maximise

audiences has led to the commercial aspects of broadcasting exerting a powerful influence over how news professionals see their role. The participant observer methodology provides a useful approach by which the degree to which commercial as opposed to professional criteria operate, in the selection and construction of news items.

In a commercial environment, the news as a commodity and the concern to maximise audience share takes on greater importance. The participant observer approach, also provides the opportunity to research how these factors operate in the field, by witnessing and recording the daily routines associated with news production. This provides an important justification for the use of this research methodology since it allows for a more detailed investigation of the influences and effects of a wide variety of forces, operating on the content and format of a television news item.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION.

This approach is dominated by first hand observation and participation of the observer in the contextual day to day activities associated with the phenomenon under investigation, combined with the recording of relevant information. However, as McCall & Simmons (1969) point out, it is probably misleading to regard the participant observation as a single method. They prefer to call it a blend of methods and techniques employed to study certain types of subject matter.

“This characteristic blend of techniques, as exemplified by the work of the lone anthropologist living amongst an isolated people, involves some amount of genuinely social interaction in the field with the subjects of the study, some direct observation of relevant events, some formal and a great deal of informal interviewing, some counting, some collection of documents and artefacts, and an open-endedness in the direction which the study takes.” (McCall and Simmons, 1969:1)

The method is generally considered to add a qualitative dimension to research which involves data collection, together with the interpretation of the meaning of observed

behaviour and events. There are however a number of obvious limitations to this approach, not the least of which is that what is observed may be highly selective since the mere act of looking incorporates an element of subjectivity. But much the same is true of all scientific observation. Perception is in large part an interpretative process whereby what counts as relevant information is a function of the particular purpose of the research and the context within which observations are recorded. The important point is to recognise this inherent point of view involved in observation rather than maintain a masquerade of objectivity.

The method does not always lend itself to the standardisation of procedures as in testing, laboratory work, or other forms of quantitative data collection. As such, questions of reliability, validity and generality of results have been raised about the method of participant observation, along with criticisms of “observer bias”, “personal equation”, “going native” and “hearsay”. However, McCall & Simmons (1969:4) dismiss such critiques and talk of proponents “championing the method as being less likely to be biased or unreliable because it provides more internal checks and is more responsive to the data than the more imposed systems of other methods.” Moreover, they claim “since it is not restricted to static cross sectional data, but does allow the real study of social processes and complex interdependencies in social systems, participant observation is richer and more direct” (1969:4).

A wide range of literature in Social Sciences has examined the role of participant observation in field studies. Hansen et al (1999) identified a number of these studies in which participant observation was particularly valuable in obtaining results which could not be obtained by any other method. Burgess (1993) also outlines such advantages while later and more detailed field manuals by Lofland and Lofland (1984) Bernard (1994) Hamersley and Atkinson (1986), and Hamersley (1992), point to the distinct advantages of the method of participant observation in advancing an understanding of the workings of complex organisations and institutions .

A number of earlier studies on news production used participant observation as the method for obtaining data. Herbert Gans 1979 study of the NBC News production,

published in *Deciding What's News* (Gans, 1979) is regarded as a founding document in the field. Other examples are Tuchman's (1973) study of how journalistic routines provide the basis for the management of unexpected news events utilised participant observation. Sigelman's (1973) study of the organisational policies designed to ensure conflict avoidance between reporters and their superiors, and Lang & Lang (1953) who examined the strategic use of "objectivity" as a means of warding off criticism in news production, all used participant observation in whole or in part when collecting relevant data.

Hansen et al (1999) also recorded a series of studies developed to further the interests of organisational and bureaucratic practices, as well as exploring the professional nature of both news production and news processing. (Epstien, 1973; Althede, 1974; Tuchman, 1978; Schlesinger, 1987; Golding and Elliot, 1979; Fishman, 1980, and Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1987.)

Having adopted the participant observation a number of issues needed to be decided before beginning the study. These included the design of the project, where and when to undertake the study, how to gain permission to observe the processes and negotiate access, establishing field relationships with participants, and collecting and analysing data.

Hansen et al (1999) provide a model and describe the steps that constitute a working paradigm for the method. These depend upon a series of sequenced research stages, each of which form an indispensable part of the ethnographic research process. They come down to six analytically distinct (but in practice typically overlapping) stages which can be identified as: design, access, field relationships, collecting and recording data, analysis and discussion. (1999:49)

DESIGN:

The design of the project was determined by the desire to observe the daily patterns of activity and routines in a typical television newsroom and obtain further information by

way of questions, while collecting as much recorded and written material associated with the production of news as possible. Hansen (1999) observes that the potential stumbling block to any participant observation is most characteristically, access. They give an account of these difficulties and partial refusals, as well as the limitations which are often placed upon would-be observers. Two factors largely determined where this study would best be conducted. The first was the desire to select a popular and widely viewed news programme. This led to the selection of TVNZ Channel One as being the most suitable candidate for the study. TVNZ news on Channel One is the most popular news programme and consistently rates the highest audience. It is significantly ahead of its closest competitor, Channel Three.

Evidence of this can be found in the ratings figures provided by AC Neilson.

For example the week of January 25th to 31st 1999

Channel One	Channel Three
TVNZ TV1	CanWest TV3
607,6000 viewers	282,9000 viewers

Week of February 8th to 14th 1999

Channel One	Channel Three
TVNZ TV1	CanWest TV3
581,000 viewers	274,000 viewers

(Source AC Neilson as reported in Sunday Star Times Sunday Jan 31st and Feb 14th 1999)

Secondly, the author had previous contacts within TVNZ, which proved invaluable both in terms of negotiating access via management, and in establishing useful working relationships with news workers. Obtaining the information required to carry out such a project necessitated reasonably free access being granted on an ongoing basis. The researcher had teaching commitments preventing extended stays in the more distant

location. Therefore it was important that after the initial data collection phase in Auckland contact could be maintained via the geographically closer newsroom in Wellington. In the end ongoing contact was maintained and follow up visits were made at regular intervals throughout the project. Sitting in on news conference meetings at some of these subsequent visits provided the project with valuable reinforcement of the data collected earlier.

ACCESS:

Access to the newsroom and news collecting processes proved more difficult than at first anticipated. Considerable time was spent negotiating access and the conditions under which the field work would be carried out. The initial meeting with the Bureau Editor in Wellington began badly when the editor had difficulty accepting the relative merits of the research project. Only after considerable assurance was given that the study was more of an analytical observation of the process of news construction, rather than a critical analysis, was it possible to overcome this resistance. The initial research design called for spending two weeks in the Wellington News room gathering data and accompanying news teams during the collection of news stories. However, permission was also required from the Head of News in Auckland since it was here that final decisions were often made on news selection and the final construction and form of the news programme.

After several letters, phone calls and emails it became increasingly obvious that final permission might not be forthcoming, and therefore a face to face meeting was arranged with the Head of news in Auckland, to inform him of the details of the study. During the meeting it was discovered that a previous researcher had in his words, "let him down" and he was hesitant to "get burned" again. A written outline of the research was provided and discussed, and approval was finally given. In addition he suggested one week in the Auckland newsroom and a second week in Wellington would likely provide more comprehensive data than confining it to one location. The writer provided a letter of introduction which was circulated to all the staff in both news rooms, identifying the

researcher and outlining the project. This proved to be valuable in terms of establishing field relationships that were a vital element in the data collection phase. The actual participant observation began during the first two weeks of February 1999.

FIELD RELATIONSHIPS:

The daily routine undertaken during the fieldwork stage involved being present in the news room in time for the Breakfast News (6.00am). Thereafter the researcher remained as close as possible to the different professionals responsible for creating news stories throughout the day until the final 6pm news bulletin was broadcast. This period constitutes the data collection phase of the participant observation and required intense and concentrated attention to as many elements of the process as possible. Dean, Eichhorn & Dean (1969) in discussing the establishment of field relations say:

“Because the relationship between the research worker and the person in the field is the key to effective observation and interviewing, much depends on initial field contacts. They often determine whether the door to research will be open or shut. “ (1969:68)

They also point out that although each field setting is unique, a few principles guiding entry into the field are worth noting. These are:

1. Generally, field contacts should move from persons in the highest status and authority positions down to the actual participants in the field situation of the study.
2. Field workers need to have a plausible explanation of the research, so that it makes sense to the people whose co-operation is being sought.
3. The field worker should try to represent the study as honestly as possible.
4. As the first research step, the field worker should have in mind some rather routine fact-gathering that makes sense to those in the field. (Eichorn & Dean, 1969:69)

They maintained that these simple steps ensure a better level of acceptance and invariably lead to the collection of better data.

Strauss (1969) also identified two general characteristics of field work which researchers need to be aware of. The first is the proposition that rarely can the proposition "A causes B" be assumed. And secondly, it is seldom that a fieldworker enters the field with a specific hypothesis. Rather, he is "testing" implicitly or explicitly the relevance of a large number of hypothesis, guesses and hunches. (1969:25)

Hansen et al (1999) also discussed the status of the participant observer in some detail. They highlight the variations in results achieved depending upon where the researcher situates themselves within the body being studied. They see a participant observer as someone actively taking part in the activities being studied but who nevertheless remains outside the group in order to maintain more independence and autonomy. Gold (1969) also refers to four possible roles for the researcher undertaking such fieldwork. At one extreme he describes the "complete participant" who is unknown to those being observed, and at another extreme the "complete observer" who is entirely removed from social contact with the subjects of the study. Somewhere in the middle is the "participant as observer" who develops relationships with the subjects and establishes a mutual awareness of each other's roles. The "observer as participant" on the other hand requires a more formal and less personal approach. (1969:33) Gold maintains that it is only through experience that researchers can determine where best to place themselves on this continuum. Nachmias & Nachmias (1996) focus on similar categories when discussing field research (1996:281).

Hansen *et al* also describe a number of studies of this type which have been carried out by former, novice or paid in-situ journalists. They observed that:

"these participant observers, though avoiding a number of the usual problems of access, and undoubtedly securing an intimate vantage point on news processes, may also have been constrained by having to carry out a job of work and thus being less mobile or flexible in what they could pursue. On the other hand observer participants who remain outside the group studied may lose something of that insider knowledge, but are likely to have more autonomy in their movements and ability to follow-up news avenues of interest" (1999:46)

What occurred in this case was in part due to the television production experience of the researcher. This made it possible to actively engage in the production processes associated with many of the news stories. The engagement ranged from the relatively mundane activity of helping carry equipment to film stories, to actively assisting in the setting up of equipment. In one case, the researcher was required to drive the news camera car around a motor racing circuit, with the camera operator strapped in the back filming an ex-world champion motor cycle ace. (Agostini)

Other activities included assisting with setting up and running live-to-studio crosses during bulletins, and in one case, becoming a true participant observer by taking part in a breakfast television news story.

During time spent in the press gallery, access was also granted to attend the Prime Minister's press conference. In addition, the normal daily round of parliamentary briefings and select committee hearings was also attended. Taking an active part in these activities enabled useful relations to be forged with the many participants in this study. Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987) describe this as enabling the researcher to attain an "honorary insider" status which can often enhance the extent to which confidences might be shared. (1987:52) Hansen et al (1999) describe this situation as providing "an intimate vantage point on news processes." (1999:510. They also maintained that such a status is particularly desirable but not always achievable.

Following the collection of material used to construct each story, the research task was to observe how the story was written, edited both in text and on tape, and finally presented in the bulletin. At the end of each day it was necessary to choose whether to watch the bulletin "go to air" from the control room, or sit in the newsroom and observe and share the reactions of the journalists. It is in the control room, a site of intense activity, that all the various elements of the day's stories are broadcast. Even at this late stage, final details such as captions, graphics, news reader introductions and live crosses are inserted and the bulletin is broadcast. During this process, the news production staff tend to sit and watch the bulletin on a TV set. This takes the form of an informal "peer assessment" session where the merits and negative aspects of the stories

are discussed by the group. The decision was made to observe both these processes at different times during the research. Tuchmans (1997) comments identify how news staff learn to ensure their stories “fit into the policies of the broadcaster and part of this involves informal and formal discussion of the qualities of their individual news stories. (1997:664)

COLLECTION AND RECORDING OF DATA:

Participant observation involves three main methods of data collection. The observation phase, discussion and interviews with staff plus the scrutiny of relevant documents. The initial daily data collected using observation techniques was in written note form. A diary was carried at all times and used to make notes about what was being observed or discussed either at meetings or during the processing of stories. The diary was also used while carrying out informal, unstructured interviews with journalists and crews. These were invariably undertaken while ‘on the run’ between stories. The notes from these were generally quite brief and served more as memory prompts for daily writing up sessions which occurred as and when the opportunity presented itself. If all else failed this was done each evening. More in depth details were recorded in replies to interview questions, as it proved difficult to recall every detail of those at a later date. Some of the interviews were recorded on audio tape but this was only possible in situations where the respondent was not constantly moving. During one of the return visits to wellington permission was also granted to video tape a morning news conference which provided valuable information.

As stated earlier Participant Observation typically deploys a number of different methods of collecting data. Though each on its own may be considered to have its weaknesses, combined they provide a solid source of evidence and findings which can be triangulated.

Triangulation involves an attempt to use more than one form of data to test a hypothesis. Since any form of observation requires a degree of inference on the part of the researcher, other less interpretative methods of data collection are regarded as

desirable in order to increase the reliability of the data. A decision was made therefore to triangulate the data by collecting other material on events that became news. The daily newspapers throughout the research period were also collected. These provided another facet to and often further information on many of the stories which television news broadcast throughout the project. Further triangulation was obtained by making video recordings of each day's news bulletins during the study. The researcher also managed to obtain copies of the agendas of the daily news teleconference. These become the daily Production List (See appendix A) and can be seen as the menu from which the days stories are most likely to come. The Production List in turn generates a daily Rundown Sheet which is effectively the template which guides each days stories. The list generated each morning contains all the stories being actively followed and therefore likely to make the news that day. The stories are allocated their position and duration on this sheet as can be observed in Appendix B

The studio scripts for each bulletin were also obtained, providing a hard copy of everything which was on the video recordings of the bulletins..

The researcher also managed to obtain samples from daily news wires, as used in all news rooms to source potential stories. These were valuable in determining the vast number of events which occurred each day, and how few of them were followed up to become stories.

In some of the stories being shadowed the raw footage was also able to be obtained providing valuable information as to what had been collected and how much of that remained in the final story.

All these separate sources of data provided the basis for the triangulation of the original observations. Subsequent contact was maintained by informal visits enabling ongoing discussion and email interviews with a number of staff enabled the researcher to gain additional information.

The observations began tentatively as it was initially necessary to blend into many the events being shadowed in an effort to avoid having an impact on them. If anybody involved in a story being shadowed had objected to the researchers presence, obtaining

data would have become difficult. Throughout the research it was necessary to make judgements about how to best obtain the relevant data. Being at a reporters side as they set up and carried out interviews, or helping the crew carry out minor tasks enabled the researcher to be part of the team covering the stories and enhanced the observational context. At no stage did the presence of the researcher appear to disrupt the process of news production. For example, once they were familiar with the nature of the study, the Prime Minister's Press Secretary and Media Liason staff were content to have the researcher present during the Prime Minister's interview. However, being so actively involved with the crew sometimes created difficulties in taking notes and recording data at the time. Often it was necessary to record observations, immediately after a story was completed. However, the nature of news gathering also means that once material for a story has been completed, the crew are back on the road to the next location, which sometimes created added difficulties in recording notes.

Carrying a tape recorder for field interviews proved impractical and too intrusive. This was quickly abandoned.

Wimmer/Domineck (1997) point out that one of the limitations of participant observation is that the mere presence of the researcher can have an influence on the activities being observed. Acknowledging this possibility and as far as possible minimising this effect was regarded as an important function of the methodology and there was no evidence to suggest the presence of the researcher unduly influenced the situation. However, since the researcher had no real comparison with a situation where no observer was present, this remained difficult to establish.

Hansen (1999) also point out that not having "normal" activities against which to compare observational data is somewhat limiting. But they also identified a potential constraint to effective data collection, which did become evident, namely the influence of managerial and editorial pressures which it were sometimes difficult to identify and yet directly affected the outcome or direction of stories. Questions posed at the level of managerial staff, concerning policy issues over news, received no reply. A number of requests for information concerning ultimate responsibility for decisions, in terms of

final editorial control and the costs of news production appeared to be issues of commercial sensitivity and no information was obtained on these elements of the news production process.

Currin (1990) identified similar difficulties, maintaining that: “ it is difficult to gain regular access as a participant observer to senior levels of management... and that managerial controls are rarely exercised with continuous force” (1990:144). Only issues involving legal and ethical matters were where these controls observable. TVNZ have a manual for news and current affairs production which identify those areas matters which needed to be referred to management.

GROUNDING THEORY

Underlying this research was the attempt to use a measure of analytic deduction to observe the behaviour of a group of people within a particular institutional news context, to determine whether or not the activities observed constituted either a set of defined practices or random events. The qualitative research method therefore differs considerably from more quantitative approaches as noted by Frankfort, Nachmias & Nachmias (1996). They advanced the view that in quantitative research the goal is often to :

“either falsify, modify or provide support for existing theory. They accomplish this goal deductively by deriving hypothesis from theory and using the data they collect to statistically test the hypothesis. Qualitative field research moves in the opposite direction, using the process called **analytic induction**. Researchers collect data, formulate hypothesis based on the data, test their hypothesis using the data and attempt to develop theory. The theory they develop is called grounded theory because it arises out of and is directly relevant to the particular setting under study”.(1996:294)

Throughout the collection of data therefore, constant effort was made to formulate hypotheses and check these against later observations in order to substantiate or not the

validity of the theories thus generated. Chamberlain (1999) describes the essential features of this approach as:

“...grounded, or emerging from the data, and not from a predetermined hypothesis or formulation. Secondly, that the theory of the phenomenon in question must be developed, and should be more than a descriptive account.

The researcher moves from a descriptive classification of events and facts to an abstract theory of the phenomenon which accounts for relationships and processes.” (1999:184)

Using such an approach, the data collection and analysis were deliberately inter-related, whereby the initial data analysis was used to direct further data collection. This was intended to provide the researcher with opportunities for increasing the “density” and “saturation” of recurring notions and ideas while also providing opportunities to follow up unexpected avenues and findings. The interweaving of data collection and analysis in this way was also intended to increase insights and clarify the parameters of emerging theory. A further reason for choosing this approach was that initial data collection and preliminary analysis could ideally take place prior to carrying out a survey of existing literature. This ensure that the analysis was strongly based in the data and that pre-existing constructs did not necessarily shape the analysis and subsequent theory formation.

Chamberlain (1999) stresses however that reading and integrating literature is delayed, not omitted, and should be regarded as forming an important part of the theory development.

CONTENT ANALYSIS:

A major assumption underlying what constitutes the news is the degree to which available space in the final bulletin may operate as an influential and often determining factor as to what becomes news. In order to determine the validity of the idea it was decided to utilise the data collected and employ a second method of examining it to see

if the time and space notion did occur. A simple content analysis was set up and the data interrogated on a time line in an effort to see if there were patterns to news bulletins.

Content analysis is by definition a quantitative method. The purpose of the method is to identify and count the occurrence of specified characteristics or dimensions to texts, and through this to be able to say something about the messages they contain. It is a valuable method for the systematic and quantitative analysis of communication content and it is well suited for analysis and mapping of key characteristics of large bodies of data such as was collected for this project. The aim of the method in media research has more often been that of explaining how news, drama, advertising and entertainment output reflected social and cultural issues, values and phenomenon.

The problem when using it, say Hansen *et al* (1998) is to determine how far quantification is taken in content analysis and to what degree the indicators offered are read or interpreted. They felt the method could be helpful in providing some indication of relative prominences and absences of key characteristics in media texts.

It was their view that it is not the significance of the repetition that is important, as much as the repetition of significance. (1998:95).

Content analysis is able to be integrated into larger research efforts involving not just the analysis of media content but also other methods of inquiry such as experiments, participant observation, qualitative and ethnographic studies and audience research.

Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1991), in describing the relative merits of quantitative and qualitative analysis describe quantitative analysis as a valuable means revealing patterns in news content and making evident previously unarticulated assumptions about how news is structured and presented. The qualitative analysis compliments the quantitative analysis by providing additional information and taking the focus beyond predefined categories. Ericson *et al* (1991) say the qualitative content analyst "picks up what is relevant for analysis and pieces it together to create tendencies, sequences, patterns and orders." (1991:53) whereas the qualitative can pinpoint the ways news operatives combine different items and stories to create new meanings and news themes. For example where stories with similar themes are placed beside each other in the bulletin to

create further interest. The bundling of thematically similar stories together was noted to be a quite frequent occurrence during this research.

In this research the method was used in an effort to establish a cross-sectional profile of what constituted a 'news hour'. A template was constructed which divided a news bulletin of 1 hour into minutes. The elements of the bulletin, such as headlines, stories, television commercials etc were inserted into the slot they appeared in to see what patterns emerged. This template was then used to establish the amount of time in a bulletin which was dedicated to news, as compared with the other elements. (See appendix D)

In order to determine the template for this aspect of the study, a simple content analysis of each minute of a 'typical news hour' was carried out. This involved close analysis of each bulletin in the study to determine the patterns of news.

Once the collected data was applied to the template it could be seen that in effect very little of the sixty minutes that constitutes a news hour is actually assigned to news items.

The chart depicted in Appendix D shows how the hour has been allocated to twenty sets of events, such as Opening headlines, Local stories, etc. These sets were not absolutely rigidly adhered to in every bulletin, however the pattern they followed was.

Some items such as program previews and promotions, television commercials (TVC's) and standard items such as the share market report and weather appeared in the same slot and occupy a similar duration each day. Some flexibility was observed in the number of items in the story slots but their combined running time was the final determinant of how many appeared. The normal maximum running time for each news story of around ninety seconds ensures that on average ten domestic stories are produced each day. In the event that a 'big' story is on the agenda, or breaks during the day, which requires an excess of ninety seconds means other stories need to be reduced or replaced, thus reducing the overall number of stories on the bulletin.

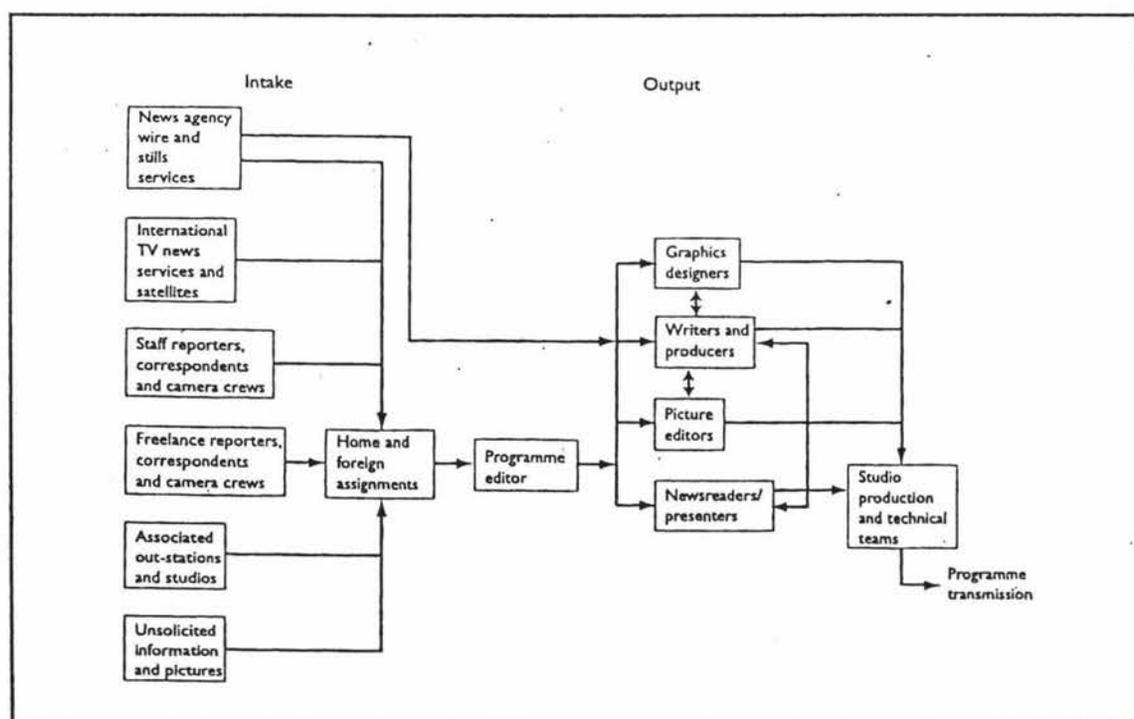
The rundown sheet in Appendix B reinforces the timing and distribution of these slots indicating how the news from almost any 6.00pm bulletin can be fitted into the template.

The combination of two methods, participant observation and content analysis enabled the data collected for the primary device, being qualitative to also be utilised in a second quantitative method thus revealing extra information which would not have been present only using one or the other.

Chapter Four

RESULTS

In much the same way as many other consumer products, television news is 'manufactured fresh daily'. It can be seen as a process consisting of a number of components or ingredients, constructed into a product and 'sold' to consumers. The production of news relies on the collaborative endeavours of teams of people who have clearly defined roles. At one end of the scale exists a management structure responsible for policy and governance. Below them are many levels of creative and technical staff tasked with finding, producing and disseminating the product called news. Yorke (2000) likened the entity to a "machine" consisting of an input (news gathering) and output (news processing) divisions. He produced a map of who does what in the process which, even though generic, covers the entire main daily functions and roles in almost any television newsroom. This map plots the progress of a news item through the production process.



Yorke (2000:30)

In answer to the primary question as to what factors influenced the transformation of an event into a news story, the analysis indicated that there was no definitive answer to this question. Rather, a cluster of very fluid factors seem to determine the acceptability and shape of any particular story. Some events seem almost to select themselves as news stories. The terrorists attack of September the 11th, the death of Diana, and the eruption of Mount Ruaepehu undoubtedly fall into this category since they constitute events of superior size and threshold. Other stories, despite appearing to have few significant influential factors to drive them, end up being broadcast. The human interest story or “kicker” (Gans 1979:172) with which many news organisation try to end each bulletin with, are examples of this type.

Attempting to determine why any particular story becomes news without being closely involved in the process is a difficult undertaking and thus, in hindsight the Participant Observation methodology was undoubtedly the appropriate methodology.

This section explores the daily routine of a ‘typical’ working newsroom:

In TVNZ, as in most news organisations, there is an executive arm (Editor-in-chief) to the management of news who, apart from the occurrence of exceptional circumstances has relatively little input into the daily production of television news.

The Director of News and Current Affairs is the senior executive responsible for the day to day management and heads the editorial team who collaboratively decide what finally becomes news and current affairs on a day to day basis.

The editorial team meet twice daily by way of telephone conference calls between Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. Their task is to determine what will be in the news, what order it will take, whether an issue is news or current affairs, and the likely angles or treatments stories will receive.

It is worth noting that the video tape which accompanies this document also contains a five minute recording of a typical daily news conference meeting which will enable the reader to gain some insight as to what happens at these meetings.

It is the editorial teams job to stay informed about breaking stories and political initiatives and to ensure that appropriate resources are constantly available to cover them. Each of the editorial teams is responsible for an 'assignment desk' through which they assign stories. They are also responsible for the logistical details associated with the production of news bulletins.

Stories originate from a number of sources. Some are 'found' by reporters using their contacts, or "tip offs" and some come through the assignment desk via press release, phone call or news wire etc. Others originate from the 'news dairy' which is a record of upcoming events, kept to provide indicators of known events. The use of scanners to monitor police, fire and ambulance radio frequencies also provides information about other events, which may lead to stories.

In the bureau offices, (these are the news rooms in Wellington and Christchurch), story ideas are compiled by the Assignment Co-ordinator and run past the Bureau Chief who decides what should go onto the production list for discussion at either the morning or if it is a late breaking story, afternoon news meeting.

4.1 News conference meetings:

These twice daily meetings are attended by the Editor and Deputy Editor Daily News, Line Up Producers, Planning Editor, New Media representatives and the Bureau Chiefs from the Wellington and Christchurch news rooms (plus any reporting staff from those offices with ideas to contribute). Both the Foreign Desk and Sports Editor also attend these meetings.

All potential stories are discussed and evaluated in terms of their merits, disadvantages and story replications. Stories deemed to be viable form the 'Production list' that is compiled on line, prior to, and during the meetings. This list is the backbone to the final news bulletin(s).

See appendix 1 for example of a typical daily Production List.

The production List becomes the agenda for the news conferences and is also used as the beginnings of the "Rundown Sheet" which allocates stories their positions and times in the final bulletin.

See appendix 2 for a typical daily "Rundown sheet".

From the early morning news conference the daily news is largely 'struck', in that the majority of what will appear that day has effectively been determined beforehand.

However, if anything 'breaks' during the day its importance is evaluated against what is already in the mix for the day.

NOTE: At the A.M. news meeting decisions as to the duration of each story are determined, this enables the reporter to fit the story into the timeslot allocated, normally a maximum of 90secs. It also avoids problems with needing to trim duration's down later and risk losing the sense of the story.

4.2 Story allocation:

Stories that get "commissioned" at the news conferences are assigned to a reporter who has the task of researching the incident and is responsible for collecting the material to produce the story. This includes identifying any available 'sources' and arranging for interviews and further comment. The reporter also suggests what images might help tell the story.

Once a reporter has back-grounded the story they will request a camera operator and if required, the assistance of a News Video Researcher, to gather file visual footage. A Reference Librarian may also be used to assist in gathering further background information.

The reporter researches the background of the story and determines who the main players are, plus an outline of questions and further detail or information which may be required to help tell the story.

The reporter and camera operator go out and film the images needed plus any interviews or comments required. In addition, if the story warrants it "live eye" footage of the

reporter from the scene may be necessary during the bulletin. This involves a live satellite feed, run direct to air and requires extra field operators to set up, co-ordinate and run the live feed. In the event that story might be enhanced by such a feed, resource planning needs to be in place early to ensure staff and technology are available when required.

4.3 Post production:

After filming is completed, the reporter 'shot lists' the footage for story and writes the script detailing which items of video and interviews best depict the story. The shot list is the log of the contents of the video tape(s) either shot for or collected to enhance the story.

In the event the reporter is staying out for a "live feed" the tape and script get rushed back to newsroom for editing, where another person does the 'intro' to the story, usually the newsreader

All the material associated with the story is then submitted to Bureau Chief who sub-edits the it, to ensure it contains no errors in fact, has no liability risk or that it exceeds the nominal 90 seconds it was allocated.

The online computer system automatically calculates the length of time the number of words involved will take to transmit and the sub editor often needs to edit the story to avoid over runs.

The online computer system (AVSTAR) is the same system which is used to generate the "Production List" and Rundown Sheet". As stories are processed the system provides the tools for shared access to scripts and visual log sheets. This enables journalists from a number of centres to work on the same story and be up to date with developments in it. The AVSTAR also provides the Newsreaders with "on air" scripts, both in hard copy and also what has been loaded to the teleprompter in front of the camera. The teleprompter is a device which superimposes the script over the lens of the studio camera enabling the news reader to appear well informed enough to

not need to look down at the paper script. It is a mechanism for increasing credibility of news by engaging the audience in eye contact with the presenter.

The Tapes containing the material and the voice over script for the final version of the story is then edited into a (typically) 90 second story on tape.

While editing is underway, the Line Up Producer checks the story (by now it is on line) and confirms both its place and duration in the "Run Down" sheet.

The Line Up producer also checks with the head of Graphics to determine which still images will be required to support the stories being followed, allowing them sufficient time to produce whatever may be required.

In the studio the Director and Assistant Director determine camera requirements for newsreaders, allocate VCR playouts, for stories on tape, and determine the keys (Graphics) required for each story. They also determine the final in and out points for each story in the bulletin.

The entire script, for the story, plus the words for the News Reader is already "on line" and the Auto Cue Operators determine that it is in the script in the right place for the bulletin. They also print out hard copies for the News Readers and control room staff so they can track the progress of the bulletin and know when they are to insert stories on tape, live interviews promos and advertising breaks.

see Appendix 3 for an example of a section of an On Air script

The News Readers come into the studio early and read the stories in order to become familiar with them prior to going to air.

The tapes of the completed stories are given to the Playout Operator to be put to air at the director's call.

4.4 Final broadcast.

In the studio, a number of Operators assist the final program to go to air. They include the Director, Directors Assistant, Sound Operator, Vision Switcher, Teleprompter Operators, Line up Producer, Kyron-Graphics Operator, Camera Operator(s). It is worth noting here that in the TVNZ news studio (Auckland) there are no longer any

studio camera operators. The cameras have been “robotised” and crawl around the studio selecting pre-programmed angles and shot sizes. It is apparently less distracting to news readers, not to have a floor crew moving around in front of them, not to mention the obvious cost savings involved. The one camera operator left in the system is now in the control room with the rest of the broadcast crew, and has overall control of all cameras, even if, to a casual observer they appear to move around to suit themselves.

Others who might be involved, depending on the stories, are the Satellite Record Operator and Master Control Operators responsible for sending and receiving visual and other data between the various bureau (Wellington & Christchurch) and the main studio.

Most stories are produced on tape and are cued up on video players in the Auckland studio ready to be started as their ‘turn’ arrives during the bulletin. Stories which are running late are satellite fed directly into the bulletin from Wellington and Christchurch in much the same way as ‘live eye’ feeds are inserted.

Newsday study:

Some of the stories observed during this project clearly depicted important and interesting issues, which viewers would undoubtedly have benefited from knowing about. Others at first glance appeared to contribute little. However, once some of these stories had been completed it became clear that the skill of a journalist extended further than simply relaying facts. Many journalists were witnessed weaving interesting and clever tales from very little in the way of actual raw material. In other words a story could be “constructed” from relatively little material.

Each day an average of ten New Zealand (onshore or domestic) news stories are broadcast in the nightly news bulletin of TV One. Each of these normally averages about ninety seconds of air time, resulting in approximately fifteen minutes of local,

New Zealand news. The rest of the hour is made up of a variety of information from weather, sport, the stock market, international news etc

See Appendix 4 for a breakdown of a typical 'news hour'.

During the data collection phase of this project numerous stories were processed by the newsrooms involved. As it was not possible to 'shadow' all the stories which were being produced, daily decisions were made about what to follow and what to omit. Some stories, for various reasons, were only followed part of the way through their production process, others right to the broadcast at the end of the day. To some degree these decisions were influenced by circumstances. For example, being in court with a reporter all day following a trial was neither realistic nor a good use of the researcher's time. Or in the event that a story involved expensive travel, such as a helicopter, a passenger was not very welcome. Consequently, some stories were only observed again when they came back for editing. Bearing these factors in mind the stories which were shadowed for much of their production process were significantly less than the total number available. For the purposes of this study 10 stories, an average daily allocation, were analysed to determine what made them stories and observe what facts influenced their final form. All the stories are recorded on the video tape which accompanies this thesis.

They are not from the same bulletin and therefore do not fit the normal 'daily template' of needing to average 90 seconds each in length, and fit the 15 minutes duration which they would need to conform to if they all appeared together. Even though all the stories appeared in final bulletins a further selection process would have been needed, some would have been dropped others reduced if they had all occurred on the same day.

Following is an outline of the stories which were to some degree or other, followed throughout their production. The list is in the order which they appear on the video tape. Following the list is an analysis of each story.

THE STORIES:**Story One: Petrol Price War.**

A new, independent petrol station opening in Hamilton led to a price war in that city, or did it ?

Story Two: The Breathing Clinic

A clinic set up to help workers get more useful air into their lungs and aid productivity.

Story Three: Tax Cuts

The revelation that tax cuts could become a reality if the present government were to be returned to office was presented to a breakfast meeting of business leaders.

Story Four: Far North Floods

Discovering that flooding in the Far North had been worse than expected led to a story about an assistance package.

Story Five: League Team re-branded

The coverage of a Press Conference to unveil the worst kept secret in Auckland.

Story Six: Prime Ministers Interview

A personal interview between the Prime Minister and TVNZ's Head of the Parliamentary Press Gallery on issues leading up to the general election.

Story Seven: Italian Motorcycling Legend

A story, shot for sports news on motorcycling ace Agostini, visiting a motor racing event.

Story Eight: All Black Hooker in Strife

A story about an All Black, who, after a drinking binge “accidentally” broke into a house.

Story Nine: Scott Watson Murder Trial

An ongoing story about the trial of a double murder suspect on the day when the mothers of both victims were scheduled to give evidence.

Story Ten: Maori Land Protest.

A Maori land protest over the proposed sale of dispossessed tribal land leads to conflict.

Story One: Petrol Price War.

This story came from the morning newspapers which stated that price competition had been sparked by the opening of a new petrol station in Hamilton. The story was not on the agenda sheet for the early morning news conference, but was raised during the meeting, by a journalist, who had seen the item in a newspaper, as an issue that might be worth following up. Palmer (2000) declared that it was “true, not to mention obvious, that journalists use other news reports as a major source of information”. Schlesinger, 1987 and Tuchman, 1978 also found this occurred on a regular basis. As a strategy to ensure news workers stay well informed as to what is happening in the world around them, events which may have been spotted by an observant journalist are produced as news stories almost daily. Thus journalists often occupy a gatekeeper role. Shoemaker (1991) and Clayman & Reisener (1998)

An Assignment Desk Editor spoken to about the practice of encouraging journalists to seek out stories themselves also stated:

“The process helps journalists feel like they are a valuable part of the organisation and effectively ensures they maintain their constant search for news. They (journalists) are an important part of the news cycle. “

(Interview C)

After some discussion the morning news conference decided to follow the story up and it was allocated ninety seconds on the "rundown list".

(see Appendix page 2 for an example of Rundown List.)

The thrust of the story was that Gull, an independent operator, had opened a new petrol station in Hamilton, offering low priced petrol, causing a price war with the existing stations. The story was assigned to a reporter who spent some time ringing around some "sources" in an effort to see what was developing.

This is a process where a journalist contacts 'known sources', in this case a selection of fuel company spokespeople, in an effort to obtain some background and hopefully comment on the event. News organisations maintain lists of contacts from organisations who often become "primary sources" for stories. (Palmer 2000:22)

In this case, because the oil companies were 'cagey' in their responses it was decided a trip to Hamilton would be the best way to gain the insights needed to possibly produce a story on the topic.

However, on arrival in that city it appeared that the price war had occurred yesterday, and prices were already on their way back up to previous levels. This proved a quandary for the crew because effectively the story no longer existed. However, since a commitment to the story had already been made, instructions from the news desk were to "explore the issue and see what else developed". The news desk decided that the investment in time and resources already committed to the story made it important to try and get something from the trip. Thus the economics of production assumed priority. Bennett (1996:42) referred to the economic pressures which increasingly drive the news business and which often can force the issue in order avoid wasting money. From the perspective of this research, observing how a journalist could weave a "stale event" into a story for that evening's news was an interesting exercise. Gans, in his study had observed that stories often undergo various forms of "restaging". He considered the practice to be permissible as long as the observed events or interviews obtained were

not altered. (1979:173) Gans likened news to baking products, which he maintained can be fresh or stale. It was his contention that if a story went stale the use of novel activities, or providing a new angle could freshen it up again. Restaging was clearly involved in this story. The story was refreshed by changing the “angle” from one which was to explore the retail price war of petrol, to one of ‘disappointment at missing out on low prices’. Some elements of the price war were left in, but the emphasis of the story was changed. The selection of words used to tell the story meant that it retained the price “war” concept in the story, but the emphasis moved to the changed circumstances. Words such as “feud”, “volatile”, “tumbling”, “scouts” etc were retained to add to the feeling of a price war.

In order to collect data for the story the crew gathered interviews and “wallpaper” footage from each brand of service station in the city. (wallpaper shots are backgrounds which enhance what is happening in the main shot.) In this case the ‘wallpaper’ was shot on service station forecourts to ensure the audience were provided with extra visual information about the story. The crew also collected “Vox Pops” from numerous customers to ensure the new angle of the story was provided with images and sound bytes. Vox Pops or the ‘peoples voice’ shots lend the story a touch of what the common people think about an issue, as distinct from what the official view may be. In reality they are purely arbitrary selection, taken from a small population whose main asset is their availability rather than a good representation

In the process of gathering material the reporter was filmed narrating a range of introductions and pieces to camera to aid in the “setting up”, explaining the background of the story. The backdrop of shots used for these were in each case, unmistakably petrol station locations to enhance the credibility of the reporter. These introductions, referred to as “stand-ups” are an onscreen introduction by the reporter, included in the story in order to increase the credibility of the reporter and in effect say to the audience “see where I am standing, right where it happened, therefore you can believe that what I am saying is correct”. Yorke (1995) for example says of the “standupper” that it is the

best and most straightforward method of presenting news on location. He saw the device as having the advantages that it immediately established the reporters presence on the spot, was extremely easy to execute and presented the viewers with what he termed a "contingency sample", (something from the site to prove the fact that they are or were there). Mitchell (1995:9)

The news archives found library footage of a fuel company media spokesman, commenting about price competition, so could be used. "Fuel company media people issue standard statements depending on whether the price is going up or down". " (Interview D)

Thus "official" sources were utilised as the basis of contextualising this story..

Peter Putnis writing in *Displaced, Recut and Recycled*. (1997) maintained that all television news companies use file footage to supplement their stories and this was the process in the case of this story because of the relative absence of "competitive" details. He raised ethical questions about the practice and asked if the use of file tape threatens the credibility and integrity of news stories. He concluded that the practice was sometimes dangerous because the context of the file footage was not always appropriate to the secondary use. (1997:III)

This event became a story because it conformed to a number of recognised "News Values"(Palmer .2000:26). Palmer related of Galtung and Ruge's eleven features or dimensions, that the more of these which an event possesses, the more likely it is to be news worthy and therefore become a story. Comparing the event to the list of news values it can be seen to conform on at least ten of the eleven features.

The event had a **Frequency** dimension as it could be completed as a stand-alone story within the 24 hour time frame which television news demands. It conformed to the **Threshold** requirement as it was seen as an important enough story to generally make it to air as petrol prices affect everybody. There was little doubt about its **Clarity**, as it was easily understood by the viewers even after the changed circumstances affected this. In an economy such as New Zealand's where the motor car is seen as a vital part

of daily life both its Consonance and Cultural Proximity are evident. The story possessed Continuity, in that price alterations occur regularly and the topic is an ongoing one. It conformed in terms of Composition as this value requires that there is a variety of different kinds of events covered in a bulletin. There were no other similar competing stories, enabling this one to fill that position. The story could be seen to involve the Actions of Elite Organisations in that fuel companies are among the largest commercial organisations. The way this story was constructed around consumers and included many comments from ordinary people enabled it to be Personalised. Even though this event was initially about a price reduction which could have been good news, in the end it turned out to be negative because the reduction only lasted one day and many people missed out.

The one criterion it did not conform to is Unexpectedness, as fluctuations in petrol prices have occurred regularly, sometimes on a weekly basis.

Palmer also maintained that “news is best understood as a sequence of events unfolding through time” (2000:vi). agreeing with both Tunstall (1971) and Gans (1979) that events need to conform to certain thresholds before they become stories.

The story is populated with a mix of what Gans (1979:10) referred to as “Actors” in that it contained a mix of both “knowns” and “unknowns” while fitting his table of “Activities more likely to become news”. (1979:16)

In his seminal work on the topic “*Deciding What’s News*” Herbert Gans (1979) identified the people whom he saw regularly populating news items, and who he referred to as “actors”. These he separated into those of familiar names, faces and positions, identified as “Knowns”, while ordinary people he termed “Unknowns”. He further maintained that particular “activities” were more likely to become news than others. The “Known” in this story was the fuel company spokesman who occupied this position by being a representative of an ‘elite organisation’. The two service station managers also occupied this category. An interesting feature of the story was how complicit both of these “actors” were in the framing of the story. The manager of the

BP station was only too happy to be filmed with his control panel raising and lowering the cost of petrol on the price board for the camera. In fact the footage of the price board going up and down constituted a major visual component of the story. The Gull manager also undertook to make a "fake" phone call in which he talked about "everyone else doing it as well". This shot contributed significantly to the story. The 'knowns' became part of news because they were recognised as 'informed sources' who could contribute with credibility to the content of the story.

The "Unknowns" included a selection of service station workers and customers who were all quite eager to be filmed as part of the story. The reporter asked questions in such a way as to elicit useful comments, such as that from a customer saying "well I missed out there". "Unknowns", according to Gans get into the news by being there or witnessing unusual events. In this story, the activity constituted a "tragic event", from their perspective, since they missed out on reduced prices.

The event continued to be a story for a number of reasons. The production economics were of prime importance and the new angle of the story continued to conform to many of the newsvalues as stated. Thus revitalising the story, when under different circumstances it could have gone stale and run the risk of being wasted.

Even though the final story was only ninety seconds long the tape was edited from over 20 minutes of filming and took about three hours to shoot. It is common for the footage of a news story to contain a 10:1 cutting ratio.

On the journey back to the Auckland news room the reporter replayed the footage through the camera viewfinder, logging all the shots and making notes about what each contained, and what sound was on each. This becomes a vital element whenever a story is shot out of town, because there is often not sufficient time to allow logging to be carried out prior to editing if the story is to make its deadline. The reporter also used this time to plan how the various clips could be used in the story, and wrote the script for the narration to complete the story. The headline banner and the introduction to the

story, the part read by the newsreader was also prepared by the reporter ready to be put on the AVSTAR system. Often remote, (out of town) stories such as this one fail to make it to air because there is not enough time to process them after travelling. In such cases stories such as *The Breathing Clinic*, are held to fill possible gaps.

As a footnote to this story, in discussing it with the reporter at the end of the day it was revealed that the story could have taken an entirely different turn. One of the managers had offered to actually reduce the price of petrol for the day to see what would happen in the rest of the city. After the events of the previous day it was clear there could have been a different story than the one which was eventually filed. The reporter rejected the offer and commented: "ethically this poses some serious questions, If I had let him go ahead it could have been seen that we allowed news to be used as a device to satisfy commercial interests".(Interview D)

Most stories must therefore appear to maintain a neutrality or impartiality, even though this is often only in appearance.

Note: The appendix 5 contains the full final script for this story as it was broadcast.

Story Two: The Breathing Clinic.

This was an interesting story, not because it contained vital information which the world needed to know, but because the way it was constructed gave a clear illustration of how a simple, and ordinary event could be produced into a story which might make people say "that was interesting". This event did not come up at the morning news conference and was merely assigned to a reporter who appeared to not have a busy day. It was thought that the story would not go "stale" and therefore did not need to be produced in any haste. Stories such as this are sought after because they can be "stored up and used to fill a variety of roles as either a filler or a "kicker". A kicker is the uplifting, human-interest story which is often used to close the bulletin. Its task is to compensate for the pessimism that may result from the mostly negative stories. Television generally holds the view that news is the program where the evenings

audience is 'harvested' and it is important to ensure they enjoy the experience in order to retain them for later programs.

Kickers are produced frequently and are used in gaps which appear in bulletins when other stories don't manage to get completed in time for transmission. This particular story turned out not to be a kicker and ended up running three days later on Telstra Business, a business breakfast program. When the story went to air on the business show it was given a business intro by the announcer suggesting the story "could breath life into your business."

The story entered the system by way of a fax sent to the newsroom by a person who knew how to get a new business venture some television coverage. The fax outlined a physiotherapy practice (plus promoted a newly published book) which had been set up to help people breathe better.

The reporter admitted he knew nothing about the topic on receipt of the brief, but used a number of journalistic and production techniques to turn a item which was initially accompanied by "You want me to do a story on what?" into a two minute story.

Initially a phone call to the sender of the fax set up an interview which, in turn provided all the main facts for the story. This person was the 'primary source' in what Sigal (1973:9) termed the enterprise channel of how events become news, and provided the lead into the story and much of the information which eventually drove the story forward. The interview was carried out at the physiotherapy rooms, with the writer of this thesis as the "subject" for the story. The initial interview also led to a client who was prepared to be interviewed for the story, providing a patient's view of the practice. Since the story looked like being mostly a sequence of "Talking Heads", the crew sought permission to film at a gymnasium in the area to gather footage of people exercising, (since that had also been talked about in the first interview).

A "Talking Head" is a term used to describe a head and shoulders shot of someone talking. They are generally seen as being boring if they are held too long. However

Shook (1998) maintained they are a legitimate device for enhancing a story's meaning because they can provide extra information about the speaker, which might not otherwise be revealed. Journalists frequently use the device to enable a 'source' to frame what is being said more accurately because it uses the actual words of the speaker. Shook agreed such practices can become a handicap for a story if their duration is too long or if the speaker is inexperienced with television, or not very well prepared. (1998:166)

A series of "vox pops" were also collected showing people sitting at a curbside café. They were asked about their experience of breathing. A few file footage clips of stressed office workers were used and some live street shots and footage of the researcher learning to breathe again were also shot and taken back to the studio for editing. The story was accompanied by Pink Floyd music and a catchy opening line, "Breathing, the first and last thing we do in life, and we do it about eighteen thousand times a day, but what do we know about it.?" All the main facts in the story were provided by the first interview, some in her own words and voice, others paraphrased by the reporter during his introduction, and in voice-overs used to break up other images in an effort to avoid the story being entirely told by the original source. Even though this was a small, simple story, by the time it had been edited ready for transmission some five and a half hours had passed.

What made this event a news story was a essentially a good public relations press release, containing enough information to gain the interest of the news room, combined with the source providing further material and an interview on first contact. Clearly the person who sent the fax to arrive early in the morning when stories were being compiled, understood the daily cycle of news production. Had the fax arrived in the middle of the day it may have been discarded.

See Appendix 8 for examples of press release faxes which constantly flow into newsrooms in the hope of becoming news.

Palmer refereed to this as a “source technique” and commented at some length at the range of motives which lead sources into the news encounter. He identified these techniques as;

- Absorbing journalists into the culture of the source organisation.
- Appealing to journalists conscience and asking for co-operation.
- Timing and placing information release in such a way as to pre-empt coverage.(2000:53)

The first, “absorption”, is generally seen as related to specialist reporters such as those who cover political or courtroom matters, since they need to understand and ‘absorb’ how the organisation works in order to effectively report on it.

Appealing to the conscience of the media applies mostly to areas of national security and law and order where information is provided on the understanding that it won’t be used for the wrong purposes, such as to create panic or unnecessary alarm.

The timing of information release, according to Palmer is carefully calculated and can be used to embargo information, to prevent it being used is just as prevalent as releasing it for use.

This story, effectively used all these techniques together, indicating that a person with a good understanding of how the media operate was involved as the original source.

The actors who appeared in the story were essentially all “unknowns” apart from the physiotherapist, who was also a “primary source”. She occupied this position not because she was personally known, but because the professional role she plays was recognised. (Gans, 1979:9) The “unknowns” became part of the story in that they were seen as “participants in unusual activities” (1979:13).

The story was produced because it was light-hearted and interesting. It could have appeared as a “kicker” or an back-up story to cover one which failed to get completed on time. After waiting for three or four days it appeared on the breakfast business program rather than let it run the risk of going stale, although this type of story had a

longer life because it was unlikely to date quickly. However, it was appropriate for it to appear on a business program as it was a thinly veiled advertisement for a product and service.

Story three: Tax Cuts

This event was on the news diary and was therefore discussed at the previous day's news conference. This ensured appropriate resources were assigned to the topic before that day's news conference.

Whereas much of what television news reports are events or occurrences which have already occurred, this story was set up for and created for the medium. It was one of the stories which unfold before the audience. The story could be labelled a political device, to enable the Prime Minister of the day to deliver a message to the public. Using her birthday as an occasion to release information about government policy, provided an audience to receive the news.

The event was staged for television and the invited business leaders provided an appreciative and applauding audience. The story on the tape was of a breakfast meeting of invited business leaders to help celebrate the PM's birthday but also involved announcing a raft of policy directions for the upcoming election. The presence of the audience was the element which gave the story its link to the population, and more importantly to the electorate. The alternative would have been to call a press conference to release such information. This would have meant the PM and a room full of journalists, all asking difficult questions with little applause at the end. However, a group of pre-screened devoted supporters made a far more effective television presentation. Television itself plays a role in such constructed events by being prepared to gather such news and information which would be difficult to otherwise obtain. It reinforces the symbiotic relationship between news and politics.

An audience of sympathetic business leaders was also a matter of preaching to the converted when talking about cutting taxes as the business sector had made constant claims for such policies. Having the setting for a televised press conference depicting a well dressed, largely white, middle to upper class, business oriented, predominantly male audience making a strong link with prosperity is a backdrop many feature film directors would strive for. As the background to the story they were a powerful factor in setting up what the story was saying, and who it was talking to. It was Palmer's (2000) contention that both journalists and sources have motives which lead them to interpret events in particular ways. He maintained that both have at their disposal a variety of techniques for: "structuring the news encounter in ways calculated to maximise the chances of their interpretation". (2000:17) Such techniques consist of each understanding the motives of the other and how they are both reliant on each other for the second part of the equation. Without the media, politicians could not easily get their messages out to the population and without politicians making material available the media would have to work very hard to gain access to information.

This symbiotic relationship was illustrated in this particular story.

Palmer maintained: "that sources the media tend to use reproduce, symbolically the existing structure of power in society".(2000:141)

The story used only one source, the PM. It was a vehicle for her self promotion and the release of Government policy outlines. It was short on detail and contained many promises. Much of what was said in the story was from the PM. Thus the media used her as the accredited source for authoritative information. This avoids journalists needing to interpret what is said and allows them a measure of objectivity in reporting the story. Langer (1998) discussed this aspect of journalism saying:

"The desire to appear impartial and objective means a heavy reliance on what journalists call 'accredited sources' who provide 'authoritative' information. In matters deemed to be important for public disclosure, news makers tend to favour those from high ranking groups who are assumed to be more credible on

such matters than those lower down.....the organisational problem of producing stories on a regular basis tends to orient coverage around the already powerful.(1998:19)

The story was broadcast with the newsreader in front of a graphic depicting the Beehive and the PM, stating: "The strongest hint of tax cuts to come and two new political buzz words for election year were released by the Prime Minister today". The story was then handed to the political editor to relate.

The notion of "gatekeeping" as raised by shoemaker (1991), Clayman & Reisener (1998) & Shoemaker & Reese (1991) was apparent in this story.

Shoemaker referred to gatekeeping as "the oldest construction in communication" (1991:87) as she saw it as a primary method of selection, creation and control of the mechanisms which order and structure news. This story was one in which the gatekeepers on each side of the gate assisted the passage of the event through the news production process. Television news personal had the advantage of a pre-prepared story, and thus their costs were minimised in the process. The PM's Press Agent would equally have been delighted to find such an easy passage for the information she wanted to impart. Shoemaker reinforced this when she described gatekeeping as : "a multi-layered activity where a number of players intervene in the process, each having some impact on the outcome".(1991:vii).

As an event this could have been comprehensively covered as a news item using the information contained in the press handout package which was released before the function. A newspaper could easily have done so, but television news, driven as it is by the need for visuals would have had a great deal of trouble trying to turn this into a news story without the presence of a camera. Both forms of media output however were present and took full advantage of the press kit as one of the prime sources of information for the story. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) noted the preference for a heavy reliance on sources rather than choosing to carry out the more expensive option,

of personal research. It became clear during this study that reliance on official sources and handouts to provide information for stories was often the preferred option.

As a follow-up to such a story at a time when all the main parties expected equal coverage on election issues, TVNZ sought responses from the leaders of other parties. The story ended up containing comments from all the other party leaders and because of this was endowed with an abundance of known actors in the form of elite people, from elite organisations talking about widely accepted activities. This is the type of story which has high news values, and illustrates the power of official and authoritative sources to control and define what constitutes news.

Story Four: Far North Floods.

This story was a classic victim / disaster story, described by Langer (1998) as “perennial”. He felt such stories constantly provided the television audience with readily understandable situations and characters whom they could feel sympathy. Langer called such stories “Communities at risk” and it was his contention that such communities are frequently granted the physical characteristics of being a living organism, making them easier to convert to news events. It was his view that ;

“...such stories provide, and use as a base from which to offer a description and explanation of events, a view of a community analogous to an assumed living entity. ...which from time to time encounter unanticipated and destabilising occurrences....causing crisis situations which need to be dealt with and contained to enable the community to be restored to a harmonious state...”

(1998:104) This story followed a similar pattern, with the promise to provide the resources needed to enable a return to a harmonious state.

The construction of this story was also of great interest, as it provided an opportunity to observe the ‘processing’ of a story which conformed at a number of points with what Yorke (2000:300) described as “The news gathering machine”.

It was Yorke's contention that news was manufactured using various materials which are gathered and processed by a team of skilled people into a product which is sold. His notion of the machine is appropriate when looking at this story as it relied heavily on both the technology and the "standardised routines" of news production.

(Tuchman,1978 Gans,1979 Epstein,1973 & Schlesinger, 1989.)

The story was on the agenda sheet for the morning news conference, having come from a press release from the Prime Ministers Office replying to criticism from the mayor of the flooded area that not enough had been done by Government to help a socially disadvantaged area. The press release stated that the Minister for Civil Defence would visit the area and assess the situation prior to revealing what Government help would be given. The feeling at the meeting was that the Minister had failed to do his job and the angle of the story was to point out his shortcomings. The other factor of interest to the news room was that the PM had been forced to apologise on his behalf, and offer something as compensation. It was decided to assign the story to a press gallery reporter in Wellington, as it was considered comments from "the people in Wellington" would be helpful. Using specialist "beat" reporters ensures the reporter has ready access to likely sources and is quick and cost effective. A great deal of file footage was available on the story as TVNZ had 'flown over' at the height of the flood and followed up with some clean up footage.

Rather than send an Auckland crew to cover the minister's inspection of the site a "stringer" was employed to obtain relevant footage. A "stringer" is a free lance camera operator, often from the area, who is employed on an hourly basis with a set of instructions as to what footage to obtain. These free lance contractors are frequently used on remote stories where the location is not cost effective to despatch a crew. The stringer is normally given a 'shopping list' of images, and if required a list of questions to be asked. These are generally sent back to the studio by microwave to be incorporated into the story written and narrated by a journalist, who sometimes does not

need to leave the studio to produce the story. Another reason for using a “stringer” emerged during the news conference. It was discussed that the minister would be likely to ‘grandstand if he saw a TVNZ camera’ it was felt using a free lance operator might help ensure the minister ‘could not use the occasion as a photo opportunity’. All the components of the story were duly collected and assembled into what became a simple 110 second, victim / disaster story with some elements of scandal thrown in.

Langer (1998) saw news story types as being similar to film genre in that: “they characteristically utilise patterns, forms, styles and structures” which, he maintained “transcend individual stories and “supervise both their construction and ‘reading’ by the audience”. It was his view that the knowledge of the generic elements of perennial stories enables television journalists to produce readily understandable stories for diverse audiences.(1998:35).

The fact that much of the visual footage used for this story already had been shot added extra impact to the story. Such footage also carries a subtext saying to the viewers the flooding was so bad the helicopter could not land. Much news footage of flood and storm damage is shot from the air and commonly carries that association.

Langer discussed the notion that in news film, meaning is not simply caught and relayed by the technical capacity to produce the image, but is in fact constructed by it. (1998:36)

It was his contention that a whole range of codes of constructedness are revealed to the viewing audience by aspects such as framing of shots, composition, lighting, angles and camera movement.(1998:37).

This event became a story because, being the only victim/disaster story on the bulletin it did not need to compete with any other similar stories. Its newsvalues guaranteed it a place in the final bulletin. Also assisting it to air was the fact that it was entirely populated by “knowns” and depicted an “activity” likely to become news.

(Gans. 1979:23)

Despite having a severe impact on a whole community of "unknowns" none of them managed to be heard or appear in the story. The only community voice came from the mayor of the flooded area. A person charged with its governance, rather than a resident. The official "sources" who provided material for this story were all permitted to speak, ensuring the information they provided was credible. It was also interesting to note the "gatekeeping" role of the news organisation in keeping the minister, a central figure in the story, but clearly not popular with the media, out of the story, apart from the mention of his failures.

Story Five; DB Bitter Warriors

The story about the "rebranding" of a rugby league team was an example of a sports story which jumped into the main bulletin. It also appears in this document because it was observed to be a good example of the craft of journalism and of the ability to make a news story out of relatively information.

The story was on the agenda for the early morning news conference and was also listed in the news diary as an event to be noted. Initially there was not much enthusiasm from the rest of the meeting for a story about a failing sports team and was regarded as unworthy of too much effort. However, it was promoted by the news desk editor as being of some importance, so was assigned to one of the more experienced journalists in the news room. There exists in most news rooms a very obvious bureaucracy and seniority was observed to carry the day in this incident. Not only did the story make it through the meeting, where weaker stories often disappear, but it was assigned to a journalist who would be most likely to produce a story which was good enough to survive any later cuts. Gans (1979) referred to this "nonjournalistic bureaucracy" when he maintained :

"News organisations are subject to universal forms of bureaucratic practice which have no relation to journalism but do have an impact on story selection

and production.....where senior reporters are usually assigned stories that are more likely to survive". (1979:107)

The brief was to attend the new sponsors news conference, obtain statements and quotes from the CEO of the new sponsor and if possible arrange to interview the CEO of the outgoing sponsor and any players and officials who might be available.

The initial angle of the story was to promote the new sponsor and try to get some information as to why the change was necessary, what went wrong, and outline how it was going to improve. The instruction to the crew was to arrive early as the press conference was likely to be crowded.

The reality was that two TV cameras and two newspapers attended the news conference, the rest of the room was filled up with players, officials and hastily rounded up employees. The press conference was opened with a video presentation of what the new sponsor had done for other teams they had sponsored followed by the CEO making a speech of welcome to the new team. The gathered audience responded rather weakly to the presentation. The footage from the C.E.O.'s speech was judged to be unusable as it would have portrayed his company in a bad light. The questions and answers session which followed also contributed very little more usable material to the story. The camera operator sensing a problem story shaping up managed to obtain some "wallpaper" footage of the press conference to use as cutaway material. "Wallpaper" is a term used for background footage which can be intercut with footage of the main speakers to create the impression that there was a significant number of other people present. In this case the audience was framed to look like there were more people present than was the case. The departing sponsors CEO gave a useful interview outside in the stadium afterwards and the journalist presented a "stand-up" while walking across the playing field. The news conference had produced virtually nothing which contributed to the story. Even a "set up" situation with the new company CEO running up the field passing a ball to players did not produce images which would have shown either him or his company in a flattering light.

The skill and talent of the journalist and the editor, with some help from the archives was all which finally prevented the story vanishing from the line up list. It is not uncommon for news stories to undergo various forms of 'restaging' when they fail to provide the desired outcome or angle. (Gans 1979:173)

Once again the role of gatekeeper(s) could be seen in operation. The editor in the news organisation assisted the passage of the story through the system by ensuring it was on the agenda for the news conference and made it to the rundown list. As in other stories discussed in this research, once an event gets to that stage it is unlikely to fail, unless it is covered by an inexperienced reporter. Hence the value of the assigning it to a senior journalist ensures it will make the final news broadcast. Also, once the press conference had been covered the 'investment' of time and resources already committed makes it less likely to fail.

The story on the tape is not an award winning piece of journalism, but it demonstrated how a story, (which ran in the second break of the main bulletin), could be made out of very little. On many other occasions weak stories were seen to have little or no content and were discontinued, this one survived due to the skill of an experienced journalist.

Story Six: PM Interview

This story was produced to fill the role of a "Close Up" segment of the news which is a weekly news story which is produced in more depth about a person or event which has appeared in the news in the past week. These stories are a device to enable a journalist to undertake some more 'in depth' research and carry out more probing interviews than a daily news cycle would normally permit. They are sometimes created in the course of a gathering a daily story which generates far more useful material than can be utilised at the time. Rather than 'waste' a quantity of useful (and expensive) material other stories can be woven from them with very little increase in cost. They are often referred to as 'plum jobs' and generally fall to senior reporters who value the opportunity to carry

them out. Such stories allow reporters the luxury of carrying out in depth investigations and interviews which the normal course of daily news stories seldom allows time for. The previously discussed issue of senior reporters being assigned the stories more likely to succeed is relevant here. To some degree, these type of stories also appear to balance out the situation in the previous story where a senior reporter's efforts to craft stories out of relatively little material could be rewarded with a bonus job.

In the normal course of a day many such stories are produced by and for the Current Affairs program "The Holmes Show" which follows the week day news, but this one managed to stay as a "Close-Up".

The story arose from the fact that a general election was approaching and politicians were eager to gain as much positive exposure as possible. It consisted of a simple two camera interview with the head of the TVNZ Press Gallery and the Prime Minister recorded in her office. Generally a field interview, such as this would be shot using only one camera. This would be focused on the subject while all the questions were asked, then record the replies. Then the camera would be relocated to focus on the interviewer and the questions asked again. A simple cut and paste edit would then depict the standard shot /reverse shot interview. This story, since it involved the PM, was shot using two cameras, each recording its own tape. The sequence of events using this method is simpler because both the subject and the interviewer are continuously recorded throughout the interview providing the editor with twice as much information from which to edit the final cut. But it requires two cameras and more resources. It is generally carried out this way to send a message to the subject (and the viewers) that this is not just a normal rushed news story, but one where more considered comment and opinion can be explored. An interview of this type is also a more relaxed affair than a conventional news interview because the participants are generally seated, rather than standing. A person such as the PM, with some experience in such matters would see such an opportunity, especially in election year as worth some extra effort.

Normally, multi-camera interviews are shot in a studio where both staff and resources for such undertakings are present. However, such locations tend to be sterile and lack the 'wallpaper' which shooting on location can provide.

Studio shoots also need to be booked to ensure facilities and staff are available. The subject also needs to travel to the studio and be made up etc, all adding considerably to the costs. This one, shot in her office had its 'wallpaper' built in. Interviewing any MP (senior Official) in their office also adds weight to the credibility of the journalist, adding the unstated "see where I am standing" to ensure the audience are more likely to believe what they are being told.

The story was initiated by the journalist, who wanted to carry out in depth interviews with the leaders of both main parties before the run up to the general election. On approaching the PM's press secretary approval was given for the shoot providing an outline of the interview agenda was provided.

The interview took 20 minutes to set up and another twenty to shoot. This was followed by nearly an hour in the edit suite in order to produce a 2 minute and 15 second story on tape. Creative editing, using the insertion of "noddy shots" and reaction cutaways provided an interview which was in the end, visually interesting. The one big advantage of this type of production is that questions asked during the interview which do not work, or would be better asked another way, can be reshot and inserted over a reverse shot during post production. There are a number of questions in this interview which employ this production strategy.

Cohen (1978) when discussing the editing of interviews points out how editing can enhance both the substantive and technical aspects "The removal of shots where focus or framing is not ideal is equally weighted with the removal or changing of the dialogue."(1978:54).The editing of interviews is a subject of much debate as the activity enables the transposition of questions and answers and as such the meaning or intent can be altered. Normally, such infractions go unnoticed, but if the person being interviewed recalls what was said they can take action when this occurs. An example of

this could be seen on TV1 at 10.00pm Monday 4th March 2002 when TVNZ were forced, by an order from the Broadcasting Standards Authority to broadcast the following notice.

“In October 2001 TV One broadcast a promo for the John Pilger documentary “The New Rulers of the World”. Subsequently TVNZ upheld a formal; complaint finding the promo to be deceptive and misleading because after the editing process a person was seen answering one question when in fact it was another.”

The power of editing was reinforced while observing the process take place and watching how sound and images could be manipulated during post production.

Cohen (1987) writing in *The Television News Interview* provides some discussion of the role of editing in such interviews. It was his contention the practice of editing interviews always ran the risk of modifying the meaning and context of what was said. (1987:42)

The ‘gatekeeping’ roles on both sides of the ‘gate’ were of primary influence in the story. Clearly if the PM’s Press Secretary had refused the interview she could have been seen as ‘holding the gate shut’. If the Journalist had not thought the interview a good idea and sought it she would not have tried to ‘access the gate’. The relationship each side has with the other is highly dependent on a shared understanding of what each can do for the other. The Government Legislature requires simple, effective methods of relaying information to the electorate, whereas broadcasters require material to transmit to the same people. It seems to make good sense that they use each other.

As an observer, it was also interesting to observe the relationship between the Journalist and the Prime Minister. Prior to the cameras rolling they discussed day to day issues as two people who see each other once a week would be expected to do. Once the recording began they both switched personas and became highly professional, each

knowing their role in what was being carried out. At the end however, neither switched back straight away. It appeared as if the switch back was a harder journey.

The event became a story because it was planned to be one. There was never any doubt it would run as a story once it was shot. It contained only one primary source who provided all the information in her own voice in reply to a set of pre-issued questions.

Note: In terms of providing the other political parties with similar exposure, and to ensure balance and impartiality existed, the leader of the opposition was scheduled to be interviewed for the same slot (Close-up) the next night.

Story seven: Italian motor cycling ace.

This story was a 'spin off' from a longer Current Affairs program which was shot on the same day, but using a different crew. It ended up more like a TVC (Television Commercial) for the motor cycle meeting than a news story and it may very well have been planned that way from the start by the "primary source". The story originated from a letter sent to the head of News and Currents Affairs announcing the visit to the upcoming Pukekohe motor cycling race meeting of an ex-world champion Italian racing team containing the "star" of the era Giacomo Agostini. The visit was discussed at the weekly planning meeting held between News and Current Affairs and a decision made to see if there was a sports news story as well. It appeared as if the letter writer had a history of providing useful leads to stories in the past establishing his "suitability and reliability" as a source. There was no discussion about whether or not the "tip off" was worth following up, it was taken for granted there was a story in the information.

Similarly, Gans (1979) in investigating relationships between sources and journalists saw a number of considerations which, if fulfilled led to sources being reused for subsequent stories.

Of the major "source considerations" which Gans identified this person scored on all. As articulate, trustworthy, having a reliable and authoritative record for providing suitable stories without the need for undue expenditure of time and resources.(1979:131)

The story was assigned to a specialist sports reporter who would be more capable of operating quickly and efficiently in the field. Most TVNZ reporters are general, in that they cover whatever is needed, but have specialist areas where they have established an area of interest and therefore access to suitable sources of information. This appears to be a common trend referred to by Gans (1979), Ericson et al (1987) and Palmer (2000).

The person who sent the original letter seemed aware that two crews would cover the story as he was heard to comment that it would have been a shame if the documentary was the only exposure the meeting received, since it was likely to be shown weeks after the event. He was the "primary source" who liaised between the largely non-English speaking motor cycling team and the two film crews. He provided the reporter with a great deal of background information (as she hoped he would), and arranged for an interview with Agostini. The plan was for the interview to be the centrepiece of the story. However, in the end the interview was a disaster. Agostini spoke almost no English and the reporter no Italian. A story which the reporter had hoped would feature the motorcycling ace talking about his life needed to find a new centre. The usable part of the ten minute interview is on the tape depicting this story and it can be seen from what is left in the story, how much useful material was gathered from the interview. Besides the obvious communication problems in the interview, the background noise of revving motor cycles etc added a great deal of atmosphere but also meant much of the footage had too much background noise to be usable. This was an example where the endeavour to create credibility by filming the reporter on location did not work.

Cohen(1987) discussed how these "Artifactual codes" or the use of various artefacts to enhance the location, are an activity which can just as easily detract from the value of the practice if they are not able to be managed effectively. (1987:46)

Fortunately, the reporter, realising there may be a problem getting information on the topic, had, before we left the studio, requested the archives and visual library also carry out some background research. When the main interview collapsed for lack of content the liaison person hastily arranged another interview with a New Zealand cycle racer

from the same era, who was fortunately at the meeting. His interview, which was almost in its entirety on the story tape, provided material to fill many of the gaps.

The reporter and camera operator in discussing what they had for the story decided that the story was too "talking head". They felt it contained too many images of people talking and not enough action. Since the story was about motorcycling an approach was made to put a camera on the track and get some footage. This was the point when the original letter writer (primary source) proved his worth. He was able, despite some opposition to get clearance for some camera stationary shots, on the side of the track, and for the news car to "do a few circuits filming the Italian team riding their bikes". In designing this research I came to understand that in terms of the field relationships required to ensure acceptance and co-operation, there would be times when the participation needed to take precedence over the observation. Hansen et al (1998:53). This was one of them, and thus the researcher drove the news car around the track with the camera operator strapped in, filming through the rear door. The Italian team and the news car spent thirty minutes "racing" around the circuit shooting the rest of the footage for the story.

This story did not contain very much that was newsworthy, apart from the visit of the Italian team. It was on the production schedule because one of the senior editorial team with sporting connections had been approached and considered the story worthwhile. It appeared in the sports news section on the Friday night news and undoubtedly assisted in providing a record crowd at the meeting next day.

Daniel Cook's claims about television news become more like advertising is supported by this story.

STORY EIGHT ALL BLACK HOOKER IN STRIFE

This event, in terms of looking at how it became a news story has a number of interesting features. From the perspective of an observer, the incident did not look like

anything special. Just another rugby player who had “one too many” and misbehaved. Admittedly it appeared on a Monday which in news circles often has a reputation for being a ‘low news day’, being the start of the week. Also, that day the Wellington newsroom was short staffed due to illness and a number of reporters in Auckland were attending a seminar on the upcoming election.

The story was initially broken by the Sunday newspapers and it was “swooped on” at the morning news conference as being the possible lead story for the day. Other items discussed at the news conference included the plea from the Scott Watson murder trial, the death of King Hussien of Jordan, another All Black being sentenced for a driving fatality, the arrival of Coronation Street star in New Zealand, three deaths in a sewer, the arrival of hundreds of APEC officials, the hearing into the Hamilton Casino application, prison inmates being asked to build fences to keep themselves secure and a raft of overseas stories.

It was difficult to see how an All Black hooker going berserk in Queenstown was going to be the lead.

On making an enquiry as to how it became a headline story the reply was:

“This is a slow burner of a story, the incident happened Saturday night and simmered until today (Monday). The ambulance were involved at the time, the police became involved today. We have a number of leads to follow up for witnesses and the person at the centre of the story is a high profile sporting figure who has a bit of a reputation and comes from a team where this is not uncommon. The rugby Union have said they will make a statement, probably with the person involved being present. There is going to be plenty of material for a story. Today’s Dominion is carrying the story and without a doubt Three (TV3) will have it tonight. We can’t afford to not be on it. It may not lead the bulletin, but it probably will.” (Interview O).

As the bureau editor had predicted, the story was 'loaded' with useful material. The crew and reporter sent from Christchurch managed to get footage at the site of the incident being cleaned up. These shots included the added bonus of having the 'shaken occupants' in the background. The police were happy to provide a number of interviews and both the attending ambulance officers gave very descriptive interviews. The Bar Manager gave a statement and an unidentified witness was also prepared to comment on what she had seen. The interviews provided a good range of sources ("Actors"), some "known": and other "unknown" for a story about a readily recognised "activity" involving a sporting hero in New Zealand. All this material, combined with rugby footage which the archives had found and records of past misdemeanours certainly looked like providing the story with all the information it needed.

The story was allocated a four minute spot at the morning news conference, with an option to reduce if it ended up not warranting the time. While the South Island crew were gathering all the material from Queenstown, a camera was despatched to the teams training camp to obtain some further footage and comment if possible. Another was sent to camp outside Hewitts' Wellington house in an effort to get some shots of him at home. This was an important part of "personalising" the story. Without these (at home earlier today) shots, all the footage obtained, (apart from the file footage) was about the individual's the story, but did not portray him. It was clear the news desk considered that shots of the subject at home were vital to the story as a phone conversation with a camera operator, camped outside the subjects house was overheard saying : "We have been here three hours and have not spotted him yet, so can we come back ?" To which the reply, "No you b***y can't, I want that shot, you stay there until you get it. If you want to succeed in this game patience is something you are going to need to learn."

Late in the afternoon the desired footage was secured as Hewitt was driven away from his house to an event which became a bonus for the story. This came in the shape of a

press conference called for 5.00pm where the New Zealand Rugby Union announced they would make a public statement on the whole event. Discussion in the newsroom was centred around the late timing of the announcement and how the NZRFU were probably attempting to avoid the story making that day's news knowing it would take too long to set up a "Live Eye" to cover the press conference straight to air. It was assumed that the (NZRFU) were not aware it was already the headline and therefore every effort would be made to keep it there. Meanwhile, several other stories in the bulletin had their duration reduced to find another two minutes for footage from the press conference.

Palmer (2000) in discussing the notion of "source strategies" alluded to the practice of timing and placing information releases in such a way as to pre-empt coverage.

(2000:53)

The economics of production, considering how much had already been 'invested' in the story ensured the story would not slip off the schedule. With that in mind, a crew was sent to the 'presser' with instructions to shoot everything relevant and get the tape back to the studio as quickly as possible to be edited into the bulletin. The competitive nature of news workers ensured that those involved did not want to see a day's work wasted, so extra effort was applied to complete it. In the end the press conference produced the opening of the bulletin as Hewitt appeared, read a prepared statement and left the room in tears. NZRFU officials remained behind to read statements of support for the 'fallen hero'.

If the story is observed in relation to how it appears on the "news values" scale it is clear, that since this sporting identity can be termed an "elite person, this story scored well on all values.

The sources used were mostly official, in the form of the police, ambulance and the Rugby Union, supplemented by various incidental witnesses. The information provided by each of these enabled the journalist to tell the story using the words of the sources,

thus increasing the “credibility” of the story as having come from the witnesses own mouths. Cohen (1987) referred to the notion of “identity codes”, where choosing the correct people to interview and “situational codes” ensuring they are sited at appropriate locations are essential elements to ensuring the interviews in a story carry the story. (1978:53). Careful selection of such support was evident in this story.

The accounts of the sources, each seeing the event through their own eyes (and values) enabled a multi-layered picture to be built up which all tended to reinforce each other in their condemnation and disapproval of the actions involved. This agrees with Ericson et al (1987) who maintained:

“the role of the news media is to shape our understanding, not only of world events but also the nature of our society” therefore they felt.” decisions made by journalists as to what is news-worthy therefore play a significant role in determining social values” and that. ”In Western societies, the essence of the news is its emphasis on social deviance and control”.(1978:3)

Hall et al, further commented on the matter when they maintained :

”the media thus tend to faithfully and impartially reproduce symbolically the existing structure of power in society’s institutional order”.(1978:53).

The story was of interest for this project as it enabled many aspects of news production to be observed. The routine nature of news work undoubtedly enabled it to be contributed to by crews who were geographically spread over half of the country. The various contributors, all having access to the story as it unfolded via the AVSTAR computer system enabled each group to insert their contribution in such a way as to compliment the other parts. The choice of many of words used to tell the story were also interesting as they angled the story of Hewitt, the Hurricanes hooker almost as if he was a weather pattern and narrated the tale as such. The introductory voice over by the news reader set the tone for the story saying: “Cleaning up the shattered remains

following a hurricane....it was at this Queenstown time share the hooker blew in....at 3.30am the hurricane smashed his way in.”

The story used a number of file footage incidents to make the point that this was not an isolated incident and gave the impression of being scornful of such behaviour.

Palmer (2000) maintained that scandal was a staple ingredient of popular journalism and that examples of press denunciation of improper conduct on the part of those who ought to behave properly are not difficult to find in all periods of the popular press. (2000:63)

The role of journalists in defining and shaping the notions of social deviance and control were also well outlined by Ericson et al. who argued that they (journalists) are in fact central agents in the reproduction of social order.

“In terms of their ability to choose what to convey, and the huge audience to whom they convey it, journalists possibly have more influence in designating deviance and in contributing to its control than do some of the more obvious agents of control.....as such, journalists play a key role in constituting visions of order, stability and change”.(1978:3).

The story became news primarily because news workers were convinced the incident was something the viewing audience would want to know about. It portrayed, as an ‘actor’, a sporting hero who portrayed himself as a classic example of masculinity. A person who was tough, stoic, aggressive and competitive. (features all exposed in the file clips used) The story was able to reveal him in tears, reduced to talking about his emotions and being overwhelmed by his feelings. It was an example of how likely a story about a powerful or successful person was to contain negative implications about them. Shoemaker & Reese (1991)

The story contained a variety of ‘actors’ many of whom were ‘official sources’ and covered an ‘activity’ which was likely to receive news coverage.

Story nine: Scott Watson Trial:

NOTE: The video tape which accompanies this thesis contains footage from a morning news conference, on the day this story was broadcast the discussion around the topic provided interesting features about how an event becomes a story.

Almost any story set in court becomes a good example of the notion referred to by Gans, Tuchman, et al. of the "routines" within which news is produced. It is also possible to see what Yorke (1995) referred to as "the news machine", processing data as the story is produced.

The story initially came out of the news diary, which all newsrooms keep in order to log upcoming events which they need to plan for. Yorke maintained: "these stories probably account for the majority of stories which appear on television or in newspapers."(1995:20).

This story, since it was about a murder trial was clearly an ongoing event of interest to the general public, so the news values are easily established resulting in it being approved for coverage in that night's news. The day's proceedings in court were discussed at the morning news meeting, (see video tape) and were concerned with the first appearance of the mother's of the two victims. Clearance already existed for a camera inside the courthouse so a second camera was assigned to cover the street, and collect footage of the arrivals at court. Only a few seconds of that arrival was included in the final story which was almost entirely centred on proceeding inside the courthouse.

A strict code of practice surrounds the use of cameras in court, meaning camera operators and reporters tend to be specialists in that activity. The restriction of only one camera which is not able to be moved from its allocated position, (If another channel wants footage they arrange their own recording off the back of the camera) impacts on how it can be used to provide material for news stories. The conventional approach for

obtaining questions and answers for news (interviews) does not work. In fact court stories are somewhat constrained by being simply observations and comments on the proceedings. TVNZ's News and Current Affairs Manual (1998) contains 6 pages of explicit instructions on cameras in court. In quick summary, as they apply to this case they are:

- Any item using in-court footage must be at least 2 minutes long, including voice-over and newsreader intro.
- They must appear in a normal news programme, any other use requires special permission.
- Applications to film in court must be made at least four days before the case, these are passed to defence and prosecution council who have the right to object.
- Witnesses involved in such cases can seek identity protection or exclusion of their testimony from coverage. This includes shots outside the court.
- There are to be no shots of the jury, or the public in court.
- Only one camera permitted, from a fixed position. At least one media person must be in attendance for the whole of sessions being filmed.
- There must be at least one hour between the recording of material and broadcasting it. (1998:31-34)

The rules are strict and breaking them would have consequences for the continuation of the practice, so these are therefore rigidly conformed to.

Material gathered for the story consisted of images of the arrivals at court, video footage of witnesses who sought none of the protections outlined above. It also included images of both counsels and a "stand-up" or "Piece to Camera" which served to link the various pieces of the story together.

For this story a description of the final news item, with some background information is probably the most effective way to discuss it. In Gan's (1979) terms, the story contains 'actors' 'but no real 'sources'. The people who appear in the story are not

strictly sources of information for the story, it is reporting what they said to the court. Court stories originate from the diary and use additional information (evidence etc) which was originally provided for other purposes to drive them. They don't have "sources" in the strictest sense of the term, but the information they provide is used in much the same way. There are exceptions to this, however, if a reporter manages to intercept a member of either counsel or a witness who has no protection, or even an accused under the same circumstances, it is possible to carry out an interview and gain information specifically for the story. Otherwise the story needs to be constructed from the proceedings of the court, and news organisations have little influence over what that might consist of.

This story as it appeared on the bulletin was introduced by the news reader as a "Voice Over" stating. "Day sixteen of proceedings where the mothers of Ben and Olivia were giving evidence against the man accused of murdering their children". This was followed by a dramatic graphic opening shot of a peaceful evening on the Marlborough Sounds with a slowly revolving title with "Sounds Murder Trial" appearing over the image.

Langer (1998) and Fiske(1992) both discussed the notion that news is sometimes produced on the intersection of fiction and documentary, while McQuail (1996), Winch (1987) and Fiske (1987) also referred to occasions when television news becomes similar to other television genres such as Serials and Soap Operas. This story, as does almost any long running trial could be seen in this light in that it possessed both the drama and narrative qualities of such genres.

After the headline introduction, the opening footage of the story briefly depicted both mothers arriving outside court. Followed by a quick cut to the inside, while the news reader related in voice over that the public gallery was full for the occasion. This helped to reinforce why the story was regarded as important for the day. It also reinforced to the viewers the importance of the story. The shots of the court proceedings demonstrate the difficulty of obtaining visuals for such stories. The two mothers had clearly

requested no protection from being filmed and as such were depicted on screen while they gave their replies to questions. Had they asked for protection some form of electronic masking would have been provided. The camera shot in a courtroom story generally depicts the person giving the reply, as they are the centre of interest at that point. Cutaways of counsel etc are recorded at times when no questions are being asked to enable them to be inserted later, during editing. The use of voice over, paraphrased questions then enables counsel to be visually depicted for subsequent questions. There are a number of examples on the story tape of this kind of process. Knowing the background one can understand the direction of the questions asked by counsel and how they contributed to the ongoing nature of both the case and the story. In order to introduce the second victim's mother to the story and outline her evidence a Piece to Camera ("Standupper") was inserted into the bulletin.

As previously outlined these are an onscreen introduction by the reporter, included in order to increase the credibility of the reporter and in effect enhance the authority of the reporter.

Yorke (1995) says of the "standupper" that it is the best and most straightforward method of presenting news on location. He maintains the device has the advantages of immediately establishing the reporters presence on the spot, being extremely easy to execute and presenting the viewers with what he termed a "contingency sample", something from the site to prove the fact that they are (or were) there. (1995:9) Mitchell Stephens in his book *A History of News* (1998) likens the "standupper" to the historical precedent established when the transmission of news was an oral concept, transmitted by runners who would carry news between communities. As the news of most interest to such rural, land based communities was about such things as where the next fresh pastures lay, they would often carry a handful of grass to show that they knew what they were talking about. Stephens termed this era one of "human wireless telegraphy" (1998:23).

Yorke also compared the device to the first men on the moon scooping up a sample of dust to bring back to earth as evidence of what was there.(1995;121)

In other words the "Standupper" in this story was different because it contained an extra element in the sense that it was a "live cross". These "Live Eyes" as they are called, are an interesting device because they take a great deal more to produce than simply filming a "piece to camera" and taking the tape back to the studio to edit it into the story. These are inserted "live" into the bulletin and thus require a high level of planning, training and co-ordination. Some stories suffer from the differences in working routines between what they portray and the daily cycle of routine news production.

This story was a good example, as it was set in a court house, with a nine to five o'clock working day, which needed to be depicted in a news bulletin, broadcast at six o'clock. Therefore, other devices were employed to line up the two different cycles. Live links into stories such as this provide the appearance of a continuity between of the days events, increasing the apparent immediacy between them. "Live segments create a sense of immediacy, of being there and usually also contribute some heightened sense of drama."(Cohen 1987:55)

The live "standupper" was shot on the pavement in front of the courthouse to enable the background of the shot to be appropriate to the story. The "Live Eye" crew set up a mobile camera and audio link via a microwave dish and cellphone connections into the network system enabling the kerbside camera to send images and audio directly into the studio in Auckland. When the main story, by now edited onto tape, reached the point in the bulletin where the reporter was to appear, the link was switched into the studio in Auckland and the tape paused, giving the newsreaders the live image on the screen beside them, and two way communication for question and answers. The reporter on the street could then be "live on air" reporting from the courthouse in Wellington. The reality is that this is merely a device designed to lend credibility (and cost) to the story. Observing the process one quickly realises that this is not an off the cuff, ad-libbed, informal report from the scene, but a well planned, labour intensive, expensive and tightly scripted component of the story. The "live Eye" crew take about an hour to set up, test, run the story and pack up at the end. The reporter appears on the scene five

minutes before the cross, having already written and rehearsed her input . The live insert into this story came close to disaster when, after setting up and framing the shot on the front of the courthouse sign, a clerk going home at the end of his day turned all the lights off. This left the courthouse in darkness and the carefully framed up shot with no “location” information behind it. It would have been pointless going to the trouble and expense of a live cross with no background, so a secondary light was put into the shot to illuminate the courthouse and sign to regain the background. After the live link was completed the tape containing the rest of the story was restarted and the rest of the story completed. In defence of carrying out a “live cross” after the working day has been completed Cohen (1987) maintains that it is important to retain “control” of the situation and this is easier to achieve when the normal daily flow on the location has subsided. The microphone picking up excessive noise such as an ambulance siren or other interference can be somewhat disastrous for a “live cross”.(1987:54)

The Rundown sheet for the bulletin is displayed in appendix 10 and it is possible to see the story spread across items 06, the opening of the story on tape. 07, the live cross.08, the second part of the story on tape. & 08A. (The newsreader’s wrap up comments).

The reason the event became news was because of its ongoing nature as a running story and was justified in terms of providing the public with information which was of interest to them. The fact that the public gallery at the court was full reinforced this decision. The story was populated by “Knowns “in the form of lawyers, who gained their status by being part of a known professional group in society and “Unknowns” as the mothers who fell into the category of both “victims’ and “Participators in unusual activities”. Observing the “actors” in news, it becomes apparent that an extra category is needed, that of people who go from Unknown to Known by virtue of having made a number of appearances in news items. Gans adds “alleged and actual violators” to the known side of his ledger, presumably because they gain status by being processed by the system.(1979:10) As was the case in this story.

Story Ten: Land Protest

By the time this story arrived at the daily news conference it had already been "alive" for a number of days. It initially came from a "phone tip-off" about a land protest and had been an 'ongoing event'.

Local Maori claimed a block of land in Paraparaumu, taken for Public Works in the past, and now no longer required, should be returned to them. The occupation of the land was seen as a protest to make this point.

Images from the protest on previous days had made the late bulletin the night before, and since they depicted a scuffle as protestors were "dragged off", was seen as "worth staying with for now". The details of the story were discussed at the morning news conference and a decision made to send a crew the courthouse to film what might happen since the protestors were charged with trespass.

Note: On the videotape which accompanies this document, some of the content of an early morning news conference is included. The meeting is on the tape primarily to assist in depicting the process which normally occurs at the start of each day, but one of the stories discussed on the tape is this one. The tape provides interesting insights into the apparent informality of the process, and the chaos which the meetings seem to become.

(The section of the tape containing the news conference is only five minutes in duration, not the entire hour which the actual meeting took.)

A reporter and crew were despatched to the Paraparamu courthouse in the hope that some interviews and footage could be obtained. The crew was also covering a Maori language story for "*Te Karare*" so the story was spread across two reporters.

Tribal spokesmen gave a number of interviews which the crew filmed along with the crowds waiting outside the courthouse. In terms of what constitutes news it was clear the footage was going to struggle to provide interesting images to accompany any story which may appear. It was however, interesting to note that TV3 also had a crew on the

story, working the same sources as TVNZ. Apparently they also saw a story in the event. The reporter shot an introductory track to the story on the steps of the courthouse. This, in the words of the journalist was done in that location in order to:

“give the story more weight, a journalist has more credibility when fronting a story.....When you can say see where I am speaking from, this means I am here and I know what I am talking about”. (Interview N)

The crew also travelled to the disputed airfield and shot further footage of the location of the previous days protest, including the sign which depicted what the area was to be used for namely an “Exclusive Mews Housing development”. This footage was also considered very bland and uninteresting, consisting of the vacant land where the protest had been.

On returning to the news room, the previous days footage was reviewed and the story written ready to be sub-edited before the allocation of an editor to edit the story on tape. At this stage of any story the content is instantly available to all other users of the AVSTAR computer system, meaning the story, as written was on line. The computer system also included a description of the images which would accompany the story.

When the story went back to the afternoon news meeting, which keeps an eye on the progress of the bulletin, it was reduced from a minute and a half story which included an on site reporter, to a thirty second “ Reader Voice Over” in which still or moving images were merely narrated over by the news reader. The reporter was not very happy about the loss suggesting “the story was pulled because it had no flames or blood”. The story as it was broadcast is on the tape and contained images of the “dragging away” and the protestors entering the courthouse. However, both reporter and camera operator were unhappy to have their day “wasted” as they regarded it. This was the only story, during the observation period when a prepared story was effectively

dropped. A few others failed to get to air due to time constraints, others had their duration reduced in order to accommodate “bigger” stories.

The event had been “something seen as worth following up” when it appeared on late news as a conflict the previous day. On that occasion it also appeared only as a “Reader Voice Over” using footage depicting police in riot gear dragging protestors away. At the morning news conference next day however there seemed to be a reluctance to allocate much time to the story. But, since the Wellington news room were already planning to send a reporter to court and *Te Karere* also had a place on their schedule, a reporter and crew were despatched. Comments made about the incident can clearly be heard on the video tape of a news conference which accompanies this document. It appears that the Auckland editor was not in favour of allocating it any time. The Wellington bureau chief defended his decision to despatch a crew and won the right to “see what develops”. The story was covered and material collected on tape, but in the end the Auckland editor, being senior to the Wellington one decided against the story and it was reduced to a Voice Over again.

It is quite common in newsrooms when there is competition for space on bulletins for lobbying to take place as to which stories provide the best news. This only occurs on days when either more stories are being produced than are required or when some stories turn out to take twists. The Hurricanes hooker story was a good example of this.. The outcome of this lobbying is that a story is either retained or dropped. The observations associated with this story support the outcome identified by Gans when he observed:

“ News organisations are subjected to universal forms of bureaucratic practice which have no relation to journalism, but do impact on story selection and production.”: he maintained “...senior reporters are usually assigned the stories that are most likely to survive, while younger reporters those likely to be spaced out” (1979:107)

Many occasions were observed during this research when senior staff were not only assigned more likely stories, they also wielded more influence than the junior staff when it came down to defending the retention of their story in an overcrowded bulletin. This story was on the agenda sheet at the morning news conference, and despite some doubts expressed by the Auckland desk did get followed up and written. However looking at the rundown sheet (See appendix 9) it can be seen that by the end of the day the story was down to being a 30 second voice over. This situation which makes any story vulnerable to being dropped off the schedule in order compensate for time over runs. It was also a story which was clearly going to become “stale” quickly and as such was unlikely to appear next day. All these factors combined to render it less newsworthy in the eyes of the Auckland editor.

The Rundown sheet for the bulletin (Appendix 9) does show that a high number of stories were broadcast on that bulletin, which probably also contributed to this story being reduced to a voice over track..

If the notion of news values (Palmer 2000:26) is applied to the story a case can be made as to why this one failed. It clearly failed to meet enough of the criteria to ensure its position in the bulletin, especially on a day when a large number of stories were processed. For example, the time frame in which the story developed was spread out over a number of days making its **frequency** difficult to achieve in a day. A number of comments passed about the event during the news conference indicated the ‘gatekeepers’ in the news room felt it failed to meet the required **threshold**. The confused nature of the story, mostly due to communication weaknesses of the parties involved ensured it failed to score on **clarity** and **cultural proximity** grounds. It did measure up in terms of **composition** as no similar story existed that day but no one person was identified in the initial story eliminating the **personal** aspect of the story. It contained no **elite people or organisations**, it did have a high score in its **negativity** but in comparison to the other stories that were broadcast that day it did not rank highly enough to retain more than a Voice Over status.

The gatekeeping function of the news organisation can be seen at work in the story.

It became apparent while undertaking this project that producing news stories each day was always a struggle against the deadline of the clock. This led to the assumption that one hour was insufficient time to cover the events of the day in a news bulletin. In order to explore this further a simple content analysis was carried out to determine the number of story slots available on any day. After doing this it became apparent that even though the news program occupied an hour, not very much of the space was available to news stories because so much of the bulletin is utilised for other items.

See appendix 4 for details.

Thus an analysis of the decision making process combined with an exploration of the production routines involved in producing television news, confirm many of the points raised about the topic by numerous media commentators. Each potential news event is subjected to a number of forces which determine both form and content of the news stories which are produced. These forces, ranging from who decides what becomes news to the deadline which determines how long each story is, are driven by the need to collect and process news stories in much the same way as any other consumer product. This product needs to be fresh and attractive and must be manufactured at a reasonable cost to ensure it can generate a profit. The profit in terms of TV news is an audience who are sold to advertisers for the program with the hope that they will stay with the channel after the program has finished, when they can be sold again to other advertisers.

Television news is not "what happened", rather it is what someone said about what happened. The production process of television news functions to turn what happened into a narrative form which can be relayed to an audience. In order for that to occur a set of routine practices and customs (the production process) must be followed to enable the construction of events into stories at minimal cost to achieve maximum impact. The highly constructed nature of television news has an impact on who appears and what topics are featured in it.

Chapter Five

CONCLUSIONS

Numerous media analysts have maintained that understanding the forces shaping contemporary television news is not a simple matter. The literature review indicated that it is almost impossible to identify any one reason as to why an event might become a news story, or not. In fact it is more likely to be a combination of a number of factors. The two main questions this research looked at, what events become items on a television news broadcast and who is involved in the decision making process are most often linked together suggesting news is largely dependent on who it is about and how it is constructed. After carrying out this project I have come to similar conclusions.

All the ten stories which were 'shadowed' through their production revealed how influential the daily production practices, codes and professional conventions of news were in determining and altering the content and form through the process. How each event became a news item or 'activity' and who the 'actors' providing sources of information were can be neatly fitted into the notions of "gatekeepers" and 'sources', which seem to be the primary elements creating news.

There appear to be a number of interwoven forces determining which events become news stories. The three primary factors are:

1. ROUTINES: Dependence on daily 'routines', ensuring that sufficient events become processed into stories each day in accordance with a set of professional codes and conventions.
2. GATEKEEPERS: The control exerted over the process by the news producers ('gatekeepers') ensuring access to news channels is largely restricted to predetermined 'activities and actors'.
3. SOURCES: Forces operating outside of the news organization, influencing the passage of events through the 'gates' and into the daily 'routines' of news making. Many of

these became the main 'sources' of information for news including "official" reports and press releases from authoritative institutions.

1. Television news is a unique media product. It is 'produced fresh' each day, but regardless of what occurs, it is shaped to occupy exactly the same time slot each day. Print based media can easily add extra pages if a greater number of newsworthy incidents occur, or reduce them on 'low news' days. Television however, is normally locked in to its scheduled time allocation. Obviously there are occasions when important news 'breaks' outside the allocated timeslot, the 24 hour per day coverage of the terrorist attack on New York on September 11th 2001 being a good example where coverage of the event extended beyond usual "news" time frames.

However, in the normal course of events, a big story, breaking late on television, means another story, one seen as less important is either reduced in length, or eliminated in accordance with the time constraints of the program. The daily 'routines' which news organizations follow in order to produce sufficient stories to fully occupy the schedule indicate a high level of pre-planning, with the running order and duration of each story being determined at the morning news meeting.

This pattern was identified by Schlesinger (1987) in his study of the production process. He argued that the requirements of the daily news cycle mean that most news is prepared in advance. He felt that rather than being spontaneous, or even unanticipated, most news was actually meticulously planned and structured within a framework of firm expectations and guidelines. He concluded that even though events that comprise "the news" may appear 'disorderly' the totality of them which is produced by news filled a predetermined order. (1987: 402). This study confirmed Gan's view on the issue as well. Some of the stories produced during this research had their origins several days before they were broadcast.

2. The stories which do get to air have been subjected to rigorous routines ensuring they conform to a number of criteria. The most important of these is getting noticed in the

first place. Before any event can become news it must be brought to the attention of someone inside the news organization. There are numerous channels for this to occur (see chapter 4).

Once an event has been accepted as a potential news item, it is subjected to a set of routines, customary practices, informal codes, and time constraints which can significantly alter the final form and content of the item.

One of the features of television news which appeared incongruous was how few domestic (on shore) news stories actually get to air each day. Since news consists of an hour of broadcast time, with the average duration for each story being 90 seconds, I expected 20 to 25 stories per day. In reality there were considerably less. Using a simple content analysis to explore the "news hour" revealed that a number of slots in a television news hour were unavailable for news stories as they were already allocated to other items.

See appendix 9 for details

Items such as previews and promotions for upcoming programs, television commercials, slots for sport, the share market, weather, headlines and reviews of what have been in the bulletin and what else is going to appear before the end of it, take up a significant amount of the news hour. This left only a small proportion of the hour to report the days news stories. This is not to suggest that all the above are not important or fall into the category of not informing the viewers, but, once all the above material is added up, approximately 33 minutes of a news hour are left for actual news. Closer analysis indicated half of that time was allocated to international stories leaving between 10 and 15 minutes per night for domestic news stories. (The Holmes show does also cover some domestic stories each night.) (Asking why this occurs,) I was informed that under present arrangements there is no other workable way to ensure news maintains its market share. Broadcasting in New Zealand has always been a curious mix of Public Service Broadcasting combined with commercial obligations. This has created the added burden of needing to return a dividend to its shareholder, the government, accordingly New Zealand has traditionally struggled to

deliver its services in the same way as in other countries. Public Service Broadcasting in many other countries (e.g. Australia, Britain, etc.) means State funding of the activity with the understanding that advertising will not be necessary, or even desirable. The BBC & ABC are cases in point. In New Zealand this means State control of the activity with advertising generating much of the funding, the return from which is used to produce television, provide broadcasting services and pay the dividend.

In New Zealand television the television commercials are required to cover much of the cost of production. The advertising slots during network news are prime time and therefore the most expensive time (per second) of the day. The headlines, promos and previews are required to ensure audience retention for the rest of the night. It is considered that running promos at times when the audience surveys indicate the maximum number of viewers are watching, ensures the largest possible numbers are exposed to later programming, and hopefully retained for the rest of the night. These later slots are then sold to advertisers at lower rates.

The weather, share market update and sport etc are all 'news' items, inform the population and justifiably occupy the space.

The proposed Broadcasting Charter is addressing some of the problems.

3. In order to meet the deadlines which the daily schedule demands, journalists tend to be heavily reliant on "official" news sources to provide quick, accurate and accredited information. In addition, in a commercial news context this also provides a number of cost benefit advantages.

Establishing who was involved in stories covered during the study was a central part of the observation phase of my research.

The process of determining what events became news, was not fully revealed by simply watching. Attending daily news meetings and being prepared to accompany crews to cover stories and where possible assist with the collection of material provided an invaluable

source of information. Here the value of utilizing a participant observation method became inescapable.

News is not something which happens, rather, it is what someone says has happened, or is going to happen. Stories on television news are more often than not reporting an event which has already passed. (Unless a reporter was present, or knew something about the event). The vital element in telling an audience about it is having on tape either a witness or an expert on the topic. For this reason news relies heavily on the accounts of others. News sources are one of the most influential elements in constructing news stories. They also provide another important aspect of many stories, objectivity. Using sources to inform the audience of detail enables journalists to ostensibly avoid any impression of interpretation or bias in stories.

After observing a number of 'official' news conferences I concluded that the practice of heavy reliance on particular 'sources' to provide information for news stories was like feeding bread to sparrows. It feeds them but they get little nutritional value from the practice and more importantly, they become dependent on these "official sources".

Journalists seem to rely quite heavily on information provided by such sources for many of the stories. Time constraints caused by deadlines seemingly a factor in this activity.

One story broke during this project which showed how the heavy reliance on sources can prove to be counterproductive. The story, about a miracle cure for cancer ran in August 1999. It was subsequently the subject of much debate when the facts on which the story was based on proved to be untrue. (see Coddington 1989. & Philip, 1989. For details)

A television news team accepted an "official source" of information for the 'scoop' story as being true, without double checking its validity before running the story. The incident put the hopes of many cancer sufferers up while ensuring the drug company received free publicity on television news for a commercial venture. It was estimated the drug company made around two million dollars in one day. Coddington and Philip were both convinced that commercial influences drove the story enabling a significant profit to be made in the

short time before the story was exposed as a fraud. The story passed the gatekeepers, went right through the daily routine and was handed to a group of journalists to cover using material provided by the primary sources

The incident was a case of the credibility of the sources being assumed to be valid and accurate without investigation or serious critical evaluation.. This was a systemic fault which occurred at all levels of the news operation and indicates how source reliance is an activity fraught with dangers.

There has for some time been recognition in government circles that television news fails to deliver much of what the current government sees as important. The previous government clearly saw television news as a means of generating income and as such the enterprise was set up to maximize profits rather than deliver a service. Numerous media commentators have written at length on the topic. (Abel, 1997. Ballard, 1994. Comrie, 1996. Day, P` 2000. Farnsworth & Norris, 1999. Johnstone , 1998. Winter, 1994 & Wyatt, 1999.)

The current Minister of Broadcasting has developed a 'Broadcasting Charter' which, it is hoped will rectify that and hope to turn television into a public service again.

The centralization of news to main centers, requires a heavy reliance on independent camera operators to provide coverage out side the main center stories. This effectively ensures regional stories always take a back seat to main center stories. It is cost which forces the use of stringers and that cost can be weighed up against the lesser investment required in stories in the main centers. (It is my view that it was a mistake to eliminate regional news.) Many of these remote stories end up as Reader Voice Over's and risk being eliminated for more important main center stories.

Since the data collection for this project was undertaken, news rooms in New Zealand are in the process of becoming fully digital. This enables the field tapes for a story to be loaded into a computer server. Once this has been done, anyone on the system can gain access to

the story, including the associated images. It means that the idea of sharing visuals between stories is easier. The system enables the reporter to begin a simple edit of the visual material as well, speeding up the final editing process. The news editor has instant access to all stories regardless of what state they are in and does not need to find the tape to see the story in terms of sub editing. Completed stories are now able to be played directly out of the server into the news broadcast. At this stage tapes are still made of each story which can be loaded into players as back up in case the server goes down during the news.

As interactive digital subscriber television takes a bigger hold on the information landscape this may well be the first step in allowing audiences to select the stories they are interested in directly from a daily news menu. It is clear that changes are afoot and television news as we know it today, being broadcast at 6.00pm, free to air in linear form, is going to change. Television news will need to reposition itself in order to survive those changes.

After undertaking this project I can fully understand why Anthropologists value such a method for collecting data. Being immersed in the target 'community' which was being studied, provided far more useful information than trying to obtain data any other way. The project could easily have been undertaken doing a content analysis of video tapes recorded over the period, as indeed many other studies have. However, the wealth of extra information gathered during such an observation has been immense. The project felt like a true sabbatical in that not only has it provided a wealth of useful information which will inform and enhance my teaching on the topic, it has also served to revitalize my approach to such an important issue.

Television news does place a 'frame' around a slice of daily 'reality' presented to television audiences. At present, I believe the frame only reveals a close up shot of a much wider picture. The proposed Broadcasting Charter might be one of the elements which can open out the shot to reveal the bigger picture which is waiting to be exposed.

Chapter Six
APPENDICES

Appendix A	Typical daily Production List	P.113
Appendix B	Typical daily Rundown Sheet	P.115
Appendix C	Typical Studio Script (excerpt from)	P.117
Appendix D	News hour Chart	P.121
Appendix E	Script of story one (full)	P.122
Appendix H	Press release faxes (examples)	P.126
Appendix I	Rundown Sheet for stories 9& 10	P.129
Appendix J	Interviews	P.131

Appendix A Typical Daily Production List

20/06/2001 15:54:57 AKLDENPJPRODLISTS.DAILY.WGTN.WEDNESDAY JUNE 20 page 1

SLUG	WRITER	CREATED	EDITOR	M
WEDNESDAY JUNE 20	By grant	On 12/06/2001 12:21:55	Mod grant	By 20

WELLINGTON

Reporters: Mauricio, Heather, Hannah, Mark, and Corinne (L).
 Specialists: Mike, Pat and Arana.
 Gallery: Robyn, Garth (L).
 Mark is sick.

Michelle Pickles is coming in at 2pm - will do a track and live cross for 6 on soccer.

AIR NZ - Air NZ rejects a takeover bid by Qantas in favour of Singapore Airlines. Will be asking the Government to allow Singapore to substantially increase its 25% stake in the company. This will require changes to the foreign ownership rules. Qantas says Singapore Airlines is trying to take control of Australia's second largest arien, Ansett Australia, by the back door.

ACC MARCH - One thousand and twenty people clad in black t-shirts with white crosses on, are expected to gather at Wellington's St Pauls Cathedral near Parliament to highlight the number of home, work and sport related deaths we've had in New Zealand in a year. ACC CEO Gary Wilson will speak while the thousand plus people, from schools, ACC and various other areas, trek through the church. Reps from the LTSA and fire service will also be there among others. Small presser afterwards. Starts 10.20am. See hard file. **HEATHER**

TOP PHOTOS - Top photo prints from Photographer of the Year award on tour. First stop Wgtn, Helen Clark will open exhibition. Margaret Blake will be there and other winners. See hard file. **MOP**

PADDINGTON RAIL CRASH - report out last night at 9pm NZ time. Do we want an interview with the Stewart family who live in Whitby - father works in Johnsonville?? His son Allan died in the crash. **MARK/C**

APPLE ROW - simmering row over the legacy of foreign exchange costs ENZA is saddled with, \$55m and growing. ENZA wants to levy all growers by \$4.50 a carton this season, Govt says it wont help with legislation unless ENZA can prove a majority of growers accept there should be a whip around. ENZA argues all should share the costs before deregulation in October. **HANNAH**

SOLAR POWER - a small but growing number of kiwis are using a solar technology called net metering, which literally makes them into small scale electricity suppliers.. I've got a couple of users who're using solar/net metering technology, plus a guy from main power ltd who can talk on the merits of renewable power - **PAT**

GALLERY**HOUSE SITTING**

TAXATION REVIEW - Report out today from the Taxation Review Committee....2pm presser, Cullen will issue a statement but may not comment further. Review of the whole tax system...almost all options open except a flat tax, to suggest changes and improvements????

Checks and possibles:

CALTEX - Commerce Commission decision due on bid for Challenge

STUDENT LOANES GO OFFSHORE More than 14,000 people who owe almost \$190 million in student loans are now living overseas. Of that, \$10 million is in outstanding debts to borrowers who are not making repayments. The Inland Revenue Department says the figures show some borrowers may be taking a head-in-the-sand approach but it wants people to speak to it, rather than ignore the problem.

MEN AND CANCER The Weta division of the Cancer Society is holding its inaugural CancerSmart seminar. Men

UN WORLD REFUGEE DAY - We are invited to celebrate UN World Refugee Day with the launch of Refugee Family Reunification Trust at the Beehive Foyer 5.30pm to 7.30pm. See hard file.

Also need to check -

1. Murchison skyhawk incident
2. Police camera car operators
3. Wainuiomata prowler
4. Cattle truck crash

GALLERY CHECKS

SELECT COMMS - Laila Harre appearing before Women's Affairs select committee 12-1pm G006. Paid parental leave.

Also SOE's.....hearing from Crown Company Monitoring Advisory Unit, and Health 10.10-12.50pm.

CITY LIFE- Helen Clark presents report on "Quality of Life" in the country's largest cities 3pm Beehive foyer - meeting with mayors of New Zealand's six largest cities.

GENDER CRIMES - Discussion paper due back any day from the Ministry of Justice about gender specific crimes. Phil Goff update may be today....wants to change laws so women who sexually abuse boys are treated as seriously as men. Judith Ablett Kerr says the law society would support the move.

ABORTION PILLS - Check with Ministry of Health when decision is expected on abortion pills. (Should be in a week.)

BATTERED WOMEN - May be tabled today. Merepeka Raukawa Tait says it can be a matter of "kill or be killed" - i/v with her shot already.

BOP BILL - BOP Regional Council (Maori Constituency Empowering) Bill - Nandor and Rod speaking on it 4pm. Committee stage.

Appendix B Typical daily Rundown Sheet.

dick Tue Jul 5 18:37 page 1

							JCSOR1
0	05/07/99	DNN	DA: ANDERSEN	60.10	0:00	0:00	0:00 -29:14R
1	OPENING		NKEY VT A	REDA	0:25	0:47	0:47 -29:14R
2	COLD START		NCOL CT 4	RE/A	.17	0:17	1:04 -28:27R
3	BABY INQUIRY	j LORELEI	N230 VT D	REDK	2.19	02:44	3:48 -28:10R
4	THE LESSONS	j LORELEI	NGRA VT A	REDA	0:00	0:29	4:17 -25:25R
5	FAMILIES	r KAREN	N231 VT B	RE/a	1:36	01:45	6:02 -24:57R
5A	BABIES B/A	r KAREN	spkn	RE	0:00	0:06	6:08 -23:12R
6	WATSON EXTENDED	JEMMA	WATS VT C MCR1	PC REDA	2.02	02:26	8:34 -23:06R
7	LIVE EMMA	j EMMA	MCR2 wgtm	LE REDA	0:00	0:14	8:48 -20:40R
8	SECOND MOTHER	x EMMA	MCR1	PC RE/A	2.21	02:21	11:09 -20:26R
8A	TRIAL B/A		spkn	RE/A	0:00	0:07	11:16 -18:05R
9	EAST TIMOR	r EWART	N243 VT B	vo REDA	0:00	0:22	11:38 -17:58R
9	SOPHIE WESSEX	j IL/BBC	BN19 VT D	s REDA	1.24	01:39	13:17 -17:35R
	1st BKTHROW		N201 VT A B00B	RE/A	0.05	0:23	13:40 -15:57R
1	1810 COMM BK	\$-\$-\$-\$-	\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$	\$- REDA	3.30	03:30	17:10 -15:34
1	PROMO PH 1810		PKEY VT C	RE	0:00	0:18	17:28 -12:04R
1	PART #2 *Sting*	hawkes	NCBK VT A	REDA	0:04	0:04	17:32 -11:45R
	ELLIS APPEAL	r ROBYN	MCR1	PC RE/A	1.57	02:19	19:51 -11:42R
	HEROIN SENTENCE	JAUCK	N241 VT B	vo REDA	0:00	0:23	20:14 - 9:23R
	BREAST CANCER	r MICH/CH9	BN14 VT C	s REDA	1:15	01:27	21:41 - 9:00R
A	BREAST B/A	r	spkn	REDA	0:00	0:05	21:46 - 7:33R
	BUZZY BEE	j SONYA	MCR1	CH REDA	1.24	01:33	23:19 - 7:28R
	2nd BKTHROW		N204 VT A STIT	RE/A	0.05	0:21	23:40 - 5:55R
	1820 COMM BK	\$-\$-\$-\$-	\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$	\$- REDA	3.30	03:30	27:10 - 5:34
	PROMO PH 1820		PKEY VT C	RE	0:13	0:21	27:31 - 2:04R
	PART #3 *Sting*	hawkes	NCBK VT A	REDA	0:04	0:04	27:35 - 1:43R
	CHILD ABUSE	j PAUL	N232 VT B	RE/A	1.38	01:56	29:31 - 1:39R

dick Tue Jul 5 18:37 page 2

AIRPORT PROTEST	rJODI	MCR1	vo	PC	REDA	0:00	0:29	30:00	0:17R
LAST POWER	j BRENT	MCR1		CH	REDA	1:10	01:24	31:24	0:45R
SHAREMARKET	r LIVE SGI	CT 2			RE/A	0:00	0:34	31:58	2:10R
CROSS STITCHING	jJANELLE	MCR1		PC	REDA	1:36	01:48	33:46	2:44R
HEAD 1 MOTHERS	r	N2H1	VT A		RE/A	0:00	0:17	34:03	4:32R
A HEAD 3 BABY	r	N2H3	VT B		RE/A	0:00	0:17	34:20	4:49R
3rd BKTHROW	rj A' CUE	N207	VT C	THUG	REDA*	0.05	0:33	34:53	5:06R
1840 COMM BK	\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$				REDA	3.35	03:35	38:28	5:39
PART #4 *Sting*	hawkes	NCBK	VT A		REDA	0:04	0:04	38:32	9:14R
SPRINGBOOKS	HAMISH	MCR1		CH	REDA	1:22	01:36	40:08	9:18R
ALL BLACKS	DISOMMA	MCR1		CH	RE/A	1:24	01:32	41:40	10:54R
RALLY CARS	MARY	N236	VT B	vo	RE/A	0.00	0:38	42:18	12:26R
TOUR DE FRANCE	SSTUART	L241	VT C	vo	REDA	0:05	0:30	42:48	13:04R
A STANDINGS	SSTUART		SS +	spkn	REDA	0:00	0:11	42:59	13:34R
SOCCER WRAP	STEVEN	L240	VT D		REDA	1:25	01:39	44:38	13:45R
NORTH SYDNEY	BULLOCK	N237	VT B		RE	1.23	01:37	46:15	15:24R
GOLF RANKINGS	SSTUART		SS +	spkn	REDA	0:00	0:21	46:36	17:01R
GOLF DRIVE	SSTUART	B283	VT D	vo	REDA	0:03	0:23	46:59	17:22R
4th BKTHROW		N210	VT A	WEB	REDA	0.05	0:20	47:19	17:45R
PROMO PH 1850		PKEY	VT C		R	0:04	0:20	47:39	18:05R
1850 COMM BK	\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$				REDA	4.05	04:05	51:44	18:25
PART #5 *Sting*	hawkes	NCBK	VT A		REDA	0:04	0:04	51:48	22:30R
1XTRA WEB SITE	j IL/CBS	N239	VT B		REDA	2:07	02:25	54:13	22:34R
MP3 B/A	jr			spkn	REDA	0:00	0:10	54:23	24:59R
WEATHER	NORMAL	WX01	VT D	pic	R	3:06	04:15	58:38	25:09R
Kicker POSH	r IULIA	N240	VT D	vo	REDA	0:00	0:18	58:56	29:24R
CLOSER				spkn	REDA	0.05	0:18	59:14	29:42R

Appendix C Typical Studio Script. (4 pages of 57)

01 1 OPENING

(PRESENTERNAME)

=====

CAM 3 WS

VT A

[PREKEY VT A]

<VT A UNDA THRU TEASES>

*CG1 NPRE JOHN HAWKESBY

JUDY BAILEY

MIX CAM 2 2SHOT

.....HAWKES/JUDY

[2]<HAWKES>

GOOD EVENING NEW ZEALAND, LEADING
YOUR NEWSHOUR...

TAKE VT B

.....

<CUE HAWKES>

NTZ1V/O

HAWK

VT B FX UNDA

ALL BLACK APOLOGY

AN ALL BLACK BREAKS DOWN AS HE
SAYS SORRY FOR HIS DRUNKEN ANTICS.
VT B SND UP 4"LW: I HAVE LET YOU DOWN WITH MY
BEHAVIOUR ..PAUSE..AND THAT SHAMES
ME.

NTZ2V/O

JUDY

VT B SND UNDA 17"

FAMILY FAREWELLS

<CUE JUDY>

EMOTIONAL FAREWELLS TO THREE MEN
MYSTERIOUSLY GASSED IN A CITY
SEWER.

01 2 OPENING

VT B SND UP

NTZ3 V/O

HAWK

THE KING IS DEAD

LW: QUICK WAILING FX

<CUE HAWKES>

VT B SOUND UP

DUR: 02"

LW: QUICK WAILING FX

*SORROW AS THE WORLD MOURNS THE
LOSS OF JORDAN'S PEACE-LOVING
LEADER.*

NTZ4 V/O

JUDY

STREETS APART

<CUE JUDY>

*AND TV SOAP STARS FROM A MUCH
LOVED STREET ARRIVE IN OUR
NEIGHBOURHOOD.*

VT B SND UP 5 "

DUR: .."

LW: COME AND LIVE HERE HAH HAH

VT C

VT C <SOUND UP>

LW: THEME

DUR: ?? MIX OUT

NB: MUSIC CHANNELS BACK TO MONO

02 1 NORM PRESSER h

(PRESENTERNAME)

CAM 3

LMS.....HAWKES

[3]<HAWKES>

TONIGHT'S TOP STORY .. TEARS AS AN ALL BLACK ADMITS HE'S BATTLING BOOZE.

NORM HEWITT SAYS HE HAS A SERIOUS DRINKING PROBLEM.

HE WAS INVOLVED IN A DRUNKEN INCIDENT IN QUEENSTOWN ON FRIDAY NIGHT.

HEWITT FRIGHTENED A YOUNG COUPLE WHEN HE TRIED TO SMASH HIS WAY INTO THEIR HOME.

AMBULANCE STAFF SAY THE HOOKER COULD HAVE DIED FROM HIS INJURIES

WE'LL HEAR FROM HIS RUGBY BOSSES SHORTLY.

BUT JUST A SHORT TIME AGO.. NORM HEWITT SPOKE OF HIS SHAME.

=====

MCR1 [PC]

MCR1

PREKEY

*CG1 SLD WELLINGTON

04"

*CG1 DBL NORM HEWITT

ALL BLACK HOOKER

DUR: 1.'14"

LW:..ONE NETWORK NEWS"

03 1 HEWITT Q'TOWN b

(PRESENTERNAME)

CAM 1 LMS.....JUDY

[1]<JUDY>

NORM HEWITTS PUBLIC APOLOGY STEMS FROM A DRUNKEN BINGE IN QUEENSTOWN AT THE WEEKEND.

A BINGE THAT ENDED WHEN HEWITT SMASHED A WINDOW AT A TIME-SHARE APPARTMENT.

THE TERRIFIED OWNERS CALLED POLICE... WHO'VE DESCRIBED HEWITT AS BEING GROSSLY INTOXICATED.

HAMISH CLARK REPORTS FROM QUEENSTOWN.

=====

MCR1 [CHCH]

MCR1

PREKEY

*CG1 SLD QUEENSTOWN

12"

*CG1 DBL INSP. PHIL JONES

QUEENSTOWN POLICE

1:

*CG1 DBL ELAINE GORTON

ST. JOHN AMBULANCE

26"

*CG1 DBL HAMISH CLARK

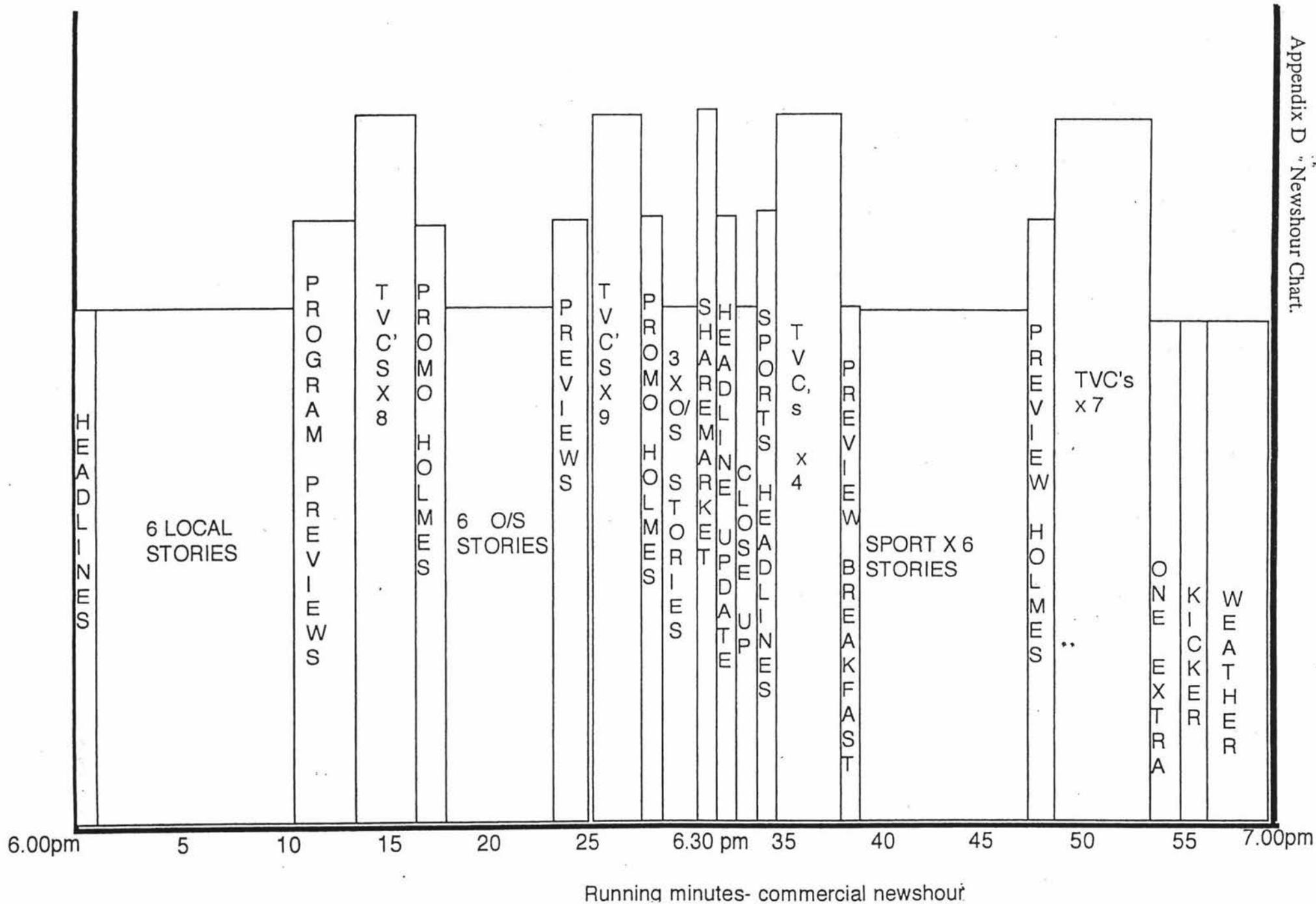
QUEENSTOWN

45-47"

*CG1 DBL MARK GABITES

ST. JOHN AMBULANCE

ONE NETWORK NEWS



Appendix D "Newshour Chart."

Appendix E Full script for story 1.

08 1 PETROL WARS h (PRESENTERNAME)

=====

CAM 3 MCU

.....<HAWKES>

[3]<HAWKES>

KEY ADO L/SS [PETROL WARS]

MOTORISTS IN HAMILTON ARE
ENJOYING THE LOWEST PETROL PRICES
IN THE COUNTRY.

THEY'RE PROFITING FROM A FIERCE
PRICE WAR BETWEEN FIVE SERVICE
STATIONS IN ONE PART OF THE CITY.

MICHAEL HOLLAND'S BEEN TO THE
BATTLE ZONE .. STATE HIGHWAY ONE'S
TE RAPA STRAIGHT.

=====

VT C

VT C

PREKEY

*CG1 SLD HAMILTON

12"-15"

*CG1 DBL SELWYN COOK

SHELL STATION MANAGER

56"

*CG1 DBL MICHAEL HOLLAND

HAMILTON

1'05"

*CG1 DBL JIM HANLEY

GULL PETROLEUM

1'09"-11"

*CG1 DBL ANTONIUS PAPASPIROPOULOS

SHELL NEW ZEALAND LTD

DUR: 1'19"

LW: ONE NETWORK NEWS."

becht

Thu Feb 4 17:07 page 1

JCSCRI

PETROL WARSholland

RE

0:00 01:15

R

*

AST:

*

Thu Feb 4 16:32 1999JOBNOMOD:Thu Feb 4 17:07 1999 becht

FUELLING A HIGH OCTANE FEUD.

PRICES IN ONE POCKET OF HAMILTON ARE
VOLATILE ...TUMBLING AT TIMES TO BE
THE LOWEST IN THE COUNTRY.

GRAB SELWYN COOK

SHELL STATION MANGER 11'53"

"WE'VE BEEN AS LOW AS 72.5 AND IT'S
REALLY EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN THAT AND
WHAT WE HAVE NOW..78.5."

THAT COMPARES TO 79.9 CENTS FOR 91
UNLEADED IN AUCKLAND ..AND THE HIGH 80S
IN THE SOUTH ISLAND.

TE RAPA PUMP PRICES ARE CHANGING UP TO

becht

Thu Feb 4 17:07 page 2

THREE TIMES A DAY.

ACTUALITY JIM HANLEY

GULL PETROLEUM 11'40"

"WE'VE JUST DONE A PRICE CHECK AND
EVERYONE IS MATCHING US."

THE MAJORS SAY IT'S ONLY COINCIDENCE A
NEW PLAYER HAS SET UP NEAR THE FEUDING
STATIONS.

TODAY ...FOR REASONS NO-ONE COULD
EXPLAIN ..PRICES WERE AT THEIR HIGHEST
FOR MORE THAN A WEEK.

GRAB OLD PUNTER

WHAT'S IT? 78.5

YESTERDAY IT WAS 72.5?

OH..MISSED OUT BY A DAY."

PIECE TO CAMERA

SCOUTS FROM COMPETING SERVICE STATIONS
ARE CONSTANTLY DOING THE ROUNDS
CHECKING ON THE OPPOSITION. DURING OUR
SHORT TIME HERE, A COMPETITOR HEARD
THIS BOARD WAS CHANGING AND WAS
STRAIGHT IN HIS CAR TO SEE WHICH WAY
PRICES WERE MOVING.

becht

Thu Feb 4 17:07 page 3

AND IF A COMPETITOR'S LOWER ..THE
OTHERS FOLLOW UNTIL IT STARTS TO HURT.

GRAB JIM HANLEY

GULL PETROLEUM 8'10"

"THE PRICE HAS TO COME BACK UP FROM
TIME TO TIME TO MAKE A BIT OF PROFIT."

GRAB SHELL CORPORATE MAN 4'11"

"THE MARGINS ARE SLIM, WE ARE COMPETING
HARD."

BUT WHEN THE GOING'S GOOD ...WHY NOT BE
CHEEKY.

GRAB YOUNG GUY 3'02"

"THEY COULD DROP IT LOWER IF THEY
WANTED."

MICHAEL HOLLAND, ONE NETWORK NEWS.



ALLIANCE

**Jim
Anderton MP**
Alliance leader

**N
E
W
S**

H Examples of press releases
Max Bradford caused Central Otago power fiasco

Immediate release

6 July 1999

Alliance leader Jim Anderton says the power fiasco in Central Otago is a damning indictment of the Government's failed energy policies.

"The time taken to restore power to rural customers in central Otago is a debacle.

"No policy could have stopped the weather from causing an outage. But when the lines went down, the small local electricity companies used to get them fixed.

"Small, locally-owned companies knew the area when customers rang up and told them the lines were down. A Central Otago-based operator would not have confused Hawea with Hawera or Glenorchy with Glendowie.

"Now the Shipley Government has forced local companies to sell their businesses to giant overseas-owned corporates and when you ring up to report a problem you're likely to get an operator in Auckland or, worse, Melbourne.

"There also seems to be a suspicion among people who used to work for the old electricity company that the new one is so big, it can't cope when it gets inundated with problems, as happened last weekend.

"The severe weather problems of the last week have been one of the first tests of the Government's energy policies, and they have clearly failed," Jim Anderton said.

For further comment contact:



Issued by the
Alliance media unit.
Contact John Pagani



Labour Spokesperson on Energy

The logo for Labour New Zealand 2000, featuring a stylized flag icon to the left of the word "Labour" in a large, bold, serif font, with "New Zealand 2000" in a smaller, italicized serif font below it.

Pete Hodgson

Member of Parliament for Dunedin North
Contact Phone: +64-4 471 9118
Mobile Phone: 025 340 668

Media Statement

6 July 1999

Bradford's Central Otago report facile, fictional

Labour's energy spokesperson Pete Hodgson has described the Ministry of Commerce's report into the Central Otago power cuts as facile and fictional.

"The idea that the power reforms has probably made things better is as credible as saying that the price of electricity is plummeting. The communication difficulties that were experienced were a direct result of the reforms. They would have been made worse if the Government's favourite retailer, First Electric, had entered the Central Otago market because its call centre is in Australia.

"By contrast the amalgamation of lines companies made no difference, because staff were brought in from Invercargill and Oamaru, outside Delta's ownership area.

"I think the report should have just thanked the staff who worked so long and hard, as well as the residents for their stoic forbearance. Trying to turn a serious event like this into a sales pitch for the reforms is a thoroughly desperate action from a thoroughly dismal minister."

ENDS

Contact: 04 471 9118



06/07/99 18:07:12 OFFICE OF HON ROGER?-> 64 4 4958043 TELECOM SMARTFAX Page 001
07-06-99 18:02 FROM-HON ROGER SOWRY +64-4-4733698 T-003 P.01/01 F-190



Hon. Roger Sowry
National MP

Minister of Social Services,
Work and Income
Leader of the House

6 July 1999

Media release

Kenepuru Hospital's future is assured.

An article in tonight's Evening Post claiming Kenepuru's emergency services may close is misleading, said the Hon Roger Sowry, list MP for Otaki.

"I'm unhappy that one sentence out of a stack of documents, can be taken out of context, creating unnecessary concern for many of Kapiti residents."

The full statement from Capital Coast Health makes it clear that there has been no such decision taken.

"I'm fully supportive of the existing services at Kenepuru staying in place, in fact I'd like to see those services extended further up the Kapiti Coast."

Mr Sowry said the Health Minister's recently-announced hospital services plan ensures current level of services will stay in place at hospitals all around the country for at least the next three years..

ENDS

Inquiries:
Belinda Milnes
press secretary
(04) 471 9787
(025) 334-783

Appendix Rundown Sheets for Stories 9 & 10.

dick Tue Jul 6 18:37 page 1

JCSOR1

0	05/07/99	DNN	DA: ANDERSEN	60.10	0:00	0:00	0:00	-29:14R
1	OPENING		NKEY VT A	REDA	0:25	0:47	0:47	-29:14R
2	COLD START		NCOL CT 4	RE/A	.17	0:17	1:04	-28:27R
3	BABY INQUIRY	j LORELEI	N230 VT D	REDK	2:19	02:44	3:49	-28:10R
4	THE LESSONS	j LORELEI	NGRA VT A	REDA	0:00	0:29	4:17	-25:25R
5	FAMILIES	r KAREN	N231 VT B	RE/a	1:36	01:45	6:02	-24:57R
5A	BABIES B/A	r KAREN	spkn	RE	0:00	0:06	6:08	-23:12R
6	WATSON EXTENDED	JEMMA	WATS VT C MCR1 PC	REDA	2:02	02:26	8:34	-23:06R
7	LIVE EMMA	j EMMA	MCR2 wgn LE	REDA	0:00	0:14	8:48	-20:40R
8	SECOND MOTHER	x EMMA	MCR1 PC	RE/A	2:21	02:21	11:09	-20:26R
8A	TRIAL B/A		spkn	RE/A	0:00	0:07	11:15	-18:05R
9	EAST TIMOR	r EWART	N243 VT B vo	REDA	0:00	0:22	11:38	-17:58R
10	SOPHIE WESSEX	j IL/SBC	BN19 VT D s	REDA	1:24	01:39	13:17	-17:35R
11	1st BKTHROW		N201 VT A B00B	RE/A	0:05	0:23	13:40	-15:57R
12	1810 COMM BK	\$-\$-\$-\$-	\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-	REDA	3:30	03:30	17:10	-15:34
13	PROMO PH 1810		PKEY VT C	RE	0:00	0:18	17:28	-12:04R
14	PART #2 *Sting*	hawkes	NCBK VT A	REDA	0:04	0:04	17:32	-11:46R
15	ELLIS APPEAL	r ROBYN	MCR1 PC	RE/A	1:57	02:19	19:51	-11:42R
16	HERDIN SENTENCE	jAUCK	N241 VT B vo	REDA	0:00	0:23	20:14	- 9:23R
17	BREAST CANCER	r MICH/CH9	BN14 VT C s	REDA	1:15	01:27	21:41	- 9:00R
18	BREAST B/A	r	spkn	REDA	0:00	0:05	21:45	- 7:33R
19	BUZZY BEE	j SONYA	MCR1 CH	REDA	1:24	01:33	23:19	- 7:25R
20	2nd BKTHROW		N204 VT A STIT	RE/A	0:05	0:21	23:40	- 5:55R
21	1820 COMM BK	\$-\$-\$-\$-	\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-	REDA	3:30	03:30	27:10	- 5:34
22	PROMO PH 1820		PKEY VT C	RE	0:13	0:21	27:31	- 2:04R
23	PART #3 *Sting*	hawkes	NCBK VT A	REDA	0:04	0:04	27:35	- 1:43R

dick Tue Jul 5 18:37 page 2

2	AIRPORT PROTEST	rJODI		MCR1	vo	PC	REDA	0:00	0:29	30:00	0:17R
2	LAST POWER	j BRENT		MCR1		CH	REDA	1:10	01:24	31:24	0:45R
2	SHAREMARKET	r LIVE SGI		CT 2			RE/A	0:00	0:34	31:58	2:10R
2	CROSS STITCHING	jJANELLE		MCR1		PC	REDA	1:36	01:48	33:46	2:44R
2	HEAD 1 MOTHERS	r	N2H1	VT A			RE/A	0:00	0:17	34:03	4:32R
A	HEAD 3 BABY	r	N2H3	VT B			RE/A	0:00	0:17	34:20	4:49R
2	3rd BKTHROW	rj A' CUE	N207	VT C	THUG		REDA*	0:05	0:33	34:53	5:06R
2	1840 COMM BK	-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$					REDA	3:35	03:35	38:28	5:39
2	PART #4 *Sting*	hawkes	NCBK	VT A			REDA	0:04	0:04	38:32	9:14R
2	SPRINGBOOKS	HAMISH		MCR1		CH	REDA	1:22	01:36	40:08	9:18R
2	ALL BLACKS	DISOMMA		MCR1		CH	RE/A	1:24	01:32	41:40	10:54R
2	RALLY CARS	MARY	N236	VT B	vo		RE/A	0:00	0:38	42:18	12:26R
2	TOUR DE FRANCE	SSTUART	L241	VT C	vo		REDA	0:05	0:30	42:48	13:04R
A	STANDINGS	SSTUART		SS +	spkn		REDA	0:00	0:11	42:59	13:34R
2	SOCCER WRAP	STEVEN	L240	VT D			REDA	1:25	01:39	44:38	13:45R
2	NORTH SYDNEY	BULLOCK	N237	VT B			RE	1:23	01:37	46:15	15:24R
2	GOLF RANKINGS	SSTUART		SS +	spkn		REDA	0:00	0:21	46:36	17:01R
2	GOLF DRIVE	SSTUART	B283	VT D	vo		REDA	0:03	0:23	46:59	17:22R
2	4th BKTHROW		N210	VT A	WEB		REDA	0:05	0:20	47:19	17:45R
3	PROMO PH 1850		PKEY	VT C			R	0:04	0:20	47:39	18:05R
3	1850 COMM BK	-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$					REDA	4:05	04:05	51:44	18:25
2	PART #5 *Sting*	hawkes	NCBK	VT A			REDA	0:04	0:04	51:48	22:30R
2	IXTRA WEB SITE	j IL/CBS	N239	VT B			REDA	2:07	02:25	54:13	22:34R
3	MP3 B/A	jr			spkn		REDA	0:00	0:10	54:23	24:59R
2	WEATHER	NORMAL	WX01	VT D	pic		R	3:06?	04:15	58:38	25:09R
2	Kicker PDSH	r IULIA	N240	VT D	vo		REDA	0:00	0:18	58:56	29:24R
2	1850 COMM BK	-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$					REDA	0:05	0:18	59:14	29:40R

Appendix J

INTERVIEWS

Interview A

Are there a set of criteria which determine what turns an incident into a story, or not ?

Depends on what the incident is obviously, how big it is, how many people does it effect. Is it interesting, does it have pictures, will the story have a major impact on people. plus the day on which it happens, how does it compare with others stories, judgement call discussed with Auckland, a story which may make the bulletin one day might end up being only a VO on the following day, or might not make it at all. That is the nature of news any story is only as good as those it has to compete with. Also depends on the mix of the bulletin. if we have a lot of hard institutionally based stories and a good Human interest story which we may be lacking for say the end of the first segment that may influence us to cover it. Basically it must have good images, be relevant, have an effect on people, and must be gettable, depends where it happens e.g. remote area at 4pm we might have to pass on it, or it might be a VO or a phone in but its prominence and the amount of resources we put into it will also depend on its location, and the timing. Timing is important, if it happens at 5.30 we do our best but it wont be as extensively covered if it happens at 10 am.

There are not really any no nos except suicides, because we have a strict code of ethics on what we can report on in relation to suicides. Also in the areas of defamation and liable. eg politicians outside the house, so bad taste, defamation and suicide are the areas we keep away from. If we have doubts we refer to a legal dept in TVNZ We have a policy of referring upwards. So many fishhooks in some stories.

What is it that defines a credible source ?

They don't have to be someone who is well known but do need to have credentials in their area. If it just for info are they trustworthy, do they have a hidden agenda, are they

supplying accurate info, sometimes we use multiple sources to double check, depends on the story.

What impact does budget have on news ?

Normally we use common sense you need to weigh up the expenditure at present we are restricting the use of stringers etc., journos are travelling budget, if a big story breaks such as a big air crash we will do whatever is required There is no annual news budget, but we need to justify our spending and if we spend on a story which does not pan out we need to make economies on others.

What contribution do news readers have on the script ?

They are involved in the process, they attend the 2pm meeting, talk closely with the lineup producers they get briefing notes and talk to the reporter of a live cross to get up to speed. They do have a script for their comments, it is not ad libbed . They don't have any say in the report as it goes to air. The reporter writes the dialogue which is subbed for form and content by a senior person, nothing written by a reporter goes straight to air without being subbed. The final decisions are made by editorial staff.

How important are ratings ?

Vital, because we need to rate. Obviously 6.00 news is a flagship for TV1 so we are required to deliver news that rates . If we rated badly we would not be happy with what we are doing. One news rates well and if it didn't we would not have the resources or the staff, so it is in our best interests to keep it rating well. There is a requirement that one news delivers an audience to television which will take it through the night. If you don't have a good audience for the news its hard to pick them up later in the night. as TV journos we want to appeal to as many as possible and have them watch so as not to feel that our day has been wasted. We try to be credible and accurate, but there is the problem in that we have to appeal to everybody, many critics say they don't like one news, they may accuse us of being shallow, etc. but we have to cater for the whole spectrum of NZers, not just for those who listen to morning report and read the Independent or NBR and listen to Checkpoint. We have to cater to those but also to

those who are out all day and don't have a chance to read a paper or those who are happy that one news is their only means of catching up with the news of the day.

Personal opinion, we have a greater responsibility to them than to someone who is already well informed. So, we can't become too elitist or we don't serve those who we are here to serve. It is interesting that we do get accused of being once over lightly but we often do 3 times as much information, in terms of the number of words and images imparted to tell a story. I think we cover in more depth than newspapers often.

Using the notion of 3 words per second we can impart a great deal of information.

Define a closeup ?

A story keyed to an important event of the day, has a fairly loose brief, but must be a companion piece, a further explanation of something else in the news, could be a further explanation, or another angle of an earlier story, has to be tied to news of the day.

A kicker ?

Something which is a nice way to leave the bulletin, has to be different, up, sharper shorter and finishes the bulletin on a positive note.

One extra (now Insight) ?

Is now called Insight, it was introduced early this year, it is an in depth look at a story which might not run in the bulletin, it is generally an issue, e.g. problems in rethomes, trade with Indonesia, Pollution, the Chubb robbery, could be an individual story or could stretch out over 2 or 3 nights. Can be up to 5 mins, they are important and interesting stories that may not have a news peg but are of interest to the country.

Person of the week ?

Someone who has done or said something interesting during the week, or involved in an activity, a charity, a sportsperson they are news themselves, or part of something which has been in the news. to try and find out a bit more about the person, and what motivates them etc.

What/who decides on the lead story and when does it happen ?

Mostly instinct, done by the line-up producer and the editor of daily news with input from other heads . We have a fair idea at the beginning of the day what is likely to be the lead, but that can change throughout the day. One day we had 5 different leads, as none of them stood out as definitive. Today for example there is no obvious lead story. Some days it is obvious, other days we have to wait for one to become more important. Each Bureau puts up stories from their region, these are discussed at the meetings where the run down list is generated and refined. Reporters are then assigned to research the story, grab a crew and shoot the material, log their footage, and see it through editing. The stories are sub edited and prior to and checked after tape editing, where they are refined. The library and sometimes another bureau may also contribute to a story, maybe a stringer from another area, who is fed the questions by a reporter and sends in only the replies, could be a phone up which is recorded as replies only. When completed it is sent via the satellite into the bulletin from here or any of the bureau's.

Weekly / monthly planning meetings ?

We have a weekly planning meeting on a Wednesday which is for half of this week and half of next. Looking at what we are doing whether we are doing the right stories, getting started on stories we know are coming up. On Thursday we have a planning meeting with news and current affairs discuss what each are planing to cover so we don't all chase the same stories down.

News Dairy ?

This is looked after by the assignment desk reporters put items into it which are coming up it is everyone's responsibility to keep this up to date and informed

Where do story ideas come from, do they come from journos?

Not enough, but they do bring some in. most of them come from press releases, contacts, follow-ups, newspapers, radio, gossip., emergency radio bands, phone ins,

Is there a debrief / analysis after the bulletins ?

We don't any longer, but we found it made the day very long and could go on for 45 mins, and could become a bit negative as well. It's done more on a one to one basis as and when required. If anything goes really astray we get a call from Auckland and we sort it out.

Does news conference include the satellites ?

No the Bureau's handle that for their area

Who decides on the final running order ?

A combination of the line up producer and the editor of daily news, who has the final say. It can still be changing while the bulletin is running, if a story is running late for editing or something does not pan out it gets bumped during the news.

Software program which news is run on

AVSTAR everyone has access to it from the moment something is in the system all the data is on line. I can sub a story who is in Gisborne, They talk to me on the top line while I sub the story below.

Are there night / duty staff ?

Only in Auckland now, we don't man after late news, we come back in for breakfast news. Auckland have someone on duty, monitoring the whole country and they call us if anything breaks. Police, fire ambulance is now done by call centres so they can be monitored in one place. We get people out to anything which needs to be followed up.

Interview B.

Who are the people who "touch" a story on its way through the process and what do they do?

Stories are normally either found by reporters, through good contacts, or come through the assignment desk via press release or a phone call". The "news dairy" where a record of upcoming events is kept provide indicators for known events.

The use of scanners to monitor police, fire and ambulance radio frequencies also provides pointers to stories.

Story ideas are compiled by the Assignment Co-ordinator and run by the Bureau Chief who decides what should go onto the production list for discussion at either the morning or afternoon news meeting. These meetings are attended by the Editor and Deputy Editor Daily News, Line Up and Assistant Line Up Producers, Planning Editor, New Media representatives and the Bureau Chiefs from the Wellington and Christchurch news rooms (plus any reporting staff from those offices with ideas to contribute). These meetings are also attended by both the Foreign and Sports Editors. From the early morning news conference the daily news is largely "struck" The majority of what will appear that day has largely been determined. However, if anything "breaks" during the day its importance is evaluated against what is already in the mix for the day.

Stories which get commissioned at the news meeting are assigned to a reporter who has the task of pursuing it

Once the reporter has backgrounded the story they will request a camera operator and often the assistance of a News Video Researcher, to gather file vision. A reference librarian may also be used to assist in gathering further background information.

The Line Up producer then meets with the head of Graphics to determine still images which will be required to support the stories being followed and give them plenty of time to produce them.

The reporter, having researched the background of the story has produced a list of who the main players in the story are plus an outline of questions and further detail or information which will be required to tell the story.

The reporter and camera operator then go out and film the material needed plus any interviews or comments required. If the story warrants it a possibility exists to "live eye" the reporter from the scene into the story while it is running during the bulletin. This needs an extra field operator to set up, co-ordinate and run the live feed.

On returning, the reporter shot lists the story and writes the script detailing which grabs of video and interviews etc. best depict the story. If the reporter is staying out for a live feed the tape gets rushed back in with a script and another person does the intro to the story, usually the News Reader

This is then submitted to Bureau Chief who sub-edits it

The Tapes containing the material and the voice over script for the final version of the story is then edited into a (typically) 90 second story on tape.

While editing is underway, the Line Up Producer checks the story (by now it is on line) and confirms both its place and duration in the "Run Down" (At the A.M. news meeting decisions as to the duration of each story are determined, this enables the reporter to fit the story into the timeslot allocated (Normally a maximum of 90secs) and avoids problems with needing to trim duration's down later and risk losing the sense of the story.

In the studio the Director and Assistant Director determine camera requirements for News Readers, allocate VCR playouts for material on tape, determine the keys (graphics) required for each story and determine in and out points for the story in the bulletin.

The entire script, what is in the story, plus the words for the News Reader is already "on line" and the Auto Cue Operators need to determine that it is on the script in the right place for the bulletin, they also print out hard copies for the News Readers and control room staff so they can track the progress of the bulletin and know when they are to contribute.

The News Readers come into the studio early and read the stories in order to become familiar with them prior to going to air.

The tapes of the completed stories are given to the Playout Operator to be put to air at the directors call.

In the studio, a number of operators assist the final program to go to air. They include the Director, Directors Assistant, Sound Operator, Vision Switcher, Teleprompter Operators, Line Up Producer, Kyron-Graphics Operator, Camera Operator(s).....

Others who can be involved, but not always are the Sat Record Operator and Master Control Operators responsible for sending and receiving vision and data between bureau and the main studio.

Interview D

How did you determine who to talk to about the story?

You sometimes get leads from from the original story. This was in the morning paper so had a name with it. A few phone calls and I have set up the contacts to start the story. We have two service stations to see, we may be able to get more.

Do you have regular sources who you go to background stories?

Sometimes, it depends on what story I am covering. If it is linked with a subject I have covered before I try that person first, it makes sense. If that is a regular source I suppose so.

This story is Hamilton, how often do the Auckland newsroom cover outside regions?

We try to get out of town stories in as often as possible. The policy is to send a reporter whenever possible. Some away stories we just get stringers to cover then prepare the story when the material arrives.

Interview E

Is there a reason for doing the peice to camera on the courthouse steps ?

Yes, doing it that way gives the story more weight and the reporter gets more credibility if the background in shot says, 'see where I am standing, this means I know what I am talking about.'

This story has fallen over today, why has that happened and how often does it occur ?

Yea, they do sometimes. This one should not have, I have been watching the developments closely and this is an important issue. The problem is the call has come from Auckland to kill it. It will now only be a short RVO. They will use some of todays images, probaly none of the interviews, so no one will get to hear the issues. They will use some of the footage from yesterday, the cops were in riot gear, and that makes a

better story. We have other responsibilities, we are not just here to produce stories with flames and blood in them.

Interview F

When you interview the PM or an MP do you initiate it or do they?

If it is something I want to know I approach them, or their press officer. If it is something they want to get out I get notified by fax or memo.

What sort of a relationship do you have with MPs outside your job, do they all love or hate you?

I need to have a reasonable understanding with them, There is generally no animosity between us, we have our moments, spats but no-one can afford to hold grudges or the process does not work. We need them for information and they need us to get it out. It is a two way street. In Wellington you run into them just as other people you encounter in a days work.

Where do the PM press agents fit into the loop?

They guard her, I can't really talk to the PM or any major MP without the press secretary being involved. They manage what comes out of any MP's office. Many of the press secretaries in parliament are ex journo's, that has some advantages in terms of contacts but it also means they understand where we are coming from and can be a bit obstructive. They know the rules too. It is the same with PR people, many of them have a journalism background, the same applies really.

Interview G

How far can do you push your contacts/ sources when chasing down info for a story?

Depends who it is, If I am talking to a person I rely on often for leads or background it is stupid to get heavy. If they decide they won't talk to me anymore I am not much good as a reporter.

Do you have regular sources who you tend to return to?

Yea sometimes, with sport stories I do try and cultivate regulars it makes getting information easier than needing to find out who to talk to each time. On other stories

there are generally some names provided, who generally can provide names of others to speak to. The time frame is quite quick, you can't afford to spend too long checking the background or you would not get the story filed. You also get frowned on if you leave the crew sitting around too long while you check something out or you could lose them to another story if you are too slow.

I noticed you covered a story in Hastings yesterday but saw you in the office all day, explain that process to me.?

If stories are too far away, or likely to get bumped if they don't pan out we just send a series of questions to a stringer who shoots them and feeds back the replies for us to use in a voice over story. Sometimes we ring up the person to be interviewed and record the replies and use them in the story if they fit, If not that information can generally be used in the story somehow.

Interview H

Where did this story come from?

The headline has been in the paper for weeks, it is an ongoing story. There has been a problem with handrails on a sailing so we are going to try and film them to get material for the story.

How are you going to decide who to talk to about the story?

They have a manager who was in the media in a previous life, he knows how we work, sometimes he can be helpful others a bit obstructive. He is our first port of call

It is 3.00pm now and you have just been handed the story, where does the background info come from to enable you to cover it so late, have you done a similar one before?

The story is not a new one so we don't need to set it up, we are just filling in some gaps.

Interview I

Do you have regular sources who you return to?

Yes, sometimes, it depends on the story I am doing. It makes sense if you are covering something which involves people you have used before, and they were OK to use them

again. There is no point re-inventing the wheel every time. Sometimes it takes a lot of effort to turn up the right person to get information from.

How do you decide who to talk to in reporting on a story.?

Leads, every story has some person or organisation involved, talking to the right person is the secret to getting the right information.

What input do you have in the editing process of the story?

I need to log the footage and decide what to use then I will sit with the tape editor as it is cut, They need that or they have to be up to speed on each story as well.

I have already been to archives to get them to drag out historical data and footage on the topic, I think we will need it. Pressers tend not to provide much more than pretty pictures.

Interview J

Your job, being confined to the office much of the time, where does it fit into the daily routine?

Making news is a bit like playing chess, it is a matter of anticipating where the resources are best used to get the best result and not be checked by missing something, or worse missing something TV3 gets. I often get requests to do interviews for reporters who are in other centres. We do them as replies only and then edit for the story.

I have not been in news for long but I find each day to be new and exciting. We have slow days, like today, but they are made up for by busy the ones.

Interview K

As a camera man what are you trying to achieve in a news story ?

I don't want to feel my time has been wasted on a story, it is my job to get the best pictures possible to help tell the story. Often, without the images, or at least good ones a story will not run. as a cameraman I am committed to ensuring I do everything possible to ensure what I have toiled to obtain is used, so quality is everything. I look for wall paper, backgrounds etc. which enhance the story, I don't want to be criticised by the editor for not providing every shot they might want, plus some that I think they

should use. You can influence the editor's decisions by providing good shots of the important features of the story.

As a cutter (editor) what are your objectives in the task.?

Firstly to get in on time. If I am too slow and miss the deadline I don't only fail myself but everyone else who has been involved in the story. That is not to say I compromise quality to do that. Stories that are badly cut reflect on tape editors, if I want to keep doing this I need to perform. I am judged on the quality of what makes it to air.

Do you enjoy what you are doing?

Mostly, this job can be a real buzz, but you need to keep in mind that it is just another TV program, news can be a sausage factory some days, when you feel the bit you add is not important. The stress of deadlines can be tough when you are last in the production line, you can let all the others down .

Tell me about the "training" which is provided for crews and journo's. Does Magid Assoc still provide it ? Do you consider it appropriate for an American to train New Zealand crews and journo's ?

Well in regard to staff training, I can only speak from a crew point of view. As to the Magid associates, well, I have never had a meeting with them. They might be the people who come in and "advise" on the "look and feel" of the news sets and Journo's (spoons), "on air" look.

As for crew training, well, most if now not all junior staff are employed from a television training school or the like. It is expected that they would have a basic working understanding of broadcast systems and production kit.

When I started at TVNZ, we would assigned go out with the 60 minutes cameramen and do sound for them over the duration of the story. This was a great chance to learn lighting and operational tricks. But this was knocked on the head about 4-5 years ago. Now it seems as you have the basic training for else where, get the job , and of you go. You really end up teaching yourself "how to shoot news" which if it is a breaking

story, is about as hard as it gets in the world of television to make the story into a good track. One chance only, you miss it, no-one is going to do it again. As we all know, the trick is being able to shoot a good sequence that can be cut well. It's only experience that teaches you how to do that well when under pressure.

The Journos will let you know if you shoot well enough for them as well. They will request you for a job. If they think you are no good, they will not use you. " You are only as good as your last job".

There is a lot of informal feedback from the older shooter's to junior staff which is good. You may get a junior staff member ask you how you lit and interview of why you shot from a different angle or why you stayed on the face of a person longer than normal. We all took the time to try and explain what and why we had done what we did.

TVNZ do run formal training for crews, but "in house". They may run a lighting workshop over a weekend, or a live eye workshop for new staff members. One crew a year gets to go to NPPA (National Press Photographers Assn) training workshops in the States. There they teach you how to do the natural sound stories which are great, but most Kiwi's would tell you to "Piss off" if you tried it with them.

As a cameraman you only go overseas if you can cut as well. The catch is you may never get into a booth to edit until you have to go overseas.

Catch 22. The training is offered, but time never makes it possible.

Interview L

Where did this story come from?

The author and the publisher of her book sent in a fax saying the book was due for release, This is a slow day or we probably would not cover it, The story will probably air on Telstra Breakfast, it is of quite narrow interest.

It is an unusual topic how do you go about getting background info on a topic you don't know much about?

The fax backgrounded the book and we will interview the author for more material. Using her to tell the viewers about the book is a good way to get information without needing to interview her, write down what she says and turn it into questions for another interview is very time consuming.

How are you going to decide who to interview for the story ?

I will talk to her first then interview her, hopefully she will generate some names to follow up. Generally people will agree to be interviewed for stories such as this, everyone likes to see themselves on TV.

Interview M

Where do you fit into the newscast?

I start my day by preparing our contribution to the prod list. I scan the wires, look at the papers, check the diary etc. I go the morning meeting to keep up with what is happening and so I know what resources I am going to have for the day. My job is to provide whatever is needed to get the stories made. It might be a taxi chit, a camera operator or a helicopter.

I notice an array of radio sets across your desk what are they ?

We keep an eye on the emergency services radio bands. If they attend anything we can be onto it. It helps us cover the stories and helps avoid traffic snarl-ups etc. There is not much point in getting to a story then not being able to get the tape out because it is in the wrong place.

Tell me about the news diary?

It is where we list events which are going to happen. For example today we have a reporter and camera in court, we have to make application days before one of those, if we forget it we are not allowed the camera in there. All sorts of press conferences, visiting experts, anything we need to plan for goes in there.

Interview N**Where did this story come from?**

Someone who knows XX I think. Many stories get into the news by tip off, sometimes they don't come to anything, I am not sure about this one.

Do you know anything much about the topic, and how do you intend to find out about it?

I have a name to contact at the track, I have rung him he is expecting us, he is the expert and will set things up for us, I hope.

I have been to research to get them to drag out anything they can, we might not need to use it, but I don't want to be searching for material later, its better to do it before.

Interview O**How did this become such a big story, you seemed to have gone after the guy, I felt sorry for him.**

"This is a slow burner of a story, the incident happened Saturday night and simmered until today (Monday). The ambulance were involved at the time, the police became involved today. We have a number of leads to follow up for witnesses and the person at the centre of the story is a high profile sporting figure who has a bit of a reputation and comes from a team where this is not uncommon. The rugby Union have said they will make a statement, probably with the person involved being present. There is going to be plenty of material for a story. Today's Dominion is carrying the story and without a doubt Three (TV3) will have it tonight. We can't afford to not be on it. It may not lead the bulletin, but it probably will."

I notice that this morning news conference seemed an informal affair with people wandering in and out, is that what happens every day. It seemed more formal in Auckland?

There is no compulsion for journos to be present. They only come in to the meeting if they are working on something on the production list which they need more information on or if they have something to contribute about other stories. It is an important part of the day as collective memory is a vital tool in any newsroom, what someone has to

contribute can change the direction of a story. We often know people who can supply extra information for stories, it all helps and contributes to the bigger picture. We all help each other.

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