Here is an example of a theoretical paper


Local Media Agenda Building:
Implications for national and foreign news coverage
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Agendas

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Introduction
The three major television networks are losing their audience. In 1978-79, the three networks commanded 91% of the viewing share. The audience share had dropped to 64% by the end of 1990 and was predicted to drop by another two points in 1991 (Standard & Poor's Industry Surveys, February 7th, 1991). Neuman and Pool predicted, in 1986, that this decline would occur as "new media" technology replaced "old media."

This drop affects not only entertainment programming but news programming. Americans watch television news. The Roper Organ-ization (West, 1991) calls television the medium Americans use most often for news; others (Carter & Greenberg, 1965; Levy, 1978/-79; Lichty, 1983; Miller, Single-tary, & Chen, 1988; Stone, 1969) believe Americans acquire news from a variety of sources. Adams (1981) reports local newspapers are the source of local information for people and suggest Roper's finding reflect television's ability to cover national and international news. Levy (1978/79) may have summed it up best "broadcast news is not the sole source of information for most people, but it is certainly impor-tant" (p. 24).

Statement of the Problem
With network news reductions some speculate local television stations, not the major networks, will soon be deciding what the audience knows about national and international news. What this means is a new set of players is emerging on to the scene of national and international news; they are local reporters, news producers, and photographers. They are players because of the changing economics in the broadcast industry and the introduction of new technology that allow them to gather news from most anywhere in the world. These changes will affect media/source relations.

An examination of the building of the local media agenda will be addressed in this study. A review of pertinent literature will be used to theorize about how the agenda building process of local media will influence
coverage of national and international news.

The Changing Broadcast Equation

Jacobs (1990) suggests the networks are quickly becoming reliant on their affiliates to supply them with information because of the reduction of network bureaus throughout the United States and the world. Broadcasting (July, 22, 1991) magazine reports cost cutting in the early nineties lead to the "elimination or reduction of bureaus from San Francisco to New York" (p.14). Executive Vice President of NBC News, Don Brown, told Broadcasting, "bureau reductions are coinciding with a greater reliance on affiliates" (p. 14).

As of July 1991, Broadcasting reports ABC maintains correspondents in 11 cities. CBS and NBC have full time correspondent in nine cities. CNN has two correspondents in each of eight cities around the United States. Many of the major city bureaus have seen staffs of 11 to 15 reduced to one correspondent and a field producer.

Internationally, staff reductions at bureaus foreign countries have occurred with the exception of CNN. They are the only ones to increase the number of international bureaus; they have 27. Broadcasting (July, 22, 1991) reports ABC has people in one dozen cities across the world. CBS has eight international bureaus and NBC keeps staff members in 17 international cities.

Reductions in staff can equate to correspondents attempting to cover more territory with fewer resources and a heavier reliance on foreign news agencies. Dominick (1988) found no noticeable decline in CBS evening news coverage of international stories after announced cuts in 1987. However, the findings from this study may be suspect. As its author suggests the study may have been done too soon after the cuts to find a difference. Also cuts in 1987 were only the beginning of a wave off cuts to hit all three networks.

Local stations go national and international

"Local TV-armed with the high tech equipment, a profit motive, and severe network slippage---is redefining its turf" (Jacobs, 1988, p. 22). Jacobs suggests before satellites "local news entailed covering the station's immediate market area," and "covering news of national and international importance was clearly the network's domain" (p. 25).

Jacobs says this global coverage is occurring at the expense of local news. While this may be true, the present study suggests global coverage, as well, will be jeopardized. Third World Countries, currently, argue U.S. network media coverage fails to accurately portray their countries. As local
stations become national and international news reporters one would have to question the future of that coverage.

Will local stations be able to afford the increased coverage area? Are local stations prepared to cover national and international news without the network's help? Is technology propelling local stations into covering national and international stories without expertise in those areas? Will local stations be able to interact with state governments and international governments in ways that will allow for accurate coverage? Will international news agencies become the main suppliers of international news? Will local media rely more heavily on state and foreign governments for information?

**Justification for the Study**

What effect will the coverage of international and national news by local stations have on the many who rely on television as their main source of national and international news? To examine this question, this paper, instead of considering the agenda setting effects of the media on the public's agenda, examines the effects of economics, technology and sources on the media agenda and how these influences will affect what the public learns about national and international news.

Why is it important to examine the influences on the media agenda as they relate to national and international news? Weaver (1982) supplies ample reason in his study of 50 persons throughout the 1976 presidential season and a content analysis of four daily newspapers, newscasts of the three major networks, and newscasts of NBC and CBS Chicago affiliates. He found the media effect is strongest on the public when the media agenda is dealing with unobtrusive issues. The unobtrusive issues include "foreign affairs, government, credibility, government spending and size, crime, the environment and energy" (p. 541).

From Weaver's studies, one could adopt what Cohen(1963) suggests, the media don't tell us what to think but what to think about and expand Cohen's famous phrase. With the additions the Cohen phrase might read like this, the media have a minimal affect on what people already know about and experience on a daily basis and media can have a much stronger affect on what people do not know about or deal with on a daily basis.

**Theoretical Framework**

McCombs and Shaw (1972) borrowed from Lippman and hypothesized that "the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues" (p. 177). They suggest
in their conclusions that people do use the media as their primary source of information about presidential campaigns and, this information is used by people as an indicator to determine what issues are important.

Since that time many studies have examined the idea of agenda setting in many different ways. McCombs in 1979 suggests the concept of agenda setting is conceptualized in many directions (media agenda, public agenda) without empirical replication of the concepts. (The goal of this paper is not to provide an extensive literature review of the many studies on agenda setting, Rogers and Dearing, 1988 provide an excellent review).

This paper adopts several of Becker's (1982) underlying assumptions of agenda setting: "media provide cues as to which issues are more important through selection and display;" and, "audience members accept the media cues regarding importance of issues and adopt them as their own" (p. 530). McCombs (1979) reports two theoretical points exist in agenda setting. One is a causal relationship between what the media report and what the people perceive are issues. This suggests people learn from the media. And, second, people use media agendas to organize their world. But, what then, it should be asked, organizes media agendas?

One term needs defining before examining what some in agenda setting research call three categories of agenda setting. Rogers and Dearing (1988) define agenda as "a list of issues and events that are viewed at a point in time as ranked in a hierarchy of importance" (p. 565). They see events as components of issues. Issues commonly have conflict associated with them. Reese (1991) suggests "an event serves as a news `peg' that justifies examining the larger issues, or many separate events may be combined as evidence of a larger issue" (p. 313).

Rogers and Dearing (1988) suggest the agenda setting process can be divided into three parts: public agenda setting, policy agenda setting and media agenda setting. Various definitions of these categories present a theoretical problem for agenda setting research. This study will examine these three parts.

**Public agenda setting**

Much of the research on agenda setting has dealt with public agenda setting. Rogers and Dearing (1988) suggest in public agenda setting that the media content and the order of the topics have an affect on what the public thinks are salient issues. McCombs and Shaw (1972) were the first to try to identify the media's ability to set the public agenda and found support for their hypothesis but Tipton, Haney, & Baseheart (1975) found little evidence of the media influencing the public's agenda. They conclude the media does not serve as a "causal agenda setting function " (p.20).
Ball-Rokeach (1985) suggests people will depend more on the media for information when they do not have direct experience with an issue. Zucker (1978) found the less a person knows about an issue the more likely the media will influence their opinions of that issue. Demers, Craff, Choi & Pessin (1989) found little support for this although they conclude media may reflect not just influence society.

Eaton (1989) found the amount of media content corresponds with what the public believes are important issues but the agreement is dependent on the individual issue. Issue importance and media coverage were found to be correlated when the media coverage is recent.

**Policy agenda setting**

The main concern in policy agenda is whether the media agenda and the public agenda affect the policy agenda. Case studies have been used in many cases to examine how the public's agenda sets the policy agenda. Of course, the most obvious effect the public's agenda as on the policy agenda occurs during an election year.

The media's agenda is more likely to have a direct influence on the policy agenda. Gormley (1975) found that the mass media set the agenda of the "political elite" when agenda is "defined as a rank ordering of a small number of broad issue areas" (p. 306). That is to say if issues are placed into certain categories, the media do set the agenda of policy makers.

Weaver's 1976 election study found the media, especially newspapers, set the agenda of candidates during elections. Altheide (1984) provides an extensive review of studies that suggest the media play an important role in domestic and foreign diplomacy decisions.

Gaziano (1985) in a study of neighborhood newspapers and neighborhood leaders found organization leaders play an important role in defining issue salience and an even more important role when public's attention is low. He suggests the press may play more of a reinforcement role in the question of issue salience.

**Media agenda setting**

Media agenda setting research has as its dependent variable the mass media news agenda (Rogers & Dearing, 1988). Reese (1991) suggests "media agenda-setting" is concerned with what affects the content of the mass media. It is not uncommon for media agenda setting studies to make suggestions on how the media content should be improved. There is a tendency in these studies to stray from the use of the metaphor "agenda-setting" and look more at the gatekeeping functions of individuals in the news media.

Some research suggests the individual plays a role in determining news


Parks (1966) said, "society, like the individual man, moves and acts under the influence of a multitude of minor impulses and tendencies which mutually interact to produce a more general tendency which then dominates all the individuals of the group" (p. 223).

As Weaver (1982) aptly points out "the press does not serve as a simple conduit or as a mirror held up to the world. In other words, the press does not reflect reality, but rather filters and shapes its" (p. 538).

This paper assumes external "minor impulses and tendencies" affect how media gatekeepers will "filter and shape" their choices of salient issues.

This paper, however, chooses to use a different metaphor for "media agenda-setting." Studies that have dealt with media agenda-setting have been examining factors which build the media agenda. Rogers and Dearing (1988) suggest there are two strains of agenda research: agenda setting and agenda building. The agenda setting process concerns itself with how media coverage suggests what issues are important. The agenda-building process concerns itself with how the media and public agenda influence policy agenda. They suggest the policy agenda, gatekeepers, influential media, and spectacular news events shape the media content.

This paper suggests all these plus the public agenda determine media content. This process will be called media agenda building and is considered a circular one. It is a circular process because the media's agenda is influenced by people and policy and both of these are influenced by media. Each will have an influence on the other. Rogers and Dearing (1988) see nine relations in agenda setting research: "media's influence upon itself, the public, and policy makers; the public's influence upon itself, the media, and policy makers; and policy makers' influence upon themselves, the media, and the public" (p. 582). As this paper attempts to do, research from all areas of agenda setting should be considered before examining a
specific area of the agenda setting process.

Reese (1991) suggests as media converge on various issues more attention should be given to what causes the media's agenda. This paper will examine three areas and the effects they have on the media's agenda: economics, technology, and sources. Implications for international and national news coverage by local stations will then be examined for each area.

**Media Agenda Building**

Rogers and Dearing (1988) suggest an understanding of what influences media agenda building is a "prerequisite" to understanding the impact of the media agenda on the public agenda. DeGeorge (1981) writes "the ability of the mass media to effect cognitive change is attributed to the ongoing selective process by media gatekeepers" (p. 219).

Whitney (1991) suggests an examination of the conditions which "inflect the effect." As mentioned earlier, this paper adopts two assumptions from Becker (1982) and at this point slight alterations are made in those assumptions. This paper replaces "media" with economics, technology and sources and the "audience" becomes the media: thus, economics, technology, and sources provide cues as to which issues are more important as the media select and display news. And, the media accepts the economic, technological and sources cues regarding importance of issues and adopts them as their own.

Many gatekeeping studies have been used to determine media content. This paper will borrow from this area of research to examine the process of media agenda building.

**Economics**

Economics play a role in the building of the media agenda. Networks relinquishing power to the affiliates, ownership changes and influences and changes in coverage area due to economics all have their affects on the media agenda. One effect will be the media agenda of national and international news content.

**Networks relinquish power to affiliates**

Reese (1991) wrote "we generally think of national media as more powerful than local media" (p. 324). But he then draws attention to the recent layoffs and bureau closings and suggests "these are the most obvious signs of power loss" (p. 331). Are the networks relinquishing their power to affiliates? NBC's News Washington bureau chief, Tim Russert, says the
next "five years will determine whether network news `will survive in the form we know it'" (Broadcasting, February, 18, 1991, p. 67).

Broadcasting (June 10, 1991) reports various panelist on a Broadcasting/Cable Interface panel predict network pool coverage of various events, reduction in political convention coverage, and the possible demise of one of the networks. Broadcasting (September, 23, 1991) suggests "newsroom costs are being scrutinized in ways that are altering the newsgathering process" (p. 15).

Jacobs (1990) predicts networks will become the appendages of affiliates instead of the other way around. NBC's News Washington bureau chief, Tim Russert, likens the loss of a network to the loss of a national treasure. He suggests there is no one else to play that role of dealing with issues on a day in and out bases. (Broadcasting, February, 18, 1991). This study suggests there is someone to fill that role and they are currently attempting to do it: local television stations.

Broadcasting (September 30, 1991) reports local stations are going national, networks are going local and cable is taking care of those who are discontent with the old media. Executive Producer of NBC Nightly News is quoted in that same edition as saying "local news directors are trying to compete with national newscasts" (p. 37).

Ownership as media agenda setters

What effects do owners have on the building process of the media agenda. Local stations are being asked by owners to deliver more news programming but with smaller staffs and more financial pressures (Broadcasting, November 6, 1989). Many owners today have no previous experience with broadcasting. They have entered the industry to make a profit.

Chaseman (1986) warns if the industry is left to the marketplace it will become a "hostage" of financial concerns paying little attention to other "societal values." Fred Friendly calls the siege of mergers and acquisitions in broadcasting the "harvest of greed" ("TV Network Mergers", 66, 1987). Soloski (1989) suggests journalists are employed by businesses which can affect news reporting.

Shoemaker's (1987) hypothesized that news content is controlled by the people who finance the news media. Shoemaker suggested those who finance the news media are commercial interest within the community. This influence, according to Shoemaker, will affect all parts of the gatekeeping process or agenda building in the media. She suggested the influence is subtle.
Carroll (1989) applied Shoemaker's theory to the marketplace in which stations operate. He did a content analysis of 161 news programs broadcast by 57 stations. Carroll concludes marketplace forces do not affect the news decisions in small and medium markets any differently than they do in large markets. As reported earlier all news budgets whether on the local or national level are being scrutinized and cuts in staff and coverage are being made to accommodate the owners. Those who control the purse strings are subtly controlling the content.

 Warner (1971) interviewed editors, writers and news heads of the three network evening newscasts and found news policy was, according to those interviewed, influenced by economics. Donohew (1967) asked what factors influence gatekeepers' decision-making process. He found newspaper publisher's attitudes play an important role in the processing of information. The attitudes of the paper publisher or the station owner or manager may be reflected in the media content. Reese (1991) suggests issues will surface when there is internal conflict among the power elite and there may be times when the media's agenda may not deal with key issues. At case in point is crisis and crime coverage, in the place development news.

**Changing economics changes local media coverage area**

Profitability of local media groups will expand their coverage of national and international news.

Berkowitz (1991), using observation and content analysis techniques of a network affiliate in Indianapolis, found the amount of available resources to cover a story is almost as strong of a determinant in deciding coverage as is standard news judgement.

According to Jacobs, (1990) "the advertising dollar can be stretched just so far. Local news becomes more profitable and independent as networks dominance shrinks. Both claim detente, but the war may already be over and won" (p. 43). The war appears to be won by the affiliates. Political conventions in 1988 attracted more than 4000 local television staffers. Local stations outnumbered network broadcast journalist four to one. Local stations currently employ stringers in Washington, D. C. and other places of interest to their local audience. Using this material plus other satellite syndication resources many local stations can pull together better stories than the networks.

**Implications for national and foreign news coverage**

The shifting of economic power from networks to local stations will have a dramatic effect on national and foreign news coverage.
Local stations will increase their national coverage without the working knowledge of the coverage area.
Jacobs (1990) reports "local news executives admit they don't have the reportorial expertise or logistics to cover major stories overseas" (p. 45). The executives don't think local staffers have the editorial decision making skills nor know what kind of questions to ask when dealing with national and international news. Concern then rest with inadequate coverage in these two areas.

Local station's national and international news coverage will reflect previous network coverage in the two areas. There will continue to be concentration of news pertaining to certain countries and certain states in the U.S. Findings by Larson's (1984) and Gerbner & Marvanyi's (1984) suggest networks pay close attention to a small number of countries. This continued under coverage of certain parts of the world will be reflected in local media coverage.

Larson's (1984) analysis of over 7,000 international news items aired in 1,000 early evening network newscast found nearly 40 percent of stories broadcast during a newscast dealt with international affairs. Larson found some 27 percent of all the international news aired was of the crisis nature. Two thirds of the stories came from Western Europe and the Middle East. Africa tended to receive less attention than anyone but when mentioned it was portrayed as a crisis region. A small number of countries accounted for the most stories. Gerbner & Marvanyi's (1984) content analysis of 2,000 pages of newspaper copy found similar findings.

Whitney, Fritzler, Jones, Mazzarella, & Rakow (1989) examined network evening newscasts for two years. In their content analysis of 5,190 newscast items they found four states received more coverage than all the rest: California, New York, Illinois and Texas. These states account for 30% of the U.S. population.

The changing economics of the broadcast industry will force local stations into geographic areas where they do not understand the value systems and norms. This will force stations to rely on stereotypical perceptions of those areas. The MacBride Commission in 1980 suggested for improved coverage of the third world "the media in developed countries--especially the `gatekeepers', editors and producers of print and broadcasting media who select the news items to be published or broadcast--should become more familiar with the cultures and conditions in developing
countries" (UNESCO, p. 223). This holds true for domestic coverage as well. If stations are covering news they must understand the norms and value systems of that area.

**Station owners will attempt to influence local stations to report only news which maintains the status quo.**

Those who are proponents of the theory of hegemony would suggest ownership works to maintain the status quo in the news agenda because it is the status quo that keeps these owners in business. Reese's (1991) suggestion that media agenda's may not always deal with key issues, but with owner issues, holds especially true for national and international issues.

Focusing on killings and drug trafficking nationally instead of looking at the systems that perpetuate the criminal justice system will continue. Attention will continue to be directed toward GNP and unemployment reports instead of considering whether the capitalistic economic systems as we know it needs to be changed.

At present, the status quo in international news coverage is crisis and coups. Development news in other countries is a case in point. While there is extensive focus on crisis in the news (Larson, 1984), the media tend to ignore development news in other countries.

**Technology**

**Increased coverage**

Technology has changed the equation in news coverage. Technology has decreased the distance between regions and nations and allows local stations to cover stories most anywhere in the world. Geographic distance from the story has been one of main problems with gathering news. Satellite transmission systems have certainly reduced the concern over the distance element in news selection. If a story is geographically far away, yet, has a local impact, stations are now covering it. Being able to downlink and up link allows producers to "originate a broadcast from any breaking story virtually anywhere in the world at any time of day" (Jacobs, 1990, p. 7).

Berkowitz (1991) and Cleland & Ostroff (1988) found satellite and microwave capabilities make it easier on local stations to gather news stories. Smith (1984) found a third of responding small markets use satellites and out of town bureaus to gather news. Eighty-six percent of news directors in his survey responded that new technology was having an influence on local news content.
Customized news gathering operations using satellite transmissions allow stations to link up to all parts of the United States without having to deal with the networks. Conus Communications is one example of this type of operation. The greatest increase in satellite news gathering vehicles can be found in small and medium sized markets. And of those who use these vehicles the National Association of Broadcasters reports 98 percent also use customized news gathering organizations to help them gather regional and national news (Jacobs, 1990).

Cable broadcasting has changed what the audience is allowed to watch. The availability of news stations is forcing stations to cover events beyond the realm of the station's area of dominant influence especially if that story has local impact. At the same time cable stations are attempting to cover local stories, while local stations go cover the world (Broadcasting, September 30, 1991).

**Implications for national and foreign news coverage**

**Local station media agenda will soon be filled with stories and newscast, gathered by new technology, from all over the nation and world.** Cable will have to fill the void left when national and international news replaces local news on traditional television stations.

**Local impact will be the main determinant in whether to place a national or international story on the media agenda.** Technology will make obsolete the geographic distance element in news gathering. The questions for local stations will be how to localize national and international stories.

**Because of new technology, the public will begin to expect local station's media agenda to include news where ever it happens.** This will force stations to rely heavily on regional, national and international news agencies to help in the collection of news. Some stations may not be able to survive financially because of these expectations.

**Sources**

The relationship between media and sources has an effect on the media agenda. Senior analyst for NPR, Daniel Schorr (March 25, 1992) told the National Press Club "sources exploit the media." There exist two types of sources. Those which serve to suggest stories and those which become a part of the story; sometimes the source is both (Jackson-Pitts, 1991).
Weaver and Elliott (1985) suggest the press may merely pass on the priorities of the people in the organizations within the society.

**Policy agenda influencing the media agenda**

Nord (1981) concludes agenda setting is a political process" (p. 574). The question is the "relative power of the participants." Schorr (March 25, 1992) says presidential administrations have increasingly "manipulated" the media's agenda.

Iyengar et al. reports (1983) "those with little political information are most vulnerable to agenda setting. The well informed resist agenda setting through effective counterarguing" (p.83-84). Tardy, Gaughan, Hemphill, & Crockett (1981) found as the public's political participation goes down the more influence the media agenda will have on the public's agenda. This may occur with the media.

Weaver and Elliott (1985) conclude in a case study of a local newspaper that a "prominent news source" will have an influence on the media agenda. The media will most likely cover the source's agenda but it will still filter and shape through the selective process the most salient issues.

Wanta, Stephenson, Turk, & McCombs (1989) found limited support for the hypothesis that Presidents influence the media agenda. Presidential influence was more widely found with newspapers than television. Media's agenda, in two cases, was found to influence the President's agenda. Gans (1980) found the president had a major influence on the media's agenda.

**Sources as media agenda setters**

Skornia (1968) suggests the media rely on sources to economize the gatekeeping process. The economization, however, affects the media agenda.

Berkowitz (1987) reports the media agenda is built by these sources. Soloski (1987) concludes relationships between sources and reporters affect local news coverage.

**Events**

Planned events often become a source of news for networks and local stations. Berkowitz (1987) found 75% of local news stories and 71% of network news stories appeared to have developed through official proceedings, press releases and press conferences. Robert Smith (1979) found there is a tendency by television news to cover the pre-planned event as opposed to the spontaneous event.

Harmon (1989) in a participant observation study discovered the planned
event stories out numbered spontaneous stories 61.5% to 38.5%. Most stories were assigned well in advance of the air date. These pre-planned events are often initiated by public relations practitioners who have their self interest in mind. Tichenor, Olien, & Donohue 1967 study of agricultural extension agents and editors of community newspapers in Minnesota found if the editor thought the pre-planned event would have high audience appeal it would be covered. Drew's (1975) findings seemed to support this.

Atwater (1989) found similar sources were used by the networks during the hijacking of the TWA flight. Weimann and Brosius (1991) call attention to international terrorist that use media to exploit their interest. They do report, however, that international terrorist events are not always covered. Three criteria seem to reflect whether such an event will be covered; the type of action, the identity of the perpetrators, and the attribution of responsibility.

**Government**

Government sources are used regularly by national and local media. Berkowitz (1987) found TV news tends to use executive sources more often than people identified as workers or spokespersons. Lasora and Reese (1990) and Soloski (1989) found sources for most of the stories used tend to be government officials and the elite. Soloski noted these sources had a tendency to be well-anchored in the community power structure. This might show that the agenda of the community power source was receiving considerable air time.

Turk (1986) found government sources had a better chance of being used when they did not use persuasive communications in their press releases. She also noted the source of information had more to do with what gets selected for use than does the selection process by journalist.

Whitney, Fritzler, Jones, Mazzarella, & Rakow (1989) examination of 5,190 newscast items revealed 42.4 percent of these stories contained more than one source. Seventy-two percent of all sources were officials of the government; 2.7% were former officials; and, 25.7% were unaffiliated. They also found among institutional and group sources the business spokesperson accounted for just under a third of all institutional sources. It appears news organizations are reflecting the power structures.

Shepherd (1981) in a study of the media's selection of sources dealing with the marijuana issue found administrative officials of government institutions were most often cited in media content.

Kanervo and Kanervo (1989) employ a survey technique to explore how chief executives in cities across the U.S. dealt with local press. They report
when city officials believe newspapers influence the public agenda they will try more frequently to get items on the paper agenda. They also found this occurs more often with city officials of larger cities.

**Foreign government**

Just as media use U.S. government officials as sources, media use foreign government officials as sources. Bledsoe, Handberg, Maddox, Lenox, & Long (1982) found in a content analysis of eight publications that foreign affairs coverage centered on politics.

Political and press ideologies determine in most countries what the press can do. Free press is not the norm around the world, however, dramatic changes in the Political World Order during the last 2 years is changing that to some degree. The lack of free press also serves to bias Western reporting. Reporters cover foreign countries with preconceived ideas of a particular country (Rubin, 1977).

Chang, Shoemaker, & Brendlinger (1987) reports several instance where the political situations in a country affect the media agenda. Many times government officials are the only ones allowed to be interviewed by the media in that country. While many Third World Countries argue that they are being under represented in the world press, some of that under representation is may be a direct result of censorship by Third World officials.

Censorship exists in many forms in many different countries. Sometimes it is blatantly obvious, at other times it is subtle (Bolling, 1985; Burant, 1988). For instance, in Africa, reporters must have a permit to interview someone (Imanyara, 1990).

Foreign governments are aware just as the U.S. government is that how decisions and policies play on television can affect the public agenda. Bolling (1985) asks how political leaders can be held accountable if there is not full and prompt reporting using official and nonofficial sources? The recent Gulf War is a case in point. Western media had difficulty gaining access to foreign and U.S. officials in their efforts to get information about the war.

Rubin (1977) suggested long before the war broke out that Middle East leaders tell correspondents one thing and their people another. "Arab leaders are well aware that moderate and `dovish' statements are more profitable in diplomatic and public relations terms abroad, while militant and hard-line rhetoric is politically necessary on the domestic scene" (p. 54).

Many Third World Countries see Western media full of conflict and crisis about their countries. They believe this undermines development
efforts. This apprehension against Western journalist will have an affect on what journalists are allowed to cover.

Larson (1984) suggests some governments take the political implication of television reporting into consideration when making policy. The relationship between foreign government and U.S. media is a two way street. Not only do the media use foreign officials as sources but foreign officials use U.S. media to monitor relations between various countries. This also holds true for U.S. officials. Officials receive much of their information about foreign government from the media (Rubin, 1977). For example, many officials stated during the Gulf War that they were getting their information about the war from CNN.

Implications for national and foreign news coverage

Local stations that have little information about a topic may readily receive information from the policy maker without asking questions.

The media agenda will begin to reflect the policy agenda as local stations, working without a knowledge base of national and international issues, becomes the source for national and international news.

Local stations will become dependent on government sources to identify salient issues nationally and internationally as the presence of the networks decreases. The power equation existing between sources and the media will be balanced in the direction of the source. Sources will have the power to maintain the status quo. Local stations maintaining bureaus all over the country is unlikely, which suggests local stations will fly in reporters to gather quickly the story then fly back home. National and international stories will lack in-depth coverage.

Because of the distance many national and international stories will require stations to travel; pre-planned events, where sources manipulate for self interest purposes, will be used more often by local stations.

In one respect there is a positive aspect to this; local stations may reduce the amount of crisis coverage. However, manipulation will perpetuate the status quo.

Public relations firms will exploit local stations.

Using video news releases and controlling access to institutional officials
will be used by these firms to promote self interest.

Local stations, operating without knowledge of foreign governments, will be unable to gain access to those that can expose corruption in those governments.

Local stations preconceived ideas about foreign countries and various regions in the U.S will bias their coverage.

Localization of national and international news will polarize various regions of the country.
As Webster(1989) points out polarization of audiences will affect television's ability to social and cultural integration and uniformity.

Conclusion
Based on the assumption that local stations, not networks, will soon be responsible for national and international news coverage, this paper examines the process of agenda-setting from the standpoint of the building of the media agenda. Implications or effects of the media agenda building process on the local media coverage of national and foreign news coverage are then introduced.

References


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