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Gatekeeping in a TV news editorial conference: Shift of force, other media, personal experience and pack mentality

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GATEKEEPING IN A TV NEWS EDITORIAL CONFERENCE:
SHIFT OF FORCE, OTHER MEDIA,
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE
AND PACK MENTALITY

by

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Bachelor of Arts
University of Alaska Fairbanks
1997

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the

**Master of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies
Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies
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May 2011

ABSTRACT

Gatekeeping in a TV News Editorial Conference

by

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This study uses Gatekeeping Theory and Conversational Analysis to describe how four factors influence news gatekeepers in a small group at one TV station. The four factors include shifting forces, other media, personal experience and pack mentality. They were identified through conversational analysis of pilot data and the research questions are supported in the literature as common influences in news gatekeeping. This study describes how those four elements occur during group conversation.

Analysis of the recorded data collected in five editorial conferences describes how the four factors are expressed by the gatekeepers as they consider events that may become news. The study finds that verbal expression of personal experience carries little weight in influencing discussion. Outside media, on the other hand, is heavily influential. Shifts of force occur easily and regularly as members of the group discard their own support for a perspective of an event and instead support another perspective that has achieved the support of more group members. Finally, group members engage in pack mentality to close the gate.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Most local TV news is shaped by producers (Smith, 1988) and it is no different at station we will call KGTE. The question is what are the forces at work as the news is shaped? At the station used for this study, producer's workdays are similar to that of workers in other white-collar jobs, being virtually chained to their desks (Whitney, 1975). However, each morning the producers leave their terminals and participate in a brief social ritual that is common among TV stations: the editorial conference. Clayman & Reisner (1998) say this is the only place where group gatekeeping occurs. It is here that the recipe for news may be revealed. Producers together with managers and reporters discuss what items may become news, what's not news, and from what perspective to approach events. They form the social gatekeeping group. The goal of this study is to look at their interaction to achieve a more thorough understanding of the forces at work as this one group of anonymous gatekeepers makes decisions at this one anonymous TV station we call KGTE.

The meeting begins at 9 a.m. Monday through Friday and occurs over approximately 30 minutes. With consent of the station and participants, pilot recordings of conversations in these meetings were conducted at KGTE on June 11 and 12, 2009. They were transcribed and evaluated through conversational analysis. Patterns were paired with the findings of previous literature to develop questions. After having secured written consent from the station, participants and the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) Institutional Review Board (IRB), five additional days of conversations were recorded as data for this research.

We begin in Chapter Two examining literature in the area of Gatekeeping Theory. The examination ranges from the theory's origins to some of the most recent studies of television news. Previous findings are then related to some of the same phenomena found in the pilot data. Four research questions arise from that literature review and pilot data. Chapter Three describes the methods, which include collecting data, identifying occurrences of each question and Conversational Analysis (CA). Chapter Four analyzes the data regarding each question. Immediately following the data and analysis of each research question is the interpretation of the analysis so that the data and analysis are fresh in the mind of the reader for the maximum understanding of the interpretation. The discussion in Chapter Five covers the interrelationship of all four questions. Chapter Six concludes this study by explaining the implications of this research, problems, recommendations for additional research and recommendations for newsrooms.

Included in the extensive appendices are transcripts of applicable conversations, the coding structure that was used and the assignment sheets for each day. The assignment sheets are additional data that wasn't studied but are relevant to future research because they show what items actually passed through the gate to become news.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gatekeeping theory began with the posthumous 1947 publication of Kurt Lewin's study of how small groups interact when making a choice about what to eat. The government sponsored his research with the goal of encouraging families to eat alternative cuts of meat to preserve more desirable meat for WWII troops.

This government-inspired promotion of products to influence the public's habits for the benefit of government interests was a well-known institutional scheme at the time. For example, during WWII the Department of Defense needed copper for bullets (Headley, 2010). So it started making pennies out of steel and used the copper to make bullets for shooting the enemy. However, because of the unpopularity of the steel pennies the government was eventually forced to resume making them out of copper (Headley, 2010).

That episode is an example of the gatekeeper's quandary that Lewin and the government faced: Despite the gatekeepers' desires and power over the product, the gatekeeper is ultimately at the mercy of the public they serve. When the government wanted to use the same scheme with food (preserving choice meat for troops and substituting an inferior product for public consumption) the government wanted to know how to better influence the choices that families would make. Lewin was employed to dissect the decision-making factors at work in families to learn how the government might better influence those family choices and ultimately better serve the institutional goals.

“This is an example of a sociological investigation,” Lewin (1947, p. 146) wrote, “to determine who the gate keeper is and therefore to determine whose psychology has to be studied, who has to be educated if a change is to be accomplished.”

Lewin concluded that when it comes to food, housewives were the ones to be influenced. He called them ‘gate keepers,’ as seen above, but the two words have become a conjunction as a kind of title. Gatekeepers manage the gate. Of all the items available, they allow only some to pass to become news for public consumption. But Lewin noted that the influences upon the gatekeeper would vary depending on the industry that is studied. Lewin chose to specifically identify the application of gatekeeping to news. The theory of gates “holds for food channels, but also for the traveling of a news item through certain communication channels in a group,” (Lewin, 1947, p. 145).

Lewin determined that gatekeepers are influenced by a multitude of “forces” (p. 144-146). Over the following half-decade, the understanding of the importance of these forces in news has developed dramatically. Understanding these forces is important because gatekeepers determine what contributes to people’s social reality (Shoemaker & Vos 2009, p. 3). According to Shoemaker and Vos, Social reality is determined by gatekeeper’s messages and understanding how those messages turn out the way they do is the value of Gatekeeping Theory.

To understand how we have arrived at this understanding, and begin developing research questions, we start with the post-Lewin gatekeeping research on these “forces” that started with the 1950 research of David Manning White. He found that an individual brought his own biases to the process of news gatekeeping in the form of personal subjectivity (White, 1997). Personal subjectivity is then one of the forces identified

through gatekeeping research. After White, gatekeeping research took a turn. Researchers began to consider technical limitations like deadlines as gates. These technical gates are considered an even heavier force on gatekeeping than personal subjectivity (Gieber, 1956). However, researchers have come to agree that, applied to news, gatekeeping is fundamentally a social and collaborative process (Clayman & Reisner, 1998).

This group process is an extremely powerful one. When acting alone on new information, only 3 percent of gatekeepers will change their opinion, but as a group, 30 percent will change their opinion (Severin & Tankard, 1979, p. 147). That means gatekeepers are 10 times more likely to change their opinions when acting as a group than when they choose their actions individually. So, the group is where gatekeeping is heavily influenced socially. However, the interpersonal interaction and the unpredictable course of conversation in the editorial conference have not been studied much (Bennett 1996; Clayman & Reisner, 1998). Given the lack of studies, we must step back to the basics. The group's function is to decide what is in and what is out (Lewin, 1947, p. 145). "Understanding the functioning of the gate becomes equivalent then to understanding the factors, which determine the decisions of the gatekeepers." (Lewin 1947, p. 145)

The first function is the role of changing opinions, or what Lewin called shifts of force. One of Lewin's original assertions was that forces routinely change polarity. At one moment, a force may be negative, impairing an item's passage through the gate and, at the next moment becoming a positive force to help push it through (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). The factors that influence these reversals in polarity are group discussion, perception of group consensus and public commitment (Severin & Tankard, 1979). Analyzing the trigger points in conversation that lead to reversal of polarity in the

editorial conference at KGTE would be an application of gatekeeping theory. In the spirit of Kurt Lewin's original observation, the first question revolves around the circumstances of shifts of force:

Q1. Under what circumstances do shifts of force occur at KGTE?

Lewin tackled the challenge of identifying forces through a descriptive process that is now the primary way to explore gatekeeping. Over time we have come to understand that this is the theory's real value, describing forces that come into play as news workers make decisions but with little predictive power (Parker, 2005). Its predictive power is so weak that it shows just how difficult it is to anticipate anything that involves people (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Researchers have considered it so uncertain that Dimmick (1974) describe the gatekeeping process as an Uncertainty Theory, a description of how workers build consensus about what is news among newswriters. More specifically, according to Dimmick, the forces that need to be described are ones that function to assist in building consensus. Over the years of describing, researchers have identified and described many forces in consensus building in news. So, to some extent, patterns of forces in consensus building have emerged and are now more predictable than previously thought.

The uncertainty is understandable since Gatekeeping has only recently been solidified as a theory. But over the years, researchers have described numerous phenomena that influence the gate. I have chosen the following additional three phenomena because of their prominence in both the research and pilot data. They include personal subjectivity (White, 1950), pack mentality (Bennett, 1996) and other media (McManus, 1997). These three are the basis for the following three research questions.

We will begin with personal subjectivity and its relationship to a complicated philosophical concept called typification. Baran & Davis (2009) cite Alfred Schutz as describing typifications as collections of social knowledge that were built over time and we carry with us. We use these typifications to quickly make sense of the world and shape our actions accordingly. It is a frame of reference for seeing the world and its events. White did not use the word typification, but the function is the same as he described how a news worker quickly classified news to formulate an action of determining if the item should be in or out of the news. He studied the decisions of one gatekeeper as he chose what wire copy to put in the newspaper, what to leave out and why. White found that the decisions included a high level of personal subjectivity. This influence of personal subjectivity is of particular interest in journalism studies because journalists are encouraged to avoid bias in stories (Avoid Bias, 2010).

White identified the force of subjectivity by studying a worker's own description of why, when acting individually, he didn't choose to include certain stories in the paper. However, when these decisions are made in a smaller group of individuals with their own nuanced differences in typifications, agreement in the group would have to be negotiated to achieve a shared perception of reality.

Description of how news is negotiated in a group is particularly illusive. News workers themselves describe the gatekeeping process of story selection as simply natural or common sense (Hood & Tabary-Peterssen, 1997). However, Tuchman's (1978) analysis of news professionals as they speak shows that there is a process for how stories are negotiated in a group. She says newswriters exchange information with each other and build a web of facts that form a shared understanding of a perspective of an event.

Each individual piece of information they consider is like a thread in a spider web. Each piece is not independently verified, but instead is self-validating as a thread that combines into a larger understood framework like a web she said. All of the pieces of information together form the web or the perspective of an event and validated through group agreement. In their minds, Tuchman (1978) says these bits of information form the web of facts, transforming an occurrence into an event and an event into a news story. “News workers simultaneously invoke and apply norms as they define them and the notion of newsworthiness receives its definition from moment to moment” (Tuchman, 1978, p.183). The challenge is identifying how, and if so what, occurs when personal subjectivity enters as a thread as a force when the group builds the web of facts.

The group member’s subjectivity is observable in the pilot data from the editorial conference. In one instance, the group considered a story about an international presentation regarding psychiatrically abused people (see Appendix A). When considering the idea, one member said that abused people “rock in a corner.” Others examples of personal subjectivity include: people who grow their own food are a “handful of freaks,” women in Las Vegas are promiscuous, homeless people are alcoholics and community efforts to help them are just efforts to remove them from sight (see Appendix A). These typifications were demonstrated through discussion as the group negotiated the web of facts. In these cases, the group is choosing its actions through ideology, frames of reference through which they see the world (Becker, 1984, p. 69). But identifying ideology, let alone qualifying it, is not easy (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 102).

To avoid subjectivity on the part of the researcher when judging if ideology or typifications include the personal views of the newsworker, I will use the most basic unit of what indicates a personal view. Personal subjectivity is a frame of reference and for the purposes of this study, the clearest way to identify a participant's frame of reference is when one mentions their personal experience with an "I" statement. The question is, how is the group influenced when that personal frame of reference is expressed.

Q2: What role does personal experience play in opening and closing the gate?

The next two research interests include pack mentality and other media. These two act as a kind of third-party influence on the individual gatekeepers. Lewin did address how third parties, specifically family and the public influence gatekeepers. He explained that the gatekeepers only consider the desires of the family to the extent that the actual gatekeeper is affected (Lewin, 1947, p. 146). In other words it is a self-serving motivation to cater to the needs of the third party. For example, if the gatekeeper makes a decision that angers or sickens the family, the gatekeeper is likely to suffer negative consequences. Just like rejected food a story proposal by a member of the editorial conference may be rejected by the group. Similarly, the public, being a third party, may also reject the news product as it did with the steel pennies in World War II.

Rejection is clearly the enemy. In this face of the challenge of rejection, the pilot data shows extremely strong group unity with mimicking and supportive comments between participants from turn to turn. They constantly jumped at the opportunity to answer questions. They often stumbled over one another; nearly always agreed, repeated the same information and blurted out incorrect facts (see Appendix A). This constant stumbling over each other to answer questions is so prevalent it even annoyed the news

director. This dynamic, a strong, seemingly irrational momentum is like a pack atmosphere.

Bennett (1996, p. 131) describes the 1982 research by Mark Fishman as representing a “pack mentality” that influences gatekeeping. Fishman found that journalists’ perspectives allow them to selectively recognize some events as news and not others. In his experience with the group, the newswriters agreed that an event was unworthy of time and energy by making “derisive jokes,” calling debates “stupid,” and “trivial,” (Fishman, 1997, p. 223). Despite the mutual support for each other at the time, Fishman, who was acting as a journalist, also pointed out that he second-guessed his own decision not to pursue an event as news. He said that publishing such an event however, would be considered “unprofessional,” (p. 225). Bennett (1996, p. 131) interpreted these pack actions as resulting in news that is hyper standardized, distorted and doesn’t give the audience a basis for critically judging events. The impact of the pack mentality may run deeper within the organization as “reporters, editors or professionals and news organizations develop together serving to legitimize the status quo” (Tuchman, 1975 p. 5). The impressive and pervasive power of the pack raises the third question.

Q3: How does pack mentality act as a force to influence gatekeeping in the institutional setting of the news meeting?

Fishman’s discovery was while working in a group of journalists who were all from different media institutions but were working together with the same gatekeeping task as deciding what in a political meeting to cover. The media agency diversity represented in his study indicates that the pack mentality is not bound by its organization or unique, rather it showed that journalists have the same propensity to form a pack

regardless of their institution. His discovery has implications for the influence of outside media acting as a force on the group as well.

The pilot data also showed strong evidence of the influence of other media as a force in gatekeeping. One event that was considered legitimate news by the newswriters at KGTE in the editorial conference was that CNN was staking out the governor's mansion (see Appendix A). On that same day, the group rejected a story about a man who sold his girlfriend for crack, then killed her and the buyer and then tried to commit suicide. The only verbally expressed reason to reject the second idea was that other media were not covering it.

The importance of other media is clearly a pattern. Content analysis has verified that stories from other media, or by public information officers that require "low" or "medium" effort on the part of the news workers filled 82 to 99 percent of airtime at three large stations (McManus, 1997, p. 291-296). Such evidence in the literature and the two examples from the pilot data raises the final question.

Q4. How does coverage by other media influence the gatekeepers?

Once again, these final two questions about personal experience and other media are integral to gatekeeping theory. Outside influences upon the gatekeepers are critical to understanding the decisions of the gatekeepers according to Lewin. "What is missing is a link which steers the action by its effect on the outside rather than by the effect within the organization" (Lewin, 1947 p. 150). What Lewin is pointing out is that heavy influence from the outside, shows lack of control on the inside.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The following is a description of the methods used in this study. It begins with data collection, followed by a detailed description of how conversation analysis (CA) is applied. CA is not often described well by researchers who conduct it as we will see. However, it does include many steps.

Three of the steps are described in two subsections: data collection and conversational analysis. The final four steps are described in two additional subsections: transcription and choosing episodes; analysis, interpretation and comparison of similar events.

Data Collection

The idea of recording and analyzing the editorial conference were presented by Dr. Gary Larson and Dr. Julian Kilker. They suggested it in 2006 when I began as a student and was at the same time working as a reporter in local TV news environment. The two agreed that there was little research of the interaction in the editorial conference. Over the next two years, I collected what little research had been conducted and shaped it into a prospectus that could be presented to the news director and assistant news director of KGTE. I made the presentation in 2008, which was met with skepticism by the long-time news director who thought that the interaction in the news meeting was too sensitive. The assistant news director (who eventually became the news director by the time of the study) however was enthusiastic and he verbally approved, allowing me to take the idea to the general manager who approved and deferred back to the assistant news director for any restrictions that may be imposed. Initially the study was to be

recorded on video over 3 months. However, the assistant news director restricted the study data to audio recordings that could only be collected over a period of one week. He said that a video camera would interrupt the natural flow of the news meeting. The specific week that the data would be collected was left up to me.

At the request of the assistant news director, I gave a 10-minute verbal presentation about the study to all the participants in the editorial conference. I explained that they were to remain anonymous and that participation was voluntary. As required by the University of Nevada Las Vegas Institutional Review Board, I gained signed approval statements from all the participants in the editorial conference and the TV station's general manager. The documents were submitted to the UNLV IRB and approved in 2008.

Various combinations of microphones and recording equipment were inconspicuously tested during the editorial conference to find the right equipment to record audio with high enough quality to clearly hear everyone in the entire room. Sufficient quality was accomplished with pilot recordings on 6/11/08 and 6/12/08. The recording equipment was a Panasonic Digital Video Camera/Recorder AG DVX100. It was placed under the table and connected to a meeting room microphone that was in the middle of the conference room table. Since the microphone had always been there it was a fixture in the room and nothing seemed out of the ordinary to the participants during recording. A video camera was used to record the audio because it was provided by the TV station. No video was collected.

The actual data for this study was recorded on Monday, January 26, 2009; Wednesday, January 28, 2009; Friday, January 30, 2009; Tuesday, February 3, 2009 and

Wednesday, February 4, 2009. A meeting participant started and stopped the recording and did not discuss it with the participants. During the final two days of recording, the news director was made aware of the presence of the recording equipment. One tape was erased and re-recorded because the news director said the recording held sensitive discussion of personnel matters that occurred in the same room following the editorial conference.

Conversational Analysis

The method of analyzing the data must be paired well with the theory. Since Gatekeeping Theory says decisions are based on factors through social interaction of conversation, analysis can be attempted through a method of studying social interaction called conversational analysis or CA. It is a form of ethnomethodology with the goal of specifying how people consciously create meaning (Tuchman, 1978).

CA can be quickly described as evaluating a series of utterances, considering their meaning and analyzing interpretations in interaction (ten Have, 2010). Unfortunately, researchers who practice CA don't usually discuss their methods (ten Have, 2010). In fact, this may be the very same method that Lewin used in the seminal Gatekeeping research *Frontiers in Group Dynamics* (1947). It included no discussion of method other than interviews with housekeepers and little discussion of literature.

A CA report will not generally have a prior discussion of the literature to formulate hypotheses, hardly any details about research situations or subjects researched, no descriptions of sampling techniques or coding procedures, no testing and no statistics. Instead, the reader is confronted with a detailed discussion of transcriptions of recordings of (mostly verbal) interaction in terms of the 'devices' used by its participants. (ten Have, 2010)

He says that the reason for this is to leave the researcher unbound by prior studies, with the freedom of his or her own argumentative capabilities to provide insight into how members of a group interact. Marshall and Rossman (2006) also say there continue to be few descriptions of the process of CA in the literature, and it remains chiefly displayed through example.

Despite that tradition, I will describe my method in detail. CA can involve a literature review. It allows analytic categories to be determined (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). I developed categories by examining the pilot data and then combing the literature for similarities in field observations. Those analytic categories are *shift of force*, *media*, *personal experience* and *pack mentality*.

The data for this study was recorded, natural and non-experimental as required by ten Have (2010). He cites Herritage & Atkinson (1984) as explaining that the scientific control in CA is the recording. It prevents failure of recollection and enhances the range and precision of observations.

He has identified four strategies to implement in using CA once the data is collected. I decided to use the first strategy, which focuses on the study of sense-making activities and interpretive tasks by group members. Once a strategy is chosen, ten Have (2010) has outlined seven steps to follow. The first is selecting the equipment, which has already been described. The second step is unbiased transcription. Step three involves choosing episodes from the data that display interesting phenomenon. Step four is to make sense of the episode by possibly connecting it with other episodes. Step five uses analytic resources, including the researchers own knowledge. Step six involves searching for references to previous discussions as a clue to how speakers have interpreted

meaning. The final step involves the researcher’s descriptive comparison of events that are similar or different. Steps three through seven are described in the following subsections.

Transcription and Choosing Episodes

CA is applied to data by using details of interactions including recordings and detailed transcripts instead of coded, counted or summarized representations (ten Have, 2007). This process begins with transcribing by the researcher himself which is an important step in CA. Since transcribing is tedious it forces the researcher to pay closer attention to the details of the interaction that would escape the ordinary listener (ten Have, 2007).

Every word of both the pilot data and the study data was transcribed. I used my memory of each speaker’s voice to identify who they were and they were identified in the transcripts by their job description (see Table 1).

Table 1

Job Title Coding

Job Title	Coding	Job Title	Coding
News Director	ND	Producer 3	P3
Executive Producer	EP	Reporter	R
Assignment Editor	AE	Reporter 2	R2
Web Editor	WE	Reporter 3	R3
Producer	P	Unknown speakers	UNK
Producer 2	P2		

The transcription not only included what was said, but how it was said (ten Have, 2007). It included any sound including sighs, laughter, pauses or tapping. With the transcription complete, I began the synthesis, which according to ten Have should examine most of the questions and areas provided by previous researchers (ten Have 2007). The areas that were identified in the literature review are shift of force, pack mentality, media and personal experience.

Shift of force was identified when a speaker expressed a particular perspective regarding an event and then subsequently expressed support for another participant's alternative perspective of the same event, shifting force from one perspective to another. Mentions of *media* were identified when any form of media was mentioned by name or in general. *Personal experience* was identified when the speaker referenced himself or herself. *Pack mentality* was identified when numerous members of the group discredited an event using humor and sarcasm as identified by Fishman (1997).

CA, being a form of ethnomethodology, emphasizes an in-depth understanding of the talk-style and environment to be studied. For nearly three years (December 2005 to September 2008) I participated in the editorial conference five days a week. It could be said that my analysis began the first day of the three years participating in this group. Having been a member of this group, it is assumed that I understand the words of the participants. That makes me a qualified knower (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). My participation in the meetings is an immersion strategy in qualitative analysis where I am afforded the liberty of not prefiguring categories, allowing me to rely on my intuitive and interpretive capabilities to develop categories (Marshall & Rossman, 2007 p. 155).

Identifying categories in the pilot data was conducted through what ten Have (2007) calls a ‘work through,’ analysis of the turn taking in the pilot data. That led to an understanding of the relationship between spoken utterances. Utterances are the appropriate unit because each turn may only be one or two words, and in some cases only a noise that indicates understanding, agreement, question or answer.

Pouring over the data, I characterized each utterance by examining *what* a participant was doing in each consecutive turn. That led to the development of an actional description of the sequence that explains how the speakers formed the action of speaking and delivery (ten Have 2007).

I developed 19 actional descriptions for utterances: questions, wavering, speculation, answers, facts, affirmation, angle, sales pitch, negative force, positive force, humor, shift of force, kill, new topic, topic change, personal experience, media and pack mentality. For a break down of the description for each, see Table 2.

Once coding began, it was clear that many codes overlapped. This began a new stage of coding in the ‘work through.’ Ten Have (2007) describes this stage as ‘operationalizing’ the sequences, doing so in a separate column, noting turn taking, sequence organization, repair and turn-design, writing down ‘analytic descriptions,’ and formulating observed rules that tentatively summarize what has been seen. The phenomenon will emerge he says; write it down and focus on it.

Analysis, Interpretation and Comparison

Ten Have (2007) says that in order to put intuitive moments in context, the research must consider the relationship between timing, the taking of turns, and the identities, roles and relationships of the participants. The timing was considered and a time code was

Table 2

Conversational Analysis Coding

Action	Code	Description
Questions	Q	Request for elaboration on a particular topic.
Wavering	W	Replying to ones own information with multiple questions.
Speculation	SPEC	An answer to a question with uncertainty by saying something such as 'I don't know if.'
Answers	A	Confidently expressed information directly relevant to a previously-asked question.
Facts	F	Utterances of information with confidence, that go beyond what was necessary to answer a question or providing information that is not prompted by a question at all.
Affirmation	AFF	Repetition or support for a previous speaker's utterance.
Angle	Angle	A suggestion of a perspective of an event as news. Angles are coded with a number to identify how many are mentioned in the discussion of each topic.
Sales pitch	SP	The initial presentation of a perspective of an event.
Humor	H	When sarcasm or laughter is present.
Shift of Force	SF	When a participant expresses support for a perspective different from one the same participant already presented.
Kill	K	Direct opposition to the forward movement of a perspective of an event as news through the news gate.
New topic	NT	The introduction of a topic without a sales pitch.
Topic change	TC	At the expressed end of a topic of conversation.
Personal experience	PE	A participant mentions or referenced themselves.
Media	M	The mention of any form of media, directly or indirectly.
Negative force	NF	When a previously-mentioned actional description such as facts or other media was used by a speaker to block the advancement of a perspective through the news gate.
Positive force	PF	When previously-mentioned actional descriptions were used in support of advancing a perspective of an event through the news gate.
Pack mentality	PM	When numerous members of the group discredited an event using humor and sarcasm as identified by Fishman

recorded, however, there was no space between utterances or turns to accurately code timing. Instead, timing was visible through the prevalence of overlapping speech and could be coded broadly as *affirmation* (AFF) often in terms of participants finishing each other's verbal expression of thoughts about perspectives of events. CA does allow the researcher to choose the level of detail to transcribe. The research interests dictate the level of detail (ten Have, 2007). Since there are only four areas of research interests, those episodes relevant to shifts of force, personal experience, media and pack mentality were the only ones that needed to be coded and examined closely.

The aspects of shifting force, media, pack mentality and personal experience occurred in sequences of discussion regarding events. The goal was to identify how those aspects influence members of the group as they consider moving an event through the gate. The beginning and end of the discussion regarding each event was identified. The beginning was marked when an event was introduced by a participant and the end occurred when a participant began a new topic. As cited by ten Have (2010), Pomerantz and Fehr (1997) encourage this method. Sequences of utterances can be described as "threads" (ten Have, 2007). Ten Have says normally they are not easy to identify, however the nature of these meetings is that participants clearly state the beginning of each topic, which also allowed the clear ending of each topic.

In the first round of analysis of the threads, ten Have (2007) excludes the institutional tasks and social class of each participant, examining the properties in interaction before context. That is how to identify relationships in the data. Following the coding, analytical memoing was written in the margins of the transcripts to outline theoretical insights as described by Charmaz (2006).

When analyzing the threads, I looked for pairs of utterances that form a pattern. For instance, ten Have (2007) points to Sacks' (1992) research that successfully showed that in telephone conversations, the person answering the phone speaks first. To do this same kind of analysis, I looked at patterns of interaction to see if any particular codes were subsequently followed by another code. The discussion in fact may begin with a pattern as a negotiation (ten Have, 2007). He cites Gail Jefferson (1980) as identifying conversational tricks, glossing over a subject to see if there is interest in "unpacking" it. This is important to describing forces because it indicates a level of force or investment.

Another pattern in social interaction is a repair. Ten Have (2010) says that Schegloff identified "repair" at a Didactic Seminar given at the American Psychological Association Meeting in San Francisco in August 1989. Repair structures are important, including phrases like, "I can't hear you." Shifts of force themselves were considered a form of repair structure.

Similar events that fell into the four study questions were then compared to identify patterns. When looking for patterns I focused on questions that the participants presented in the editorial conference because they are requests for clarification or specification that can lead to descriptive sequences and cycles (ten Have, 2007). These patterns become predictable because it is how the parties cooperate, demonstrate a shared interest in achieving a solution to a problem (ten Have, 2007).

CHAPTER 4

DATA, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

Media

References to media were by far the most common of all four areas of interest in this gatekeeping study. They occurred in 14 of the 33 threads (see Appendix B).

The most common pattern was that immediately following the mention of media other participants immediately verbally acknowledged having experienced the same media. Most typically they responded with “I saw that,” “Yeah,” and “we were reading that,” seen in five instances. References to media were also immediately followed by expression of striking enthusiasm from other participants such as: “what!”, “oh my god!”, “Oh yeah!”, “I saw that!” In one case, a speaker followed their own mention of media with their own interjection of enthusiasm: “Incredible!”

In all but one of those threads, the mention of other media was followed by additional discussion. The typical pattern that emerged was the mention of the media item was followed by acknowledgement of having experienced the same media, surprise and additional discussion.

Two references to media were inconsistent with this pattern. The first inconsistency came when the *media* itself was the topic of the story, specifically sales methods of COX Cable. Initially this topic followed the pattern of interest through discussion, however, force shifted immediately when a participant mentioned a negative relationship between KGTE and COX and that doing a story on this topic from this perspective would worsen the relationship. The next turn was followed by sarcasm and a closing of the gate: “That would be great!”

In five of the events, the gates were overtly expressed as open such as saying that they should “do” the story. Following each verbal expression of the opening of the news gate, was clear affirmation of the open gate by group members either through the word “yeah,” or “okay.” While a variety of members expressed opening the news gate, approval was immediately given by the executive producer or the news director:

Producer1:	I like the local idea on the stimulus package.
Executive Producer:	Yeah, we gotta do that.
Producer2:	We gotta do that.
Web Editor:	Yeah . . .

In two instances, previously published media was used to provide alternative perspectives on an event. In one, the News Director mentioned a perspective provided by an advertisement about new job openings at the North Las Vegas Police Department. But another participant mentioned another perspective by news media that presented negative perspectives of the members of the same police department .

When the participants started talking about a recent marketing blitz by casinos to promote lower rates, a reporter in the meeting expressed skepticism that hotel discounts weren’t low enough. However, members of the group reference advertisements by the hotels to argue that the discounts are even surprisingly low. In both instances, the second mention of media prevailed over the previously competing perspective. In both cases the second mention of media closed the gate on the first.

Interpretation

The mention of media did act to close the gate, but it usually opened the gate in terms of inspiring discussion. It both puts complicated events in perspective and provides outright topics of discussion for potential news. Part of the reason for this is that the

occurrence of an item in other media adds legitimacy in that it has already passed a news gate among colleagues. However, the participants also engaged in discussion following the mention of media that involved discovering additional unanswered questions, displaying an ability to critically analyze holes in other reporting that KGTE could fill.

Other media also put an item in context for the group. The value of context to the group is visible by examining what occurs in the group when a media source does not provide the usual context. In the following example, a text alert was cited as “breaking news” but it didn’t put the news in context. That caused the group to follow the pattern of surprise but then stuck in the enthusiasm stage as they struggled to put the item in context.

Web Editor:	I just got sent out breaking news. The unemployment rate is nine point one percent.
Unknown:	Oh my god!
Assignment Editor:	Nine?
Web editor:	Nine-one. It is a full percentage point higher than November and the highest since September 1983.
Producer:	It was eight percent last year.
Producer 2:	It was like eight something
Reporter:	National is like seven point two.
Web Editor:	It was eight point one in November. Nine point one in December so.
News Director:	Wow!
Web Editor:	When they factored in Novembers numbers we were the eighth highest in the nation. So I don’t know if we are going to move up a notch?
Reporter:	We were eighth in December?
Web Editor:	We were eighth in December and now we are nine point one. Yeah.
Producer:	They were predicting we would hit ten percent, so I am curious to see if they are predicting if it will be even higher, but I am curious to see if they are predicting if it will be higher since we are already at nine and it’s January.

The breaking news text message was a media message that, unlike usual mentions of media, lacked context in terms of a perspective on the new unemployment figures. The lack of context led to circular discussion and the gate temporarily closing. This discussion is one of the longest threads in the study. More than half of all the comments were made by the person who initially brought the media item to the group's attention. This shows that the participant who brought up the item shoulders some responsibility for describing the context with which KGTE could examine the same event. This is also prevalent in two other relevant threads. But the previous example shows that while the gate may be open when other media is presented, without being able to put the story in context, the gate is temporarily closed. One participant who didn't add context to media was The News Director.

Two threads showed how media serves a variety of purposes. It can be used to close the gate and re-direct discussion back to an angle that is already prevalent in the media rather than explore a new direction. The heavy reliance on media for context calls into question the ability of the participants to put events in context based on their own investigations and information.

Personal Experience

References to personal experience were found in six conversations (see Appendix B) With the exception of appendix one thread, the predominant pattern in each discussion was that they were terminated within four turns after the mention of personal experience. Another pattern that emerged is that references to personal experience occurred within close proximity if not within the same utterance as a reference to media. This occurred in five of the seven threads. This pattern was strikingly obvious where a reporter said, “my package,” referencing both her experience at UNLV and her published media content. The gate opened after her reference; it was the only case in which personal experience was verbally given the go-ahead to pass through the news gate. The mention of personal experience was also accompanied by references to other group members, including discussions with anchors.

A few references to personal experience occurred in close proximity to bias, including calling a person who can't pay their bills a “scumbag.” One reference to personal experience occurred in close proximity to pack mentality, where laughter and sarcasm ended a thread about suicide.

In all but two cases of references to personal experience, the News Director made the immediate determination of whether the gate of was open or closed. Support for opening the gate through additional discussion came in form of simple expressions like “right,” affirmation through expression of a similar experience, and calling the idea a “piece” that may have already passed through the gate. In two cases, there were neutral reactions to personal experience in the form of participants providing little or no additional information.

Under only one circumstance was a personal experience questioned. It occurred when bias was revealed that toll roads are a “nightmare,” implying personal experience. It was refuted immediately in the subsequent utterance also using personal experience mimicking the words: “It’s not such a nightmare. I mean I did it in California.” That thread provided unique repeated references to personal experience.

Interpretation

One of the most interesting patterns is when personal experience is mentioned concurrently with media or another credible source. The expression of personal experience in conjunction with media is an attempt to enhance the credibility of the personal experience. However, this was clearly an ineffective method. The participant’s personal experiences usually didn’t carry enough weight even in conjunction with media to become a news story. Personal experience closed the gate. The implications of the differences in value assigned to personal experience vs. media will be addressed in the discussion chapter. The theoretical consequences are addressed in the conclusion.

One of the most striking exchanges with regard to personal experience in the entire study occurred in a discussion of toll roads. It is the only place in the entire study where disagreement between participants occurred over multiple turns. The debate was fueled by personal experience and it is notable that media was not mentioned. The participants were discussing the idea of toll roads in Nevada. In turn after turn strong opinions were expressed referencing personal experience. The thread simply ended with the executive producer declaring that toll roads are “worth it.” The debate itself should have triggered conventional journalistic intuition as to the newsworthiness of the topic resulting in an unbiased approach to exploring the topic as news. However, the data

shows the group did not consider their personal experiences newsworthy and so instead of channeling their heated debate into a productive news discussion it ended with a bias declaration by a manager.

By mentioning personal experience, the group is consciously considering themselves valuable assets in the newsgathering process. As a group however, the personal experience of its individuals doesn't appear to carry weight like media does. Members of the group don't greet references to personal experience with enthusiasm. The fact that they mention media and other people in the news business in conjunction with their personal experience also shows that the individuals in the group recognize that their personal experience carries little weight and need added credibility.

Pack Mentality

The sarcasm and humor consistent with pack mentality only occurred in four cases (see Appendix B). All of them are relatively short threads that included the participation of the news director. Two involved the news director making a supportive statement within one turn of the initial utterance and the other two cases of pack mentality were initiated by the news director himself. Statements and strong language by the news director included, "They [suicidal people] don't need any help. You can get a really dangerous gun really easily here," and "That is just bullshit!"

Pack mentality discussions were also rife with stereotypes. For example the previously mentioned suicidal people, "don't need help" and "already have guns," presumably to kill themselves. Also, that, "no background check is required" to become a police officer and that police "like shooting guns," and "molesting people."

Following the typifications that led to pack mentality the turns were short and repetitive. In each case, the same words were repeated immediately after each turn, including words like “spanked”; “smoke cigarettes”; “guns” and “shoot,” “molesting,” and “propositioning.” In each case of pack mentality the thread ended without assigning resources to the event.

Interpretation

We know pack mentality closed the gate because following each thread where it occurred, no resources were assigned to cover the perspectives of the discussed events.

The presence of a typification didn’t always lead to pack mentality. For instance when an unknown speaker said that bowlers like to “smoke cigarettes” and an assignment editor said “undisciplined kids don’t get spanked anymore,” the discussion simply ended. The presence of a typification did not automatically lead to pack mentality. In both of those instances, authority within the group hierarchy played a role.

The data shows that authority outside the group also plays a roll, particularly outside authority. When people at an environmental event were characterized as “tree huggers” pack mentality didn’t ensue because of the presence and endorsement of local authorities Rory Reid and the Mayor Oscar Goodman. In fact, instead, because of their presence, the event entered and passed the news gate.

Instances of pack mentality occur regardless of the depth of context that is provided regarding an event. This is seen in the suicide thread, police hiring during a recession, and the event of a school official calling on parents to take responsibility. It would appear that the barrier is not the lack of context, but instead it is overcoming the pre-conceived contexts or conflicts between context created by previous media.

In a remarkable series of utterances, we see in Appendix DD the skill that is necessary to overcome the forces of pack mentality. It begins with an example of “unpacking” an event or glossing over it to see if there is interest in discussing it more as Gail Jefferson says is common (ten Have, 2007). At least one member of the group is capable of “unpacking” and the effectiveness of this strategy.

To explore the strategy at work, we start by looking at the end of the thread on the topic of bowling. It ended with sarcasm and a typification that bowlers “smoke cigarettes.” The sarcasm indicated the propensity toward pack mentality. But it did not take hold so we have to ask why. The news director first provided a perspective of the event by laughing about it, saying, “ha ha, they want to do a story about bowling.” There was no pack mentality reaction from the group. Following the mention that members of congress might be at the event, the news director quickly shifted force in the very next turn and began describing unusual aspects of the event, such as, “Bowling alleys, those lanes are supposed to be the most level surface on earth.” Between his utterances, members of the group interjected until every member had expressed a supportive statement, creating an atmosphere of group support. One member even said, “It’s like the best kept secret.” At that point, any typification had been disarmed by achieving a perception of group consensus. The consensus was the perspective that the event provided economic benefit to the city. So when the typification occurred, (one member saying sarcastically that bowler’s contribution to the economy is that they “smoke cigarettes”), no other members contributed to the typification that could have led to pack mentality. The repetition of the typification by the Assignment Editor was in anticipation of a supportive comment as is the pattern in this group’s discussion.

Shift of Force

Shift of force occurred in eight discussions (see Appendix B). The data involved in shifts of force also included complicated combinations of media, pack mentality and to some extent personal experience that will be explored later during interpretation.

To simplify the understanding of who is shifting force, we replace the titles of the participants with letters from the alphabet. In the following example, notice how speaker A shifts support away from his original idea and toward a new one.

- Speaker A: “. . . is it really a good deal or are you just putting people in debt?”
Speaker B: “Not if they need a car.”
Speaker C: “Yeah.”
Speaker D: “That’s true.”
Speaker E: “Get people to spend some of their money that way.”
Speaker F: “Spend it that way instead of spending it on a credit card.”
Speaker A: “Well, yeah, see?”

Speaker A is suggesting an angle for perceiving an event. The event is a new federal economic incentive for buying cars. Speaker A’s perception is that accepting the incentive puts people in debt. However, speaker B acts as a negative force against that perspective. Speaker B provides another perspective: That the federal economic incentive is helpful to those who need a car. In the following turns speakers C and D utter supportive statements. Speaker E provides a perspective that is also supportive of the program. Momentum gathers as speaker F provides additional support for that perspective already supported by E, D, C and B. Speaker A then expresses support for that perception, and by default discards support for his own original perception.

The force at work most often resulting in a shift of force was that after one perspective was presented, another perspective gained support from subsequent group

members, turn after turn, to oppose the original perspective. Shifts of force also occurred with no defense by the participant who expressed the original perception. That same pattern occurs in two other threads.

The shift of force is also dramatic in the discussion of hotel discount marketing. The first speaker says there are a lot of discounts being offered by hotels. But speaker B presents another perspective, saying that the “discounts need to be lower.” They are two clearly opposing views.

The third speaker (the news director) follows with supportive comments for speaker A’s statement, saying the discounts are important enough to add to a “list”. The “list” is a reference to the station’s web site and a reference to media. Adding it to the “list” means that the gate is open. Speaker D then interjected with a more powerful outright media reference about an advertisement from the Mandalay Bay hotel. Then speaker C enthusiastically affirms speaker D by following the pattern seen in the media discussion, saying he saw it too. Speaker D references media content supporting speaker A, gathering the momentum of speaker C, and supporting speaker D’s previous statement. Speaker C references the media content as well, affirming that he is part of the momentum with speaker D and A. Speaker E interjects with surprise at the depth of the reported discounts in the advertisement. Then comes the coveted shift of force as speaker B utters surprise at the level of discounts as well, discarding his original perception that the discounts are not low enough. The gate is then closed to B’s perception that the discounts aren’t low enough and the gate is open to the perspective of the advertisements that the discounts are low.

In all but two cases the utterance indicating shifts of force were short, such as “Jeez”, “Wow”, “yeah”; “okay”; “Well, yeah, see?”

Those shifts of force occurred both after sequences of direct opposition to the original perception of an event. There was no pattern to the length of opposition. In two cases the shifts of force were expressed almost immediately and both shifts were by the news director who not only shifted force but added context to the opposing perception.

In order to consider the more complicated abrupt reversal of force we must move on to the interpretation.

Interpretation

The quick shift of force and its relationship to pack mentality is fascinating:

Assignment editor: They want to do a story on NASCAR, bowling congress . .
News Director: Ha, ha, ha! They want to do a story on bowling!

No response from the group

Assignment editor: . . . bowling and I thought senators and congressmen
would be here for that?
News Director: Those bowling alleys, those lanes are supposed to be the
most level surfaces on earth.

The news director engages in the language of pack mentality by laughing at a story and providing a perception of the event through his laughter: “Ha, ha, ha. They want to do a story about bowling.” However, the next turn does not follow the pack mentality pattern. There is both the absence of a pack mentality response from any of the group members, and there are facts (that congressmen will be at the event). In the face of the lack of pack mentality and the presence of important facts, the news director quickly shifts force and begins to offer supporting tidbits. A pattern similar to Tuchman’s web of facticity emerges with the news director’s factual tidbits interrupted by group members’

supporting utterances of “yeah” and “really?” until full-fledged group support emerges for a perception of the event and the news director steps back and lets the group take control. Members of the group eventually fully support the idea.

Reporter: “It’s like the best kept secret. No one knows about it and it brings in more money to the city than . . .”
Assignment editor: “These types of people also drink, buy food, buy souvenirs . . .”

The news director’s shift of force had disarmed the typification when it arose. The pattern that has emerged is that shifts of force can occur easily in the group setting.

The ease with which a shift of force can occur is also visible in Appendix R. The news director provides only the statement of an event’s occurrence and the presence of supporting media. In the turn that follows, a producer continues the typical support seen in the media discussion, expressing that they have experienced the same media. The next turn supports the previous two statements by expressing that the media is readily accessible to the participants and the gate remains open. However, the next turn references independent, third-party media with an alternative conflicting perspective. At that point there are two conflicting media accounts and the gate is in limbo, to possibly swing open or close to one of the perspectives.

The original perspective from the advertisement is a positive perception of the police department by hiring in a down economy. The alternative media perspective is independent media accounts of deviant behavior by police in the same police agency. Faced with the opposing perspectives of media accounts, the news director immediately engages a pack mentality utterance with humor focused on the media account of deviant behavior by one police officer in that agency. The five utterances that follow the News

Director's shift of force are pack mentality that works to close the gate on the original perception provided by the advertisement.

In those two cases, the News Director's shift of force significantly impacted the perception of the event and its momentum to block passage through the gate. This brings us to the role of authority in the shift of force. Within one turn of every shift of force the News Director or Executive Producer interjected. The two cases also display another pattern that is prevalent in two more threads. In four cases what is evident is the immediacy with which the news director expresses support or opposition to a perception of an event.

Of all the phenomena studied, the shift of force is clearly the most game-like. The news director is clearly the most skilled and influential individual in this game. One other member displays a similar skill. A producer provides ideas but poses them as questions to her superiors. That allows her to both present an idea, and quickly shift force to match authority's perspective.

Through close conversational analysis I have identified that the news director's ability to quickly shift is the result of not strongly committing to a perception of an event that he proposes. For instance, he simply mentions the police advertisement, not overtly expressing a perception, but implying that: "We should do a story about how the police are hiring in a down economy." By simply mentioning the advertisement, he is not committed and instead is allowing the group to suggest the perspective from which the gates may be opened to contain the message of the advertisement. By not committing to a perspective, he allows the ideas to take shape among the group and lets other walk out on a limb and risk having their perception shot down.

The Assignment Editor is extremely vulnerable to shifts of force because he presents the majority of the ideas and to some extent he is obligated to explain a newsworthy perspective of each event. In the following example, we see that simply in the act of doing his job, he runs the risk of regularly presenting perceptions of events that are not congruent with the group or the news director.

Assignment editor: There is a perfect example of a business that is thriving. Ha ha, ha!
News Director: I don't want any 'business is thriving (story)'.
Assignment Editor: I know, but '(a) too much work (for a business story).'

When the assignment editor finds that his perspective is opposed, he follows a pattern of trying to bring his perspective in line with a more powerful opposing perspective from the news director. The pattern is presented even though the opposing perspective hasn't been defined.

Through the examination of shifts of force, it is clear that the gates don't open or close to the newsworthiness of the events themselves, it is that the gates open or close to perspectives of those events. The method participants use to test the gates and challenge a perspective is to provide alternate perspectives similar to agenda setting. Under the force of the group, the original presenter of a perspective may risk being perceived as an outsider in terms of his or her divergent personal perception of the event. The data shows that in the face of opposition from the group, the original presenter does not resist the group momentum and rather expresses agreement. The shift of force brings the original speaker back in line with the group. This is a kind of 'repair structure' as described by ten Have (2007). The ease with which members shift force shows that a characteristic of group membership is that they must not express a strong attachment to their perspective.

The atmosphere and culture that develops is one that is subservient to the group rather than a healthy debate of how issues impact the public. The culture that emerges then is one where the presenters choose a perspective that is “safe.” The participants are expected to fall into line with the consensus rather than foster a culture of alternative points of view and open-minded debate.

Here is the result. Time after time, by not defending a perspective, they forgo deeper debate of issues and instead express support for simpler angles that support the status quo. Take for instance, the discussion of the federal auto sales incentive program. Instead of talking about how debt is part of the nation’s financial problem and that the federal program encourages more debt, the group opposes that perspective and instead opts to support the idea of how more debt through the federal program (status quo) is a solution. Also, an idea of how hotel room “discounts” are not very good deals becomes a discussion of how to promote the status quo: that hotels are advertising deep “discounts.” A story about how a debt-collecting business is thriving in the bad economy is quashed by the idea that most businesses are not thriving, thereby omitting a discussion of how a business is profiting off the failure of the economy. Another perspective that shifted in favor of the status quo was the positive aspect of the police hiring event shifting force to support media accounts that the police are violent. And finally the idea that children need to be held sternly accountable and punished through spanking falls to the more status quo perspective of a university chancellor calling for more parental involvement.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

What has emerged in this analysis is that the editorial conference is a negotiation over how each event should be perceived. It is the achievement of shared perception of an event that determines its forward motion or its death at the entrance to the gate. Calling the activities here a “negotiation” is a stretch, however, given that perspectives are not debated or defended and the ease with which shifts of force occur show there is little expressed personal attachment to perspectives. Media plays a strong role in opening the gate and pack mentality closes the gate. Personal experience doesn’t carry enough weight to open the gate. This discussion will focus on the relationships between shifts of force, media, pack mentality and personal experience.

The four elements fall into two categories. Media and personal experience describe external forces that shape group perception. Shift of force and pack mentality describe forces acting within the group to solidify universal perception.

The two external forces of media and personal experience appear to be nearly polar opposites in their effect on the negotiation of perception. Both are used by their presenters with the hope of moving an idea toward agreed perception and through the gate. It is a kind of fishing, to see if others are also lured into the same perception through the same experience or media. Media is clearly the stronger bait, nearly every time grabbing attention, respect and continued discussion from other group members. Personal experience played no roll in solidifying group perception.

To understand the purpose served by each factor, I looked at the differences in the reactions from turn to turn. When references to media are made, the immediate reaction

from other members is enthusiasm, saying that they had witnessed the same media. That is an expression of unity and signals a shared experience of perception.

Personal experience on the other hand tended to end the conversation, required the interjection of the news director and led to some sarcasm that acted to prevent that perception from moving forward through the gate. The participants continued to mention their personal experience despite its ineffectiveness in achieving additional discussion and group interest. In many cases, participants attempted to boost the effectiveness of their personal experience with mentions of media. Clearly, the group couldn't reconcile the experiences of one member with a perception the group could share.

The value for the group is not the perception itself. It is the source and the ability to experience it. Media give the group members the opportunity to quickly and easily share perception. Personal experience does not. Therefore, personal experience is not a valued commodity in the group selection and negotiation of perceiving events. Other media is.

Having established the predominance of achieving unity through the sources of perception, we can now move on to the other two elements. Shift of force and pack mentality describe tendencies acting within the group to solidify universal perception and even marginalize or discourage deviant perceptions.

Pack mentality rarely occurred but it was an extremely strong force. The news director and other managers reacted when it arose and deferred to the force of the pack. Under no circumstances did the news director discourage the sequences of pack mentality when they arose. This again shows the importance of unity. Pack mentality served to

close the gate with rather unpalatable typifications that may not be shared by the general public or KGTE's audience.

This study revolves around a point in the news production where the gate has been open to events. However, the narrowness of the gate and the flood of news items at the gate at this point mean the group looks for reasons to close the gate, rather than reasons to open it. They use rather shallow excuses to close the gate to an event. A participant who couches her news pitch with, "You are all probably tired of hearing me pitch this," invited humor immediately, a key element of pack mentality that was used to close the gate. Pack mentality works because participants don't defend their perspectives. Any participant that does not fall into line with the pack mentality may risk being considered an outsider, too attached or personally invested in the cause and risk having their journalistic integrity called into question. That finding is consistent with Fishman's (1997). Ironically, the group member whose perspective is denigrated could call into question the journalistic ethics of the group as a whole when it is acting to close the gate with unfounded typifications and bias. Instead, participants not only stop short of defending their position, but they have a tendency to verbally express their agreement with the group's alternate and often opposite perceptions. This brings us to the element of shift of force and the ease with which verbal expression of agreement occurs.

The ease with which a shift of force occurs with no debate points to an individual's willingness to discard their commitment to a perspective. The group member who has a firmer grasp of the sentiments or media consumption habits of the group majority is likely to not only speak up, but to prevail. This discourages alternative points of view from being voiced. Members who have the best grasp of the majority perspective

can play to the lack of debate and the expectation that one must fall in line with the majority. This also means participants are likely to self-censor perspectives, which they know may challenge the majority perspective. Members who consistently challenge the majority perspective and attempt to defend their own perspective are likely to risk being marginalized.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Despite the declaration by numerous researchers that gatekeeping theory is only descriptive and not predictive, this conversational analysis of an editorial conference, combined with a literature review of consistent phenomena observed across institutions has provided patterns that are likely predictable. We know that the gate is shaped by solidifying group perception in the editorial conference. The gate is not influenced by verbal expression of personal experience. The gate dictates that individual participants who express non-majority perspectives must also shift their opinions without question. Even authority is subservient to the pack mentality of the gate. The gate is heavily influenced by the external force of other media. These systems of interaction are 'party administered,' and work again and again (ten Have p.128). TV journalists, being a homogeneous party and therefore susceptible to pack mentality, are likely to administer these systems of interaction at other media institutions as well.

Understanding how these patterns may influence news coverage is integral to the survival of the television news business. As in Lewins (1947) description of influences on gatekeepers, TV news workers must also take the considerations of their family and the public into account. According to The State of the News Media 2010, network television news has experienced 5 years of decline in audience and now local TV news is experiencing a rapid audience decline. Audience desertion is equivalent to a dissatisfied public, like family members leaving the table full of distasteful food prepared by the gatekeeper. In fact the same audience report says viewers feel overwhelmed by content, but still uninformed. If gatekeepers are to change course, they must understand the forces

at work in gatekeeping because that is equivalent to understanding their own decisions (Lewin, 1947). Achieving this understanding serves a dual purpose. It serves both private business by retaining customers and it serves the public interests by ensuring concern for the public. However, the data shows that public commitment is never mentioned in any of the conversations about what should be news and what shouldn't. This should be studied further.

A number of other gatekeeping factors not mentioned in this study also influence the social process of gatekeeping. The participants in the editorial conference are required by management to bring story ideas to the table each day. The members have a dual role of both gatekeeping what others bring and choosing what they themselves bring to the gatekeeping group. They choose to bring other media and personal experience. Despite the lack of influence that personal experience has on the gate, the participants continue to bring their personal experience to the discussion. This means that they do, to some extent, recognize their value as participants in society whose experience should be considered valid in the news gatekeeping process. The mentions of personal experience are echoes of a distant era, when other media wasn't such a strong factor in the American social experience.

Today, media is the influence on these participants. They are so immersed in news that their reality is news, like town criers who spend all their time in towers only hearing the echoes of other town criers and never come down to spend time with the people below. Producers are heavily reliant on and are more immersed in news than any other job duty in the TV newsroom. They are increasingly playing a stronger role in deciding what is news as well. They interpret reality from a chair. Their fingers stroke a

keyboard while they are bathed in the blue light of flat-screens feeding them a constant digest of the latest news. This technical reality influences their social reality. At night, on their free time, they consume more news. Many are unable to escape the news and experience a sense of withdrawal without it (R. Malone, personal communication, February 10, 2009).

In this reality, one buried in media content, the personal experience of the newsworker is the media itself. Interaction with citizens who do other work is replaced by interaction with media and their colleagues. In effect, their experience of the world is made up of mediated accounts of the world, and their personal experience is atrophied compared to the rest of society whose experience is more grounded in direct interaction with the world around them. This impacts the newsworkers ability to independently interpret events without the help of other media. If they had the time to participate in community events and explore the world around them, more events would be brought to the table and personal experience would carry more weight.

For now, what little personal experience the participants have plays virtually no role. The result is that they must turn to what is influential among the group to achieve the daily production of news. That influential force is other media. So, when faced with the daily choice of ‘where will I get my required story idea for today,’ they choose to consume more media rather than explore the world around them.

The result of this dynamic may simply be regurgitating the news, re-versioning events from the local newspapers to select items that have enough depth for the participants to develop additional perspectives. However, there is another possibility that isn't so bleak. When the same dynamic is considered across multiple mediums, each one

taking a different perspective, collectively they are providing more depth to the events that are already in the news and then presenting a more diverse field of perspectives. The problem is that consumers of TV news can only see one perspective by virtue of only being able to watch one station at a time, not multiple ones. This could lead to divisive perspectives instead of diverse ones across the population that consume different media.

There is also a bright spot visible in the discussion of the bankruptcy of Station's Casinos. That exchange shows the remarkable development of a unique perspective on a local event almost like enterprise or investigative journalism. How is it that the participants do this so quickly? The participants consume different media and when the combined knowledge of all the consumed media converge into one enterprise perspective as is done in Appendix Y. That is presumably the ultimate goal of the news meeting, that the group's collective knowledge quickly builds enterprising perspectives on stories.

Technical gates may also be impacting the social process of gatekeeping. Deadlines may be the reason there is a lack of debate in the news meetings. The pressure of deadlines requires that group members work intensely as a team, meaning that conflict through debate is avoided. That overarching culture is visible in the editorial conference in the form of deference to the group, regardless of the personal investment in the topic. A public service-driven culture on the other hand would consider even a brief airing of each perspective and opinions that arise. Instead, perspectives are immediately met with alternative perspectives rather than asking a question such as "why do you think that?"

This research only considers the course of conversation and not its final impact on what actually becomes news. Data is available that does definitively declare what made it through the social gate. That data is included in Appendix C. There are two areas of

future research that could be addressed using this data. One is to select the items that made it through the gate and examine patterns that occur in the discussion of those items. The data is the day sheet and includes the assignment file that outlines what made it through the gate on each of the days. It also includes their “Treatment” (air-time), resources that were allocated to each story, and when the story aired (see Appendix C). This is valuable because in the conversation participants rarely expressed what items will actually pass through the gate.

A final area of interest for future study is one that is of significant importance in the field of journalism. It is Severin & Tankard’s (1979, p. 147) assertion that public commitment is influential in the decisions of gatekeepers. Public commitment among the participants should be considered in future studies because it is a tenet of journalism and it is a driving force behind the public journalism movement. Public journalism is an attempt to re-connect the media with the public. The data in this study does reflect this disconnect in that the general public is not overtly mentioned in any of the discussions over the five days. The public certainly is not an influence in gatekeeping like media is.

The data in this study could be combined with interviews with journalism professionals regarding the role that public commitment plays in the consideration of what is news. I fear that the results of asking journalists about the role of public commitment may yield vague responses like Tuchman’s discovery that news workers think the definition of news is “natural” or “common sense.”

Gatekeepers must keep in mind the public interest because to do so means the product is likely to be more palatable. A palatable product is likely to keep the customers

coming back and that is in the interest of the gatekeeper. It is a mutually beneficial relationship.

The role of public interest can't simply be an illusion promoted through messages such as "looking out for you," or "on your side." The gatekeepers must convince the public that they have the public's best interests at heart through practice if they want the public to consume their product, be it steel pennies, beef entrails or news. In order to do that the public must be able to experience the positive consequences of the gatekeeper's decisions. If it is only propaganda through mottos with no real achieved benefit, slowly but surely the consumer will begin to doubt the slogan campaign and consume a more desirable product as they appear to be doing now.

The influences discovered in this study are not necessarily problems, but rather signposts that gatekeepers should heed.

In fields of social management . . . we lack signposts of exactly where we are and in what direction we are moving with what velocity. As a result, the actors are uncertain of themselves, they are at the mercy of the likes or dislikes of bosses, colleagues or the public. (Lewin, 1947 p.150)

We must remember that conversational designs are chosen ones (ten Have, 2007, p. 137). The patterns discovered are also ones of choice and choice implies that there are alternatives. The study shows these are the patterns of choice in this group. The conversational design is one where debate does not ensue and participants do not defend their points of view. Instead the choice is to discard one's own perceptions, jump on the bandwagon with the group and allow other media to choose events that will make it through the gate. That was the design of choice and the culture that existed among the participants in KGTE's morning editorial conference. It would be interesting to know

how much thought, if any, was put into this design. That may be part of the culture too: little or no planning about what will be allowed to shape and influence gatekeeper's choices as they paint the path of our reality.

According to Lewin, changing the process means educating or replacing the gatekeepers. In summary, the education a gatekeeper can take from this study is that alternative points of view should be encouraged rather than force a shift of opinion to comply with the groups perspective. The force of pack mentality should be combated so that ideas are not met with sarcasm. Other media plays a positive role, however it appears to inadvertently dictate content. Finally, the first-person personal experiences are being entirely omitted, and it is those experiences of the group that may more closely mimic that of the people the media hope to serve.

APPENDIX A

PILOT DATA

The assignment editor has just finished listing the day's events and is turning over the discussion to the News Director. He will direct each member to begin sharing story ideas for discussion.

ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: What do you got?
NEWS DIRECTOR: CNN has the Governor's mansion staked out.
WEB EDITOR: Nice!
NEWS DIRECTOR: Ha, ha! So we will want to get that. We have got a few e-mails.
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: You know CNN is lacking news if they are hanging out at the governor's mansion.
PRODUCER: CNN at the Governor's mansion is a sad day.
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: I read something today that said, that said, something like, 'Gavin Newsome is cute, Bill Rosa is charming and Gibbons is just a putz.'
VARIOUS: Aha, ha, ha, ha!
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: So it's like you expect it from Gavin Newsome and Bill Rosa, but you don't expect it from Gibbons.
NEWS DIRECTOR: Except for his own personal philandering over the years.
PRODUCER: Dawn (Gibbon's wife) is going to make out wonderfully.
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: Good for her.

In the following thread, the group is discussing if scarce resources should be assigned to cover a trial.

ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: It's supposed to be his prelim. (preliminary trial).
PRODUCER: What do you think? Is it going to go?
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: I don't know. No one [other media] is going to it. Everyone [other media] is going to Family Court.
PRODUCER: Well this guy tried to kill his roommates and tried to kill himself with a box cutter and they found him on the street with his neck bleeding or whatever.
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: He was that guy who was going to kill his girlfriend but killed the other guy instead or tried to kill his girlfriend.
PRODUCER: He exchanged his girlfriend for a crack rock and then when the guy was having sex with her he went

in there to kill him and tried to kill himself and they found him bleeding on the street.

PRODUCER 2: Hepatitis (risk) right there.

The web editor suggests a story idea. The business-related story, has elements of marketing and is likely the result of media, however, media is not mentioned. The enthusiasm that ensues is striking.

WEB EDITOR: I think this is fantastic news. Virgin Atlantic is going to have non-stop service from New York to Las Vegas.

PRODUCER: Yes!

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: Ahhhh.

PRODUCER: Wow!

ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: They are taking up the slack for everyone else.

WEB EDITOR: One flight to JFK.

PRODUCER: How much is it?

WEB EDITOR: Um, \$159 one-way.

ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: \$159!

WEB EDITOR: Not bad.

ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: Holy shit!

PRODUCER: \$300 round trip. Not bad at all.

ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: They give you good service too.

PRODUCER: And you have TVs!

NEWS DIRECTOR: Ya, maybe we should . . .

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: That's pretty good news for us.

The Assignment Editor continues going over the list of events that day. He waivers slightly, deferring to the group. Despite the seriousness of the topic, the scientific basis, and abuse of helpless persons, the topic is not well received.

ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: And then at 6 pm. I don't know if we can get in early uh, not many people are up at 6 am to call. Ha, say 'hey, can we come over?' but there is a psychiatric abuse of adults and children exhibit over on Maryland parkway across from UNLV.

NEWS DIRECTOR: What would be on exhibit?

PARTICIPANTS: Ha, ha, ha, ha!

HEALTH PRODUCER: It is abused people.

PARTICIPANTS: Ha, ha, ha, ha!

ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: *[Reading]* Citizens commission on human rights will hold . . .

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: Ever seen an adult like this!

ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: *[Reading]* It's a touring exhibit entitled . . .

NEWS DIRECTOR: Rocking in a corner.

ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: *[Reading]* Psychiatry, an industry of death.
NEWS DIRECTOR: Wow! *[Sarcasm]*
PRODUCER: Who are these people?
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: *[Reading]* The exhibit features 14 documentaries that reveals the history of psychiatric abuses in the U.S. and abroad, ranging from involuntary confinement to political torture.
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: Moving on, moving right along.
REPORTER: Is that a *[Investigative reporter]* story?
NEWS DIRECTOR: Ha, ha, ha!
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: That is *[investigative]*.
NEWS DIRECTOR: *[Speaking to the health producer]* You had better hope you have a good story there.
HEALTH PRODUCER: I know.

The Assignment Editor continues going over the list of the days events to see if the group is interested in discussing any of them. Here, a topic is suggested on an event happening that day that challenges the American tradition of fast food. It is not well received, as the news director calls it a story that can be done on any day, despite the event that day and recent disease hitting mass-produced foods. The news director's stance is that there are more important things to cover. He also uses the story idea to make a derisive comment about one of his staff members.

ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: Slow food movement.
NEWS DIRECTOR: That is an evergreen (story). Moving on.
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: People growing their own veggies? Might be pretty good today considering that salmonella has tripled its caseload.
NEWS DIRECTOR: It's a feature story. A handful of freaks are growing their own vegetables. Who provided that story, Jeff?

Each day in this meeting, the allocation of resources is often considered so that it is likely that each staff member in the field will produce content each day.

There is an extreme eagerness in the group to answer questions about resources. The following thread shows briefly how they jump at the opportunity to answer and express a strong handle on what is at their service.

PRODUCER: We have two night-siders today or just one?
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: One.
PRODUCER 2: One.

This eagerness to answer questions and show that they have a handle on resources can become overbearing. News Directors often want to know about resources in order to evaluate if the staff is allocating resources appropriately. In the following

thread, that is what he wants to know. Members of the group are so eager to answer that the News Director is annoyed.

PRODUCER: So Jeff?
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: He is at family court, or headed to family court, or is at family court.
NEWS DIRECTOR: Do we have anyone over there?
PRODUCER: Jeff.
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: It's Jeff.
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: I think Jeff is.
NEWS DIRECTOR: Okay!

The eagerness to answer questions is not only annoying, but it can also lead to inaccuracies. In the following thread, the executive Producer is trying to decide how to allocate reporter resources for an event that is designed to help hundreds of people cope with foreclosure. The rest of the staff is eager to help, but their comments are regularly incorrect and conflicting.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: Is it (the event) an all day thing?
PRODUCER: Ten to seven today. Ten to five tomorrow.
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: Um.
REPORTER: It's going on tomorrow too.
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: I would love for you to leave something cuz I can still run that in the afternoon but maybe a daysider (reporter who works during the day) needs to be down there all through the day too, with people?
REPORTER: Usually they go until . . .
REPORTER: Ends at 3.
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: Ends at 5.
PRODUCER: Ends at 7 today.
REPORTER: He said we have three people working on this.
PRODUCER: We have three people? Oh.
REPORTER: Usually they go for quite a while and even longer and last time, this is the first time they are doing it for two days and there is a reason they are doing that.
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: End it right at 7.

Allocating resources so that each field reporter produces content, is often dictated by the technical gate of time. Here the group is discussing if they should cover a meeting regarding potential terrorist targets in the State of Nevada. Despite the importance of the topic and the high-level attendees, time is a major determining factor.

NEWS DIRECTOR: (Terrorist) Targets?
PRODUCER: Hotels, casinos, the Stratosphere.

NEWS DIRECTOR: What time does it (The meeting) start?
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: 9 a.m.
NEWS DIRECTOR: By 10:30 lets call it. Text him and say, ‘Are we going to hear about targets or not?’ because if we are not, I don’t want to deal with another boring ass story.

PRODUCER: Is the report . . .
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: Well this is one of the few times . . .
NEWS DIRECTOR: It could be good.
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: It could be. And there’s a retired general that is going to be addressing the commission on the importance of homeland security and their association with the military.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: Whose association with the military?
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: The Homeland Security Department of the State of Nevada. So it would be Nellis Air Force Base and the National Guard.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: We are in an Orange Alert so all I can say to that is ‘Duh!’ Ha, ha, ha!
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: Remember when they had the National Guard posted out at McCarran and a number of other . . .
NEWS DIRECTOR: Considering all the terrorist activity around here I am sure we need a well-oiled machine down there at homeland security.

ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: Well I think the fact that the 9-11 terrorists spent time here prior to their Jihad.
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: Same thing in Florida. Florida and Las Vegas are the same thing.
NEWS DIRECTOR: One last fling before you ‘off’ yourself.
PRODUCER: Totally acceptable.
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: Exactly. Why wait for the virgins when you can go right to them?
PRODUCER: (Virgins) In Las Vegas?

Widespread laughter. Discussion ends.

APPENDIX B

STUDY DATA

January 26, 2009

The participants are sitting around a large conference table, in a room enclosed by glass. Every seat is taken. They take turns, moving counter clockwise around the table suggesting story ideas and briefly discussing them.

In the following thread, the participants have gone half-way around the table, and at the head of the table, it's the news director's turn. In an unusual reference to other media, the relationship between the two media agencies becomes an issue when discussing if the story a story is worth covering.

News Director: Joe sent me a note, said that COX cable installers are trying to upsell people when they get their cable installed and some supervisors promise to file a complaint with their boss about it. I don't know what they are trying to sell people.

Various talking

Unknown: HBO Pack.
Unknown: Movie channels.
Unknown: Right! Sports channels.
Reporter: Extra ten bucks a month.
News Director: I don't know what they are trying to sell people.
Reporter: They are already the most over priced cable. I have had it for 5 years and I hate it.

After covering all the story ideas, the group begins to sift through a select few that they like for additional coverage. The News Director highlights his previous idea again. However, behind the scenes internal conflicts between KGTE and COX close the gate on his story idea.

News Director: Up selling by Cox Cable is an interesting one.
Producer: Yeah, that story will go over really good.
News Director: With our pals over at Cox.
Executive Director: That would be great.

The News Director has also brought up another story idea from other media. It's one that is related to a declining economy. It has a rather rural focus in a decidedly urban newsroom both in location and in staff.

News Director: And *The Sun* has a story. Did you see? Poaching is up.

Assignment Editor: What (with surprise)?
 News Director: Poaching is up. Probably because people have more time on their hands and they want to get a free meal and they are going out and shooting deer and stuff.
 Reporter: What are they shooting?
 News Director: Deer, elk, antelope, big horn sheep. I didn't know there were any (animals) out there.
 Assignment editor: There are a ton of big horn sheep.
 News Director: That's it for me.

During this meeting, the Web Editor gets a text alert. When it is her turn that day to give her story idea, she brings up the text alert and it turns into one of the longest discussions over the entire week of study data.

Since it is a text alert the information is very brief and largely without any pre-existing context that usually accompanies other media. This thread not only references media, but also personal experience and even a shift of force occurs later.

Web Editor: I just got sent out breaking news. The unemployment rate is nine point one percent.
 Unknown: Oh my god!
 Assignment editor: Nine?
 Web editor: Nine-one. It is a full percentage point higher than November and the highest since September 1983.
 Producer: It was eight percent last year.
 Producer 2: It was like eight something.
 Reporter: National is like seven point two.
 Web Editor: It was eight point one in November. Nine point one in December so.
 News Director: Wow!
 Web Editor: When they factored in Novembers numbers we were the eighth highest in the nation. So I don't know if we are going to move up a notch?
 Reporter: We were eighth in December?
 Web Editor: We were eighth in December and now we are nine point one. Yeah!
 Producer: They were predicting we would hit 10 percent. So I am curious to see if they are predicting if it will be even higher, but I am curious to see if they are predicting if it will be higher since we are already at nine and its January.

The discussion ends abruptly with no context or director for coverage. However, later in the same meeting the group picks up the question of what angle to cover the topic of new unemployment figures.

Notice, that the News Director brings up the topic, emphasizing the news value, and qualifies it as, "it's bad," and specifically asks how it should be covered.

News Director: So, unemployment figures are out and its bad. How do we do this story that we have done unemployment situation Sunday. How is it now?

Web Editor: In December it was 126,000 people were unemployed.

News Director: What are they doing? Are they leaving Nevada?

Web Editor: I don't know. This is one side effect of this. I was reading somewhere and they said nationally they noticed fewer illegals coming in.

News Director: Right.

Web Editor: Because there is no work, and interestingly, [an anchor] and I were talking about that and she said 'I drove by Star Nursery where there were a lot of the day labor-type and there were not nearly as many.' Just a side note.

News Director: We actually talked about that a while ago. I don't know if we did that piece or not.

Producer: I think we did.

Web Editor: We usually do the job connect.

Executive Producer: Yeah (unenthusiastic).

Web Editor: (Sigh) You know the one thing that was kind of interesting, (another station employee) mentioned how much money they (the unemployed) get a week. I wasn't really sure how much they get and maybe take that approach?

News Director: Right.

Web Editor: And maybe try to find a family that is trying to live on that. Um I don't know.

News Director: Yeah, we could do that.

Executive producer: Is it based on what you make?

Web Editor: I don't know

News Director: I don't know exactly how it works.

Executive Producer: Yeah.

Web Editor: But it's capped.

Executive Producer: Yeah.

Web Editor: But maybe get away from the job connect?

Executive Producer: Yeah, I don't think job connect . . .

Web Editor: Try to find a family they . . . they, I don't know.

News Director: That would be one way to do it and then we could use that as a way to update the state unemployment compensation funds. I don't know where we stand and we had a lot of money.

Web Editor: They said we were going to have a problem.

Assignment Editor: Aren't one of [reporter's] people (sources) currently on unemployment?

News Director: I don't know, maybe its time to go back to one of his people and see how they are doing?

Various talking over each other.

News Director: Who is unemployed? Remember we saw single women going to our job fair? We need to break out who is in the highest unemployment category.

Producer: I am sure that the state kind of tracks that.

News Director: I am sure they have that kind of break down.

Producer: That is a good way to do it because it's different.

News Director: It is something we haven't done before you know, who is unemployed?

Executive Producer: Okay, well which is it? Compensation, or who is unemployed, is two angles. Why don't we give those two angles to whoever gets it and see which one we can get. Just tell them we want both. But one merges the package and one can be a break out.

A lot of the day's story ideas are provided by the assignment editor. Many include a reference to other media, like this one. But here, they struggle with the context because none of them have a clear handle on the facts of the story.

Assignment Editor: There was something in *The Sun* this weekend, the calm they have when they ask questions of the health district guy . . . he is talking about some um breast infection . . . there is some . . . not an epidemic.

Executive Producer: Yeah, I saw that.

Assignment Editor: Some 40 cases.

Producer: How do you get that?

Assignment editor: I don't know if it is a breast enlargement thing, a mastectomy?

Executive Producer: Yes, it is after they go in and remove something.

Assignment Editor: It is spreading among women and women and women.

Producer: Maybe [anchor] can do that for her lung check in February?

News Director: Yeah.

Producer: It's only a couple of weeks away and it is something local.

News Director: Yeah.

These discussions take place during a long, protracted and severe downturn in the economy. The effects are wide-reaching, and many groups are vying for attention that they deserve hard to come by state funding.

One of those groups is university students and staff at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. The previous week they held a rally to raise support for defending the university budget. A reporter in the group pitches a story that the topic is still relevant. The video is impressive. In a rare instance, a reference to personal experience in conjunction with media, succeed in passing the gate.

Web Editor: I wonder if people here would be going to UNR instead and transferring up north?

Reporter: Well, it's like what that guy said in my package on Thursday, 'What's a diploma from UNLV going to be worth in a few years?' He is like, 'We are not going to be competitive because UNLV is going to have a bad name. What is UNLV? We are not going to be able to compete with anymore, even if we have a degree. A degree from UNLV is not going to worth as much as . . .'

Assignment Editor: Yeah, great, you have a Masters from UNLV as opposed to a masters from Duke.

Web Editor: Well, that is a whole different thing.

Reporter: Or from ASU.

Web Editor: ASU, California College or even UNR.

News Director: And they are saying their degrees will be compromised because they won't have the programs?

Reporter: Because UNLV will have a bad name.

Executive Producer: Yeah, professors.

News Director: Reputation because they raised tuition?

Reporter: No, a reputation because all the programs have been dropped.

News Director: That is what I am asking.

Reporter: Their class selection is limited and they just don't have the money to have these wonderful, wonderful programs so that is what they are saying, 'Diploma is not going to be worth as much.'

News Director: That's not a bad angle. That's not too bad, and it is a little something different and it is a little more substantive than just a bunch of kids rallying about cost.

Executive Producer: Spewing, Yeah.

Web Editor: Maybe they can't finish a four year degree in four years now?

Reporter: That's what the student government told me is that all you hear is that they have this one girl and I don't know if they can put me in touch with her, she has been in school for 6 years now and she just has to take one class left and they are not offering it and they only offer it in the Fall semesters. So she has to wait, she isn't taking any classes or anything. She has to wait until they offer it in the fall to take it.

News Director: So these are some specific issues that make a little more sense. Maybe we should do that?

Executive Producer: Lets call and see if the University President, he hasn't talked bigger picture.

Reporter: Okay, yeah.
 Executive Producer: What do we stand to lose? And not just the dumb little class: Rock and Roll, History of Rock and Roll whatever!
 Web Editor: Maybe they stand to lose professors?
 Executive Producer: Something that means something, or professors, we would have never got professor 'so and so' without (this class) you know?
 News Director: Classes that are required is probably a big issue.
 Reporter: Okay.

Once the agenda is set, in this case, UNLV funding, there is momentum and a microscope placed on the institution. However, that momentum may be broken by an off-topic issue.

In the following thread, the Assignment Editor brings up a curious event at UNLV that would not have gained interest if it were not for recent focus on events at UNLV. It includes a shift of force and pack mentality.

Assignment editor: Then Friday something went up. I don't know who that was from? Demanding a retraction and apology from the chancellor.
 News Director: That is just bullshit! Never mind that! The chancellor's comments, I don't have any fault with what he is saying about parents who are not responsible enough in taking care of their kids because there are a lot of parents that are not involved and don't give a shit and they bring down the whole freaking' system!
 Web editor: That is the biggest problem with our school district.
 News Director: Yeah.
 Assignment Editor: Undisciplined kids don't get spanked anymore.
 News Director: They don't need to get spanked. They need to spank the parents.

Keeping an old story alive like UNLV budget cuts can be a challenge without new developments. Regardless, there is a lot of interest in doing so with particularly shocking stories. In the following thread, a member of the group brings up one such shocking story that was covered the day before about a pizza delivery guy who was robbed and murdered. They seek new developments to keep the story alive.

It includes a reference to media, but in this case the group struggles to add context. The news director expresses skepticism about the context and angle.

News Director: Well, you know the pizza murder guy? That's not a bad story. I wonder if we need to uh . . .
 Executive Producer: Yesterday they were trying to get more .

Assignment Editor: Maybe today, the (Clark County) Coroner . . . 40 to 50 years old.

Web Editor: He was 40 to 50 years old, which makes me wonder, ‘was he out of work and went and got this job?’

News Director: Yeah! He had four kids.

Unknown: FOX talked to a co-worker and they said he was working two jobs to try to support his 18 year old daughter who also worked at Pizza Hut and he was also taking massage classes because he wanted to help people. They made it seem like he was a really hard working guy who was just trying to make ends meet by delivering pizza.

Web Editor: Some of the co-workers seemed to write on the (web) comments . . .

Unknown: The Pizza Hut was closed yesterday.

Executive Producer: Yeah.

Web Editor: And gosh, those guys can’t carry that much money. That is just so pathetic.

Unknown: And on the web site they will tell you they carry 20 dollars and that is it. They carry no more than 20 dollars.

News Director: Well, maybe it’s a sign of the times in more ways than one? How desperate do you have to be to kill a pizza guy for money?

Web Editor: I wonder if companies that do deliveries are maybe gonna re-think about checking addresses or doing something?

News Director: I don’t know if that is a particularly dangerous kind of thing to do or not to do? You don’t hear about pizza guys being robbed.

Web Editor: It used to be taxi cab drivers getting robbed in this town and I haven’t heard about that in a long time.

Executive Producer: All right, should we have him look into it? [Reporter], you want to have him try to find out more information before he gets here?

Assignment Editor: Yes ma’am.

As stories are assigned members of the meeting often leave to start their day. Near the end of the meeting, only the 6 P.M. producer and a group of managers are left to discuss what will be covered in that newscast. In the presence of the managers, that producer shifts force.

Producer: Quick one before we get to, Sprint and Home Depot and I have Caterpillar too that lost jobs. Should I just knock Home Depot out since it’s not here? It’s not affecting stores right?

Executive Producer: I mean it is one of those . . .

Producer: Still interesting.
Executive producer: A bunch of layoffs announced nation-wide but right now they are not affecting here. I think you hear Home Depot, Sprint and Caterpillar you know?
Producer: Okay
Executive Producer: Yeah.

January 28, 2009

As said earlier, during the study period the group is challenged with explaining how the overall reality is changing dramatically, from economic boom to downturn. In this discussion of what to cover and how, personal experience is brought up multiple time in trying to add context to other media stories that are prominent at the time. But personal experience is so weak, that even a flubbed enunciation stops the development of context that include personal experience. The group seems relieved that they do not need to continue the task of developing the idea into an angle for coverage.

Web Editor: Well, this morning on CBS, they had a toke board of the biggest drops in home values. Las Vegas was 29 percent, very top of the list. Incredible!

News Director: Oh yeah!

Reporter: That's funny, I did that short sale story this morning. I wish I had known that.

News Director: Yeah!

Reporter: Wow!

Web Editor: One thing that I was thinking about, when you are driving around, you are seeing so many empty businesses and retail areas, and we all know that retail was hit hard. The paper (*Las Vegas Review-Journal*) actually had a little something today where it said that there are 17 anchor stores around the valley that are vacant and that mall owners are totally struggling to fill these vacancies and that is hurting other businesses, these little businesses in these malls where they don't have an anchor store or they have empty store fronts around them. So there might be something in that.

News Director: I went to the Birdevard Mall yesterday. There was like nobody over there.

Reporter: Boulevard?

Producer: Because they are all dead.

News Director: You guys call it Boulevard? Not Birdevard?

Reporter: Ha, ha!

News Director: I used to go there all the time, now it is like oh!

Covering the economic downturn is a touchy subject. In the following thread, a reporter is asked what she would like to cover and she selects one of the stories about process servers who are evicting people.

The angle is not specifically outline, however, the assignment editor presents an angle that a business is thriving on evicting people, that contrasts dramatically with the sad story of evictions and he quickly has to shift force.

Reporter3: I don't know, this process server thing sounds cool. But, if we are going to hold that . . .

News Director: We should just see what [photographer] thinks about the chances of talking to a homeowner.

Reporter3: Oh, like going back and talking to a homeowner?

News Director: And then maybe we can go out again tomorrow with him with a reporter and get homeowners?

Assignment editor: They go out every day.

News Director: Now we have the video so . . .

Assignment editor: There is a perfect example of a business that is thriving. Ha, ha, ha!

News Director: I don't want any business is thriving (story).

Assignment editor: I know. But, too much work.

Las Vegas has a little-known darker side, especially in a high-poverty and high crime city of North Las Vegas. There is also a seedy side to the police and that becomes obvious in this discussion about North Las Vegas and how dangerous it is. Pack mentality and media are strong themes as News Director floats an idea about a advertiser, the police.

News Director: They have an ad (advertisement) on our air by the way for police officers, North Las Vegas.

Producer: I saw that. Well I heard it as I was getting ready for work.

Assignment Editor: They have it (the advertisement) in house.

Reporter: No background check required.

News Director: Ha, ha, ha, I know, shoot people

Executive producer: Do you like shooting Guns?

Reporter: That's Metro (Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department).

Producer: Do you like molesting people? That is North Las Vegas (police).

Producer2: Do you like propositioning people you pull over?

Light laughing. Discussion ends.

Throughout the meeting producers, associate producers and reporters leave to start their days as they are assigned stories. A smaller group of two managers is all that is left in the following thread and they are deciding how to gatekeep. The force of other media covering the same story plays a role.

News Director: Ready?

Executive Producer: Yeah.

Producer: What would you like to ‘hold out’? Did the gun stuff get sent to everyone (other media)? Probably did huh?

Executive Producer: It sure did.

News Director: Yeah.

Producer: And everyone will probably want to try and get Station’s today. Mexican consulate is a V.O.S.O.T. (Voice Over, Sound On Tape). It is a newser (press conference).

Executive Producer: It’s a big one.

Producer: Yeah, it was like . . .

Web editor: What if we do a V.O. (Voice Over) on the gun laws?

News Director: Well yeah, I was going to say the gun law is the best teasable story.

Producer: Yeah.

Web Editor: Uh hu.

Producer: Yeah. We can do that.

Executive producer: And they break it all out so . . .

Producer: Yeah and I could, she could do the numbers.

News Director: Other stations may report it but they may not pursue it like we might.

As we know, references to media are abundant and serve a variety of purposes including providing context. In the following thread, the group is talking about a story in the newspaper about how property taxes are expected to decline. The news director waits until the discussion begins to wane before bringing in extremely relevant personal experience. The thread shows that the weakness of context even when provided by other media, can not be bolstered by personal experience.

Web editor: They have an explainer about how your property taxes can go up and now they have an explainer on the bill.

Executive producer: Now, has that deadline passed? We were reading that (news story in the paper) and we didn’t understand.

Web Editor: I don’t know. I just don’t know, and they say 200,000 (property owners) will actually see a drop and I am guessing those are the people with big, super-duper homes.

News Director: Yeah, I don’t know how it works. That you would have . . . there is a cap on how high your taxes can go so your property taxes if your assessed value is lower . . .

Web Editor: Well, see? What happens is, say your assessed value goes here, but your property tax only goes here, but then your value drops, but your still not . . .

News Director: You are still paying the same or more.

Executive producer: Where you expect it to go down.

Assignment Editor: Do you have to pay someone to come in and re-appraise your home?
News Director: I don't think so. I got a tax notice and they lowered the assessed value of my house and it actually does lower the taxes on my house a couple of hundred dollars a year.
Assignment editor: That is good.
Executive producer: Yeah.
Silence and sound of tapping.
News Director: All right, where are we going here?
Discussion ends on this topic.

Personal experience is raised fairly often to little effect, but in the following thread personal experience is an extremely powerful force to inspire heated debate. The debate however is entirely different, more about the reality of their personal experiences than how to approach a story.

The story idea is about toll roads and the news workers have experience and strong feelings about toll roads. The debate becomes about if toll roads are good or bad, rather than how to cover the story.

Reporter: It's like a highway.
Web Editor: Nightmare.
Assignment Editor: It's not such a (nightmare). I mean I did it in California and it is like a thing, a magnetic thing, and you put it on your windshield and when you drive under this thing . . .
News Director: Right.
Assignment editor: It registers. There is no stopping. It just automatically . . .
Reporter: You have to pay for that.
Producer: But who wants to pay for that?
Reporter: It's like 70 bucks, who wants to pay for that?
Assignment Editor: To get from one side of town to the other in 20 minutes as opposed to an hour?
Reporter: But you know that not that many people are going to pay that much for that thing.

Lots of talking.

Assignment Editor: You would be surprised.
Reporter: It depends on how much you drive it
Lots of talking.
Reporter: Not in Texas. They jack that thing up like 5 percent a year.
Executive producer: It's worth it.

The group starts to talk about a press conference where the city is announcing that for the first time it is going to participate in the environmental event: Earth Hour. In an unprecedented move, Las Vegas strip casinos will intentionally shut off their signature

lights to save electricity. The news workers use stereotype the participants, but the pack mentality is counter acted by the powerful political players backing the event.

Reporter2: Rory Reid (county commissioner) is out there, the mayor is out there and all kinds of tree huggers.

The previous thread shows how politicians can overcome stereotypes simply by their presence at an event. The following thread shows how politicians and other media can carry heavy influence in the direction of coverage within this group as well.

In the following example, a newspaper breakdown of economic benefit of stimulus money that was provided by one political party office holder. That is paired in the news story with critique of the opposing political party.

The news group latches on to that critique and explores the conflict between the pro and anti stimulus forces on both sides of the political debate. Their bias becomes evident as the agenda has been set.

Producer2: And then uh, just uh, RJ (Las Vegas Review Journal) had a pretty good story today about education. CCSD (Clark County School District) and the transportation department would benefit from the stimulus plan, the millions that each would get. The two things I had.

The group doesn't discuss the idea in depth at the time. But then later, as the group picks it back up.

Executive Producer: I was going to bring up what these guys (Review Journal) already said, is that they couldn't convince them and then through Dina Titus' office, they broke out what Nevada stands to gain.

Producer2: Yeah.

Executive Producer: You know? 312 million dollars for education, so they broke it all out.

Web Editor: Oh, that's good!

Executive Producer: I think we should do this.

Producer1: Uh hu.

Executive Producer: And then again, Heller and Ensign, and its hilarious, I don't know if you guys ever read the comments at the end (web site)?

Producer1: Uh hu.

Producer2: Yeah.

Executive Producer: So here is one (web comment), 'Heller and Ensign would vote against cutting the rope that they are being hung with,' ha, ha, ha, 'if it were suggested by Democrats.'

Unknown: Ha, ha, ha!

Executive Producer: It was kind of funny. So I just wonder if we could hear from them or hear from our other people that they think this is a good thing. Why would you turn away money? They are saying that it is loaded with all this pork you know?

Producer1: Uh hu.

Executive Producer: But if it helps create jobs, you know? Clark County School District, 179 million, Head Start funding 2.8 million.

Web Editor: Should we call (senator) Ensign and (congressman) Heller and say, 'where is the pork? What are you specifically against in this? What would make you vote for it?'

Executive Producer: Yeah, tell us?

News Director arrives in the meeting.

News Director: Are you talking about the national bail out?

Executive Producer: Yea, the break down.

Web Editor: Uh hu.

Executive producer: There is a break down: 39 thousand Nevadans will continue to receive benefits that would have otherwise expired, so it is a pretty good breakdown that we can get from Titus office.

News Director: And so you are going to try to get a comment from our delegation? Is that what you are trying for?

Executive Producer: Well we are saying (senator) Ensign and (congressman) Heller both voted against it so they didn't go, they both voted along party lines. But, but I guess, how do you turn down this kind of money? You know? They have their reasons obviously. Senators, say the spending levels are obscene. Okay so?

News Director: Well yeah, the Republicans are worried about the deficit. They think this is going to go to a trillion dollars.

Producer: Yeah.

News Director: The other thing is, um, there is a lot of talk about, there is only, what is it: Just a drop in this thing to help small business, but they create 70 percent of the jobs in this country. They have some legitimate points: 'Why aren't we helping small business who put people to work?'

Reporter: Yeah, instead of Wall Street.

Producer: Right.

News Director: So, you know, these are all good questions to ask.

Later they return to the same topic

Producer: I like the local idea on the stimulus package.

Executive Producer: Yeah, we gotta do that.

Producer: We gotta do that.
Web Editor: Yeah, cuz we never really heard how that money would really be used.
Reporter: And I don't think that a lot of people, even small businesses have no idea. They don't know about that problem.
Executive Producer: We could separate out, you know, maybe do the story, and then we try to get reaction from Heller, try to get sound, but that is separate. Who wants to do that?

January 30, 2009

Marketing media is a powerful tool that seemingly easily infiltrates this group. They begin to talk about a flood of advertised discounts at the resorts. There is an alternative point of view that is skeptical of the marketing, but that is quickly overshadowed by enthusiasm about the intended marketing message. This thread includes a shift of force and a reference to media.

Web Editor: Well, with all the local discounts and stuff.
Reporter: They need to make those discounts lower though. They still aren't that . . .
News Director: We continue to ad those to our list [on the web].
Reporter2: I got a thing (advertisement) from Mandalay Bay.
News Director: Mandalay Bay! I saw that!
Reporter2: 65 dollars for Mandalay bay! 65 dollars a night!
News Director: 100 dollars credit toward . . .
Assignment Editor: Wow!
Reporter: Geese!
Executive producer: Yeah!
Reporter2: The Hotel.
Web Editor: And the Wynn's got the one. I saw Lake Las Vegas is running stuff out there.
Reporter2: The Hotel is 85 dollars a night, which is a really nice place.
Reporter: Wow!
Web Editor: All the shows too. There are a bunch of 49 dollar shows.

February 3, 2009

The assignment editor has just finished reading a list of what is happening that day and at the end are the stories that sports wants to do. It includes a shift of force and pack mentality.

News Director: Ha, ha, ha! They want to do a story on bowling.
Assignment Editor: They want to do a story on NASCAR, Bowling Congress. Bowling and I thought senators and congressmen would be here?

News Director: Those bowling alleys, those lanes are supposed to be the most level surface on earth.
Assignment editor: Really?

He goes on to tell them more about how great it is, heavily carrying on a presentation of little-known facts, interrupted by interjections of surprise by the group members and additions of potential angles.

Reporter: It's like the best kept secret, no one knows about it and it brings in more money to the city than . . .
Assignment Editor: These type of people also drink, buy food, buy souvenirs.
Unknown: Smoke cigarettes.
Assignment Editor: Smoke cigarettes.

February 4, 2009

Other media and personal experience would seem to be a powerful combination given that the goal of the media is to allow us to personally relate to the event and put them in the context of our lives. However, as seen in the discussion of toll roads, it is a challenge to not let personal experience lead to bias in coverage.

In the following thread, media, personal experience and bias. A green reporter read a story in The Las Vegas Sun about a philanthropist who was a powerful person in her hometown. She had once interviewed him. But he was being sued by casinos for loans (markers) that he allegedly never paid back. The group could have considered her a resource to advance the story, but her bias is revealed and she is unable to present an angle for covering the event even though she is connected back home and bad loans in Las Vegas is an under-reported topic.

Reporter: Oh, it's funny. The guy, it's on the front page of *The Sun*, about the millionaire that owes, the billionaire that owes, uh, that owes Caesars . . .
Web editor: Caesars.
Reporter: I know that guy. I interviewed him in Omaha. He is an oriental trading company that sells little chachikki items and little everything you know, made in Taiwan... little ...
Producer: Oriental trading company.
Reporter: Hu? Oriental trading company, yeah. And he is like the Mr. Big of Omaha. He has this monstrosity of a house and I have interviewed him. I was like, 'no kidding, who knew that guy was a scum bag.'
Producer3: Exactly, and his headquarters is in Omaha.
Reporter: Hu?
Producer3: Omaha trading company.
Reporter: Yeah. His father started it. Yeah and they give. He is gay, and they give millions to A.F.A.N. (Aid for Aids of

Nevada) and to all of the A.I.D.S. projects. That's funny. He didn't pay his bills. If you saw his house, you would be like 'Hu? Can't pay your bills? Hmmm.'"

Sometimes bias is evident through repeated attempted agenda setting. In this case, a reporter uses the personal experience of in speaking with another respected staff member to imply that the other respected staff member has a similar concern and agenda. While agenda setting is a regular infiltrator by outside marketing and political groups, this perceived effort from within the group to set an agenda is not successful. It is met with powerful and alarming sarcasm indicating pack mentality.

Reporter3: Um, okay, I know that everybody is probably tired of hearing me pitch this, but . . .

Various laughing loudly.

Reporter3: I was talking to [an anchor] about it yesterday, and the, you know? The number of suicides are up period in general, there is a suicide hotline here in town? And um, you know, maybe this is a way for us to see what kind of calls they have gotten? What they are hearing and offer our viewers some help? You know, someone who is in a situation? You know? On the fence, teetering, and you know maybe they don't know what help is out there? Maybe this is the chance for us to show them what help is out there?

News Director: You know, they don't need any help. You can get a really dangerous gun really easily here.

Reporter: They have got guns!

News Director: What's the problem?

Various laughing much louder.

The economic downturn is ripe for story development and a new, brief report from the Associated Press shows that Station's Casinos has missed a debt payment and there is speculation that the massive locals casino may go bankrupt.

The use of media by the group to provide context may overshadow their collective ability to develop deeper contexts under the right conditions. In the following thread, they quickly and collectively develop an enterprise story and that puts the event of a bankruptcy of a casino in perspective.

Web Editor: Right, this is a local place.

Executive producer: Local place and they were doing well and they just opened Aliante and now its like you know?

Producer2: That might . . .

Executive producer: And so obviously when they opened Aliante they were in trouble. They didn't just get into trouble. It's, you know?

Producer 2: That might be good too, who you say [reporter], because there is also talk that Harrah's is in serious danger of it as well facing bankruptcy as well.

News Director: Yeah. And what does it mean obviously?

Reporter: Is it going to close? Should they have opened Aliante?

Executive Producer: Yeah, should they have . . .

Reporter: 750 properties. They owned so much land around town. I couldn't believe it when I saw how much. All the southwest they pretty much own. They have a ton of land right off the strip.

Executive producer: What's next Durango?

Producer2: Hey, yeah, Durango Station. They own the old Castaways site.

Reporter: They have a plan.

Reporter3: They own like 4 or 5 more sites.

Assignment Editor: Well.

Web Editor: It would be great if ... with them maybe you know?

Reporter: They have 100 acres.

Assignment Editor: And they were going to do the whole revamp tear down of the Palace.

Executive Producer: Palace.

Producer: Yeah.

Reporter: And then they have their own plans. This was in *Fortune Magazine* on the Fertittas about, they had their own City Center. It was supposed to go right where the Wild Wild West is at Trop and...

Producer2: Oh, that one too?

Reporter: Yea, they have 100 acres right there, but that's not going to happen.

Producer: We should do a map of that story, map out everything they own.

Reporter: I think I may have all their stuff and stuff.

News Director: Whose working today? Who are the reporters today?

Talking and chatter.

News Director: Looks like it will have to be [reporter]. Lets make sure he does take a broad look at their holdings.

While the group had a strong attachment and knowledge of the local economic impact of the previous event, a broader perspective on economic policy did not have the high group cohesiveness.

In the following thread, the assignment editor brings up the idea of a recent car-buying incentive program by the Obama administration. The assignment editor expresses skepticism of the program and quickly shifts of force.

Assignment editor: To get people into buying cars. Now, the other thing is like all you are doing is putting people in debt is what you are really doing here. So, there is a little argument. Is it really a good deal or are you just putting people in debt?

Executive producer: Not if they need a car.

Web Editor: Yeah.

Reporter: That's true.

News Director: Get people to spend some of their money that way.

Producer: Spend it that way instead of spending it on a credit card.

Assignment editor: Well, yeah, see?

At the end of the meeting, the majority of the group has left and a smaller group of managers is discussing the amount of resources to put on a story. The story is that an arson has attacked the oldest Mormon Church in the state. The producer waivers and defers to the managers with a shift of force.

Producer3: Would it be dumb for nightside (11 p.m. newscast) if we sent a photographer to go shoot that church fire and have them (the reporter) front that (with a longer package)? Or just do a V.O., S.O.T. (Voice Over, Sound On Tape) maybe?

Executive producer: I think it's just a VOSOT (Video, Sound on Tape). I don't think fronting that adds anything.

News Director: Yeah.

Producer3: Okay.

Executive producer: It's a good VOSOT.

Producer3: Okay.

APPENDIX C

KGTE ASSIGNMENT SHEETS

Explanation

These are the assignment sheets from each day of the study data. They show the major stories that will be covered that day in each newscast and what kind of resources are assigned to the stories.

The crew members names are abbreviated next to the stories they are assigned. One set of initials means only a photographer is assigned. Two sets of initials indicates a reporter. The L means live, in-field introductions by a reporter and a photographer at a live remote truck. Live reports include a 15 sec. introduction and tag as well as a 15 sec. anchor introduction and tag. Live can be paired with a variety of “treatments” including a PKG (package), and a VSV (Video Sound Byte Video). A PKG is 1:30, when paired with the intros and tags for a total of 2:30 seconds assigned to a story. A VSV is 1:15 for a total of 2:15 assigned to a story. The difference between the two is that the PKG has multiple sound bytes and production elements. The VSV is simple video and one byte.

S means “set” and it is where a reporter tells the story in the studio, from the set after an anchor introduction. HELO, is the use of the helicopter to show a live picture from the air of an event with a reporter in the air telling the story live. The time is not specific. VO is 20-45 seconds of video that an anchor reads from the set.

Monday, January 26, 2009

Slug	Time	Where	Crew	Unit	AM	NOON	4PM	4:30	5PM	6PM	11PM
WED CHILD EDIT	10:30AM	DONE	BRO								
UNLV CUTS			MDU/MZA				L-VSV		L-PKG		
UNION HALL	2:00PM										
UNEMPLOYMENT DATA	11AM										
UNEMPLOYMENT			MSA/MM				S-VSV		S-PKG	VSV	
TOWN HALL PREVIEW		AHE/CBE	AHE/CBE					L-VSV		L-VSV	
TEEN SUICIDE											
SPORTS SHOOTS											
SPECIAL TOWNHALL	6:00PM										
SCHOOL FIGHT	3:00PM										
RICK TABISH HEARING	8:30AM										
PROPERTY TAXES											
PIZZA DELIVERY MURDE			TFL/LJA						L-SVS	L-MPK	
ONLINE HX	3:15PM										
OBESE KIDS	SAT FEED										
MORNING SPORTS SHO	11:00 AM	VENETIA	TZE								
MEADOWS SCHOOL	10:15AM	DONE	NKR				VO				
M. SCHOFIELD/ASSESSO	2:30PM		BRO								
I TEAM											
HTA				L23							
HISPANIC DUI	10:00AM		CSA/JBO					S-VSV		S-PKG	
HEALTH SHOOT	12:30PM		PFR/NKR								
HEALTH CARE CUTS	10:30AM	DONE	DSU								
FRANK BI ACKBURN	9:30AM										
FORECLOSED HOMES											
F STREET PROTEST PRE	6:00PM	WLV LIB									
EXTRA EXTRA											
COLLEGE REPUBLICANS											
CHAMBER- XGR PRIORIT	8:30 A.M.	DONE	BRO				VSV		VSV		
CABLE CONFUSION											
BUDGET COMMITTEE	9:00AM	DONE	DSU					VSV	VSV		
BBO				L22							
BABY BURNED											
AM TRUCKS											
AM STUFF											
*****CREWS*****											
*****OTHER*****											
*****COURTS*****											

L-VSV : LIVE VO/SOT/VO
 L-PKG : LIVE PACKAGE
 L-MPKG : LIVE MINI-PACKAGE
 S-VSV : ONSET VO/SOT/VO

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Slug	Time	Where	Crew	Unit	AM	NOON	4PM	4:30	5PM	6PM	11PM
WHITNEY DONATION	8:00AM	Whitney	BBO				VSV				
VACANT BUSINESSES											
UNION FILING											
TRANSURANIC WASTE	5:00PM										
TOLL ROADS?											
THE NEW HOMELESS			MSA/LJA						L-PKG	L-MPK	
STIMULUS REAX			AHE/KSH					S-VSV			
STIMULUS IMPACT			MDU/DSU				L-VSV		L-PKG	VSV	
STIMULUS BUSINESS			ELA/MMU				VSV		L-PKG	MPKG	
SPORTS SHOOT											
SEXUAL ASSAULT PARE	7:30AM	DEPT 6	CCO/HTA								
SCHOOL FIGHT CHARGE											
SCHOLARSHIPS	9:00 a.m.		CSA/JBO				S-PKG			MPKG	
ROUNDTABLE	3:00PM										
RENEWABLE ENERGY											
PROCESS SERVER	7:00AM		/BRO								
PRJCT HEART BEAT	1:00PM	NHP	BRO					VSV			
OBAMA DOG IN HENDER											
NEIGHBOR MEETING	6:00PM										
MOROCCAN DESERT			SPX					S-VSV			
LV1: Raphael Tulino	9:00pm		Gillan								
LAKE MEAD/CAREY CON							HELO				
LABOR PROTEST	9:00AM										
IRS INTERVIEW	1:00PM	In House	KZU								
I TEAM											
HORTON SHORT SALE											
EXTRA EXTRA											
EARTH HOUR 2009	10:30AM		CCO				VSV				
EARTH HOUR											
DESALINIZATION			GKN/MAD						PKG	PKG	
CREWS											
COURTS											
BUDGET MEETING	9:30AM		TZE								
BIG SPORTS SHOOT 2	12:50PM	SUNSET	KBY								
BIG SPORTS SHOOT 1	12:30PM	MGM	TZE								
American Recovery and Re											
AM TRUCKS											
AM STUFF											
*****other*****											

Friday, January 30, 2009

Slug	Time	Where	Crew	Unit	AM	NOON	4PM	4:30	5PM	6PM	11PM
CREWS											
HOME AUCTION			AMC/MZA				L-VSV		L-PKG	VSV	
SUPER BOWL ECONOMY			ELA/DSU				L-VSV		L-PKG	VSV	
EARNED INCOME AWAR	10:00 A.M.		TEI/MMU					S-VSV		S-PKG	
SMALL BUSINESS	10:00AM		MSA/BRO					S-VSV		S-PKG	
BILL PREVIEW			JHU/ABR						PKG		
RJC LAWSUIT											
*****OTHER****											
SEATBELT SAFETY	10:00AM		CCO								
UNEMPLOYMENT BACKL	11:00AM		JBO								
HORTON SHORT SALES			ASSIGN								
ONLY ONE NIGHTSIDER											
RECYCLE	8:00AM										
HOMELAND SECURITY M	9:00 A.M.										
LVCVA/ALBERTA	2:30PM		JoeW.Bro								
Dawn Gibbons Gives Out \$	1:45PM										
BLAGOJEVICH UNIFORM	7:30PM										
OUTLETS DOING WELL											
NLV AIRPORT LAWSUIT											
SUPER BOWL GAMBLING											
CULINARY PETITIONS											
LOAN MODIFICATION											
COURTS											
I TEAM											
SPORTS SHOOTS											
AM TRUCKS											
AM STUFF											
EXTRA EXTRA											

Tuesday, February 3, 2009

Slug	Time	Where	Crew	Unit	AM	NOON	4PM	4:30	5PM	6PM	11PM
WED CHILD EDIT		In Progre	DSU								
UNLV BASKETBALL	6:00PM		TZE								
TIP SHARING HELP											
STUDENTS GRAMMYS	12:30		DSU						VSV		
SPORTS SHOOTS											
SOCIAL SERV. PAYMENT											
SENIORS & ECONOMY	3:00?	AM SHO	DSU								
SECTION 8 WAIT											
SEAT BELT LAW											
SCHOOL ZONE SPEED LI											
ROBBERIES UP			MDU/MZA						S-PKG	MPKG	
REDEVELOP SUCCESS											
REBEL GAME			SPX/TZE	L22						LIVE	
POST OFFICE CHANGES											
POLLY LAWSUIT			CMC/								
OTHER											
nellis commander											
NASCAR INTERVIEW	4:00PM		TZE								
METRO ID THEFT	4:00PM		ADR/CBE					L-VSV			
MARY VONSEYDEWITZ											
LAKE LV GOLF COURSE											
ice cream truck music											
I TEAM											
HORSE AUCTION											
HOOKAH MURDER ARRE											
HIDALGO, LUIS	12:30PM										
HAZ MAT CALL											
HARDSHIP FAMILY											
GUARD PARTY	3:00PM		KCA								
GREEN BELT											
GRADUATED DL											
furlough program											
EXTRA EXTRA											
ENSIGN ON STIMULUS											
ECON INDICATORS											
EARLY LIVE			ADR/CBE								
department budgets											
CREWS											
CRASH SURVIVORS			AMC/LJA	L24			L-SV		L-SV	L-SV	
COURTS											
COUNTY COMMISISON	9:00AM		JBO								
COUNTY BUDGETS			MSA/JBO					S-SVS	VSV	PKG	
CONGRESSIONAL BOWLI	1:30PM		TZE					S-VSV			
CHINESE OFFICIALS											
CCSD BOARD CERTIFICA	4:00PM										
BUS FOLO?											
BUS FOLO			ELA/BRO	L21			L-SVS		L-PKG	VSV	
BUDGET SUGGESTIONS											
BRAIN INSTITUTE EDIT		DONE	TZE				S-VSV			PKG	

Wednesday, February 4, 2009

Slug	Time	Where	Crew	Unit	AM	NOON	4PM	4:30	5PM	6PM	11PM
CREWS											
BUS VICTIM IDS			ELA/DSU				L-SVS		L-PKG	VSV	
MEXICAN CONSULATE	10:00AM		MDU/MM					S-VSV		PKG	
STATION FINANCES	11:00AM		MSA/TZE				L-SVS		L-PKG	VSV	
GUN LAW SCORES			AMC/JBO				VO		S-PKG	S-MPK	
FORECLOSURE FUNDIN			AHE/KSH					L-VSV			
XGR UPDATE			JHU/ABR						S-VO		
OTHER											
LDS CHURCH FIRE			BRO								
FORECLOSURE FUNDIN			ASSIGN								
MOULIN ROUGE	9:00AM										
TOURISM IMPROVEMENT	9:00AM										
REDEVELOP AGENCY											
XGR-SMALL BUSINESS											
WED CHILD EDIT	Need to edit	In Progre									
WED CHILD	1:00PM		DCOMZA								
BUDDY CHECK	12:00PM		PFR/								
SPORTS SHOOT	3:00PM	UNLV	BRO								
SEAT BELT LAWS											
MED CHOPPER CRASHE											
CAR PURCHASE TAX											
COLLEGE STUDY											
XGR STIMULUS											
BILLBOARD ZONING											
UNLV CONFERENCE											
SUICIDES UP											
COURTS											
PARK, VICTOR S	7:45AM										
ORELLANA, CARLOS	7:30AM										
I TEAM											
SPORTS SHOOT											
AM TRUCKS											
AM STUFF											
Celeb Pizza Cook Off	6 PM	Sammy's			VO						
EXTRA EXTRA											

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL



**Social/Behavioral IRB – Expedited Review
Approval Notice**

NOTICE TO ALL RESEARCHERS:

Please be aware that a protocol violation (e.g., failure to submit a modification for any change) of an IRB approved protocol may result in mandatory remedial education, additional audits, re-consenting subjects, researcher probation suspension of any research protocol at issue, suspension of additional existing research protocols, invalidation of all research conducted under the research protocol at issue, and further appropriate consequences as determined by the IRB and the Institutional Officer.

DATE: June 27, 2008
TO: Dr. Gary Larson, Journalism and Media Studies
FROM: Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
RE: Notification of IRB Action by Dr. J. Michael Stitt, Chair *MS/ct*
Protocol Title: **Television Newsmeeting Culture**
Protocol #: 0805-2737

This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45 CFR 46. The protocol has been reviewed and approved.

The protocol is approved for a period of one year from the date of IRB approval. The expiration date of this protocol is June 26, 2009. Work on the project may begin as soon as you receive written notification from the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS).

PLEASE NOTE:

Attached to this approval notice is the **official Informed Consent/Assent (IC/IA) Form** for this study. The IC/IA contains an official approval stamp. Only copies of this official IC/IA form may be used when obtaining consent. Please keep the original for your records.

Should there be *any* change to the protocol, it will be necessary to submit a **Modification Form** through OPRS. No changes may be made to the existing protocol until modifications have been approved by the IRB.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond June 26, 2009, it would be necessary to submit a **Continuing Review Request Form** 60 days before the expiration date.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at OPRSHumanSubjects@unlv.edu or call 895-2794.

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 451047 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-1047

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Committee Member, Susanna Priest, Ph. D.
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