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FAITH AND NEWS: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN RELIGIOSITY AND TV NEWS EXPOSURE

by

Raquel Marvez Sesmero

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Communications

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Raquel Marvez Sesmero-Wigglesworth in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

FAITH AND NEWS: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOSITY AND TV NEWS EXPOSURE

Raquel Marvez Sesmero

Master of Arts

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between religiosity and broadcast news usage. This study examines the level of religiosity of individuals and its correlation to broadcast news exposure. The correlation between religiosity and perceptions of violence on broadcast news was also measured.

Two theories were applied in this study. Uses and Gratifications asserts the active character of the audience to choose what they watch, how often, etc., and Selective Exposure defends the ability of the individual to select media that coincides with personal value systems. These two theories complement each other and provide support in the evaluation of religiosity and broadcast news exposure.

A survey was posted on-line through various message boards. Twenty-five questions were used to determine religiosity, broadcast news exposure, broadcast news and perceptions of violence on broadcast news. In sum, all hypotheses were supported and the general idea that as

religiosity increases broadcast news exposure decreases was confirmed. Nevertheless, due to the small effect size the study also indicates that religiosity does not explain a great percentage of the behavior of an individual towards broadcast news exposure.

Therefore, the results of the study indicate that even though religiosity is not a good predictor of broadcast news exposure in general, religiosity affects to a small degree the choices of a more religious individual to expose himself to broadcast news. The perception of violence in broadcast news is also greater in religious than non-religious individuals.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Since the coming of television the inter-actionable relationship between this popular medium and audiences has frequently been a subject of scholarly investigation. Early models of media effects considered audiences to be passive objects that merely received messages from television with the mass media viewed as a powerful tool that exerted direct influence on people's behavior (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1968). However, additional research by communication scholars (Hovland, 1949; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; McQuail, 2005) revealed a more nuanced picture of media effects, with the focus changing from "What media do to audiences?" to "What do audiences do with media?" By 1970 scholars considered audiences to be active rather than passive users of media, especially in regards to audience member's selective exposure of media based on that particular person's needs or desires. Theories emerging from this shift in thought, including uses and gratifications and selective exposure, resulted in a new view of audiences—a view that described audiences as empowered to not only choose which media they used, but also sought to explain why audiences selected some media and rejected others.

However, regardless of whether a media effects model placed power with media, the audience, or somewhere in between, most scholars agree that since television's explosion of popularity in the late 1940s and early 1950s, this medium in particular has played a significant role in the lives of most Americans (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980). Television content has not been static, though, especially in the area of broadcast news content, with research showing an increase in violence and sexuality in

television news, as well as changes in audience attitudes towards the news shown on the TV. Numerous factors have been shown to influence audience perceptions of violent and sexual content on television news, including such factors as gender, age, and even social status. Thus, since the environment, social conditions and individual personalities differ, both audience choices and exposure to broadcast news will differ as well.

This study will focus on the relatively unexplored factor of religiosity to try and try and determine if non religious audiences and religious audiences differ in the way they perceive and react towards broadcast news, and to see what relationship, if any, exists between an audience's religiosity and patterns of television news exposure. This study is informed by two theories—uses and gratifications and selective exposure—and utilizes quantitative research methods to try and determine what degree an individual's religiosity impacts their attitudes towards and violence perception of television broadcast news.

Literature Review

Changes in Media: The Importance of Television in our Lives.

Despite varying levels of importance placed on media based on differences in culture, audience, and access to technology, television has been considered a significant part of the lives of most people worldwide. When Philo T. Farnsworth began his first experimental transmissions in 1927, few imagined that two years later television would become a commercial product. By 1945 it would attract the attention of more than ten million people in the United States alone (Godfrey, 2001). Yet, even though television has become a popular and important—almost essential—household tool, almost no one

remembers to celebrate November 21, the day of the television. It was on November 21, 1996, that the first World Television Forum took place in the United Nations. Three weeks later the U.N. established Resolution 51/205 to promote peace, social development, cultural exchange, economy, and security within television programming.

But what is television? The changes that television has undergone — not only in its structure — but also in its content have made it hard to accurately define the nature of this mass medium. A viable definition has been attempted by numerous specialists and all of them agree that even though television by itself is a broad field to define, there is little doubt that cultural factors are involved in its characterization. Further complicating matters, culture is also considered a broad concept to define. Fiske (1987) linked these two important terms and defined television as a cultural agent:

Television-as-culture is a crucial part of the social dynamics by which the social structure maintains itself in a constant process of production and reproduction: meanings, popular pleasures, and their circulation are therefore part and parcel of this social structure (p. 1).

Moreover, Gerbner and Gross (1976) argued that television should not be analyzed nor observed without the modern cultural point of view because it is television that helps shape modern culture via its unique and pervasive nature:

TV's standardizing and legitimizing influence comes largely from its ability to streamline, amplify, ritualize, and spread into hitherto isolated or protected subcultures, homes, nooks, and crannies of the land the conventional capsules of mass produced information and entertainment (p. 181).

Mitchell Stephens (1990) claimed that since antiquity humans have continuously been obsessed with the need to search out and hear good news. Man has always wanted to know the unknown, he further pointed out, and thus combining this natural human tendency with resulting technological improvements quickly facilitated the integration of

television into people's everyday lives. Stephens observed that television's pervasiveness even had families going so far as to rearrange their décor and adopt new house designs to accommodate its prominent location in their homes and lives.

The importance of television and broadcast news in the lives of most Americans is arguably high. Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli (1980, p. 10) have referred to television as "the central and most pervasive mass medium in America culture." In looking at the impact of broadcast journalism through the medium of television, scholars recognize not only the importance that professionals give it as a tool to connect the world and report facts, but also the importance that audiences give it as a means of being accurately informed. Potter (2005) referenced the United States Statistical Abstract in noting that the average American spends 10 hours per day watching television. Potter also stated that:

The media actively construct audiences by crafting certain kinds of messages to lure certain kinds of people. Once they have attracted those people, they do everything they can to reinforce that exposure behavior by conditioning those audience members into exposure habits (p. 215).

For many scholars there is no doubt that television has become a dominant factor of "modern" life. As Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli (1980, p. 14) affirm, "Television's images cultivate the dominant tendencies of our culture's beliefs, ideologies, and world views, the observable independent contradictions of television can only be relatively small."

Some insist the quality of television has declined as a direct result of corporate conglomeration. However, Michael K. Powell, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, said in his March 27, 2003 remarks at the Media Institute that the reason for television's decline is not conglomeration, but rather fierce competition. Because

opinions are so varied, professionals are still trying to fully understand why “the public interest is not just what interests the public” (Powell, 2003, p. 9). For television to satisfy audiences and offer what they want is a continuous challenge. Changes are not always accepted by the overall audience, with different audiences having different reactions and opinions about television content in general and broadcast news in particular.

In short, television has long been considered both an exciting and controversial medium. Notwithstanding debate over whether or not television is suffering a crisis in its capacity to reach audiences and keep them, presently television remains essential to Americans that still consider this form of medium as an important element in their lives.

Changes on Television: The Increase of Violence Content.

Television content has changed since the medium’s inception. Stephens (1990) maintained that sex and violence are two of the most common subjects in the news today. Additionally, timelessness, proximity, the unusual/novel, prominence, conflict/controversy, magnitude, and human interest (Schulz 1982) are the principal values that are deemed to make a story more interesting and eligible for possible inclusion in television programming. As Klijn (2003, p. 128) noted, “Stories about violence often have timeliness, conflict, controversy, and human interest and can also have proximity, novelty, magnitude, and even prominence.” Considering these factors, Klijn saw violent broadcast news as containing most of the important elements of media programming.

Sean McCleneghan (2002), in his extensive revision of scholarship on the subject of television news, asserted that “reality violence” on news began with the Vietnam War. McCleneghan pointed out that this war not only the longest in America’s history, but also

was introduced in the houses of most Americans by television, enabling much of a generation to grow up with violence intimately received through their own televisions.

As violent television content increased in an attempt to understand the attitude of audiences and the reasoning behind their content choices, more and more researchers focused on the effects of television violence on audiences. However, the findings have been mixed. For example, while Freedman (1984) found a small and insignificant relationship between violence and aggressive behavior, Wood, Wong and Chachere (1991), through their meta-analysis of 23 studies, discovered a significant positive relationship between exposure to media violence and subsequent aggressive behavior.

Gerbner and Gross (1976) declared that one of the biggest concerns about the effects of television is violence. They see violent television content as harmful due to the “possibilities of disruption that threaten the established norms of belief, behavior, and morality” (p. 177). The potential negative impact of violent programming has been a major concern since the late 1950s. It was in 1969 when The National Commission on The Causes and Prevention of Violence affirmed for the first time that violence on television was one of the factors contributing to aggressive and antisocial behavior. An experiment conducted by Bandura, Ross, and Ross (1963) demonstrated how nursery school children imitated violent behavior they perceive through television programming. Within ten years, more than 50 studies of violence and television confirmed the negative influence on audiences.

Even though Gerbner and Gross do not believe that violence in media is the only factor leading to increased antisocial behavior in individuals, they agreed that violent content in the media could activate aggressiveness in an individual, a trait that is already

influenced by multiple factors in his environment. For their analysis of brutal behavior on television they defined violence as: “the overt expression of physical force against self or other, compelling action against one’s will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing” (p. 184). A more widely accepted use of this definition to measure how much violence is contained in current television content may lead to surprisingly frequent rates of audience exposure to violence.

Other scholars have somewhat different albeit related definitions of television violence. Kunkel et al (1995, p. 287) characterized violent behavior as “any overt depiction of a credible threat of a physical force or the actual use of such force intended to physically harm an animate being or group of beings.” Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli, echoing Gerbner and Gross, classified it as “the overt expression of physical force (with or without a weapon, against self or others) compelling action against one’s will or pain of being hurt or killed or threatened to be so victimized as part of the plot” (p. 11-12). They found that during primetime hours, 70% of all programs contained violent content.

Because violence is compelling or “good” television (Freedman, 1984)—meaning good for business—media producers tend to orient content toward aggression and hostility, reflecting the unseen influence of numerous interests. According to some scholars, the special interests of people and organizations such as advertisers, corporate sponsors, and company presidents have caused values to become less important than the bottom line.

This perceived slide toward “valueless” television has not been met without resistance. In 1974 Richard Wiley, Chairman of the Federal Communications

Commission, asked NBC, CBS, and ABC to reduce “sex and violence” in the content of their programs. In response the National Association of Broadcast Television Review Board instated a “family viewing” policy, limiting sexual and violent programming to the hours of 9:00 to 11:00 p.m. (Schlegel, 1993). But limiting violent content on broadcast news has proved to be no easy a task given that much of the relevant information of the day is violent and broadcast news is part of the merchandise market in which media are involved.

Johnson (1996) found in his research of television violence that 53.4% of television news shows violence, suffering, and conflict-related content. The Johnson’s six-month period of study they analyzed not only the national network news, but also local, cable and independent super-station news. He discovered that local news contained the highest amount of violence in its content. In addition, other studies indicate that 20% of crime shown is related to the city while 40% is related to the area (Gerbner, 1996).

Changes on Television: The Increase of Sexual Content

Violence is not the only element that has increased in news coverage; another main change in television programming has been the increase of sexual content. In defining sexual content, Reichert and Ramirez (2000) characterized it as any word or image where physically-attractive people dress or behave in a sexually suggestive manner.

The results of the largest study of sex on television to date (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005) found that in 2002 the number of sexual sciences on television had doubled since 1998. The study observed over 1,000 hours of programming, including not

only daily newscasts, but also all genres. The results of the study also indicated that 70% of all shows that were analyzed contained sexual content. In 2002 the average number of sexual scenes per hour was 5.0 in a sample week, compared with 1998 findings of a total of 56% of the shows with sexual content and 3.2 sexual scenes per hour. Huston, Wartella, and Donnerstein (1998) affirmed that media might offer the least embarrassing way to get information about sex and romance. Nevertheless, not everybody agrees with this thinking.

Additional studies have analyzed sexual content on television and have arrived at the same conclusion: sexual content on television is increasing. Nevertheless, the majority of these studies have centered their attention on the effects of media sexuality, specifically on teenagers (Brown & Newcomer, 1991; Collins, 2005; Farrar, 2006). They have seen how the sexual messages teenagers receive through media programming affect not only their behavior, but also their sexual socialization. Farrar (2006, p. 636) asserted “clearly, television portrays a great deal of sexual content without much attention to sexual responsibility.” Other studies about sexual content on television programming have also analyzed sexual content on television as an entertainment factor (Kenneth, 2006). Thus, the overall conclusion of studies related to general television programming and sexual content is that sex on television is an everyday part of the typical American’s life.

The Evolution of Television News.

To understand what news within United States means, it is also important to observe how different countries contributed to the evolution of the definition of television and in particular to the evolution of the definition of news. It was in the 19th century that

the British news agency Reuters by selling news stories to newspapers (Desmond, 1980) started developing a new economic-based news model. Other news agencies soon followed the same pattern, seeing in this new model a greater financial profit. Some of the important factors of this economic model were: timeliness, impact, proximity, prominence/importance, conflict/controversy, and unexpectedness/novelty (Mencher, 1994). This concept of news as a product was originally used only in the United States and was very different from news models found in other countries around the world. Communist countries, for example, used the press as a tool to maintain the power of the system; contrary to this view, the United States saw news as a social good and a way to promote decolonization (Meyer, 1988). In this sense, news was used in varying ways to satisfy the unique interests of each country. Therefore, as a result of different official regimes and systems of government, offering a universal definition and understanding of the concept of broadcast news can be complicated. Nevertheless, for most of the countries, particularly for the United States, news media is generally seen as “merchandise rather than a service” (Righter, 1978, p. 41).

Furthermore, broadcast news has suffered its own internal subdivisions. Tom Patterson (2000, p. 4) distinguished soft news from hard news, affirming that soft news is “more sensational, more personality-centered, less time-bound, more practical, and more incident-based than other news.” On the other hand, hard news is generally defined as information that people need to know. In this sense, Carroll (1985) considered temporal and integrated content as main factors of hard news. Thus, as Whetmore (1987) posited, the main difference is that “hard news is factually based while soft news is background information including opinion and color” (cited in Scott & Gobetz, 1992, p. 4).

Changes on Broadcast News: The Increase of Violence Content

The progressive change in the structure of broadcast news has equally brought a consequent change in its content. Scott and Gobetz argued that this change occurred because of the necessity of satisfying advertising companies that support media in these companies desire to reach the largest number of audiences. The result, Scott and Gobetz noted, was that “the nature of news itself has changed” (p. 3). Moreover, the original definition of news—the information that people need to know—changed to a “more elastic definition that includes all events that are out of the ordinary” (p. 3). In addition, Scott and Gobetz compared the practice of delivering the news to a vehicle designed to ensure profits, and see in this process that “instead of covering stories audiences need to know, the media serves up a diet of stories that titillate rather than inform” (p. 3). Johnson (1996) likewise concluded that the values of prestige and profits are the ones that govern broadcast news rather than the previous values of informing audiences in a professional and accurate way. Therefore, the content of broadcast programming, in specific broadcast news programming, has been significantly affected by the increased desire for profit.

More studies have also contended that violence on television news is more than a way to increase audiences—it is an actual obsession with crime (Gerbner, 1996). This obsession comes from the fact that crime is an easy way to make news and show audiences what is happening in their local and international community. As violence is easy and fast to find, filling the newscast with crime is easier than looking for other kinds of content, Gerbner argued. These authors found that even though the crime rates declined during 1992 and 1993, television networks doubled the amount of time they

covered crime and violence. Hence, violence has become a priority on the television news agenda. A more recent study about news and violence in Los Angeles indicated that homicide, plane crashes, natural disasters, and fires were the causes of about 65.6% of the traumatic deaths showed on television news, while the actual percentage of deaths due to such traumatic incidences was 31.4% (Wang, 2001).

In further evidencing that violence dominates, Dorfman, Woodruff, Chavez, and Wallack (1997, p. 1311) attempted to view news not from the perspective that assumes that news violence affects directly the behavior of the audiences, but from the perspective of examining how violent news stories “influence public and policy maker opinion.” Accordingly, the authors performed a content analysis of 214 hours of local television news in California. These authors concluded, “Local television news provides extremely limited coverage of contributing etiological factors in stories on violence” (p. 1311). They also asserted that: “The way television news stories frame violence will influence whether the public perceives violence as a salient problem and, if so, how the public will choose to respond” (p. 1311).

Other attempts to examine violent content in broadcast programming include the study of the visual elements used in television news. Visual elements such as dead people, mutilations, and battery or other kinds of acts of violence continually illustrate the news. Nevertheless, Klijn (2003, p. 124) pointed out the potential paradox of visual elements’ contribution to audience’s ability to understand television news, because “although getting attention is necessary for comprehension, over-emphasizing attention attributes may impede comprehension.” Klein (2003, p. 1661) also emphasized the element of news comprehension declaring, “bad news may affect the viewer both in

terms of news comprehension and emotional reaction.” With Harmon (1989, p. 858) having noted that “the traditional news values of proximity, prominence, consequence, significance and the unusual nature of the story were the reasons most often given by the gatekeepers to explain their decisions,” many broadcast news producers justify the increase of violence news portrayed through visual elements with the necessity to illustrate the importance of the news. Van der Molen (2004) gave further evidence of the recent news focus on violent content, listing a few of the most prominent national and international violence news content of the past few years: school shootings, the Oklahoma City bombing, kidnapping of children, reports of ethnic cleaning in Yugoslavia and Kosovo, terror in the Middle East and Africa countries, the September 11 attacks, and “operation Iraqi freedom” (p. 1771). She also affirmed that as a consequence of the important nature of violent news, audiences, including children, have been exposed more than ever to violent content on television.

Despite differences over whether violent programming has a direct, indirect, or null effect on the behavior of the audiences, a common conclusion of existing studies is that violent content continues to increase on broadcast news television. Moreover, the fact that the increased presence of violence on television programming is considered one of the major characteristics of current broadcasting has increasingly led audiences to worry about television content. What is still undetermined is if this worry has influenced certain audiences in their content choices.

Changes on Broadcast News: The increase of Sexual Content

Looking specifically at broadcast news content, Davie and Lee (1995, p. 135)

discovered evidence of a “consonant coverage of sex and violence stories in local television news.” They also found that most of the time editors select practically the same stories, with local news broadcasts tending to choose those stories that have a lower level of complexity and higher level of visual and dramatic values. Others have observed an association between news coverage of violence and sex. For example, Kenneth (2006) noticed through his content analysis research that around 10 percent of crime stories were sex-related. Davie and Lee (1995) found that broadcast producers lean toward running news or sensational stories involving sex and violence. The reason for this preference is the simplicity and ease in explaining the facts: it is an easy way to share information. Violent content as well as sexual content attract and impact audiences. Therefore, although violence and sex are not the same, they are treated in a very similar way on television news.

But sex is not only prevalent on the content of broadcast news; it also finds its way into the delivery of the news. Reporters and anchors are often selected based on sex appeal. In a formative investigation published in 2007, Nitz, Reichert, Aune, and Velde (2007) concluded that 62 percent of the television news segments contained journalists with a high level of sex appeal. This was observed in the way journalists not only looked, but also in the way they presented themselves on camera. The researchers declared that the importance of a physically-attractive journalist, together with provocative manners of dress (wearing things such as skirts or tight-fitting and open blouses), are evidences of an increase in sexual connotations on television, especially on broadcast news. These authors found that, in general, 93% of journalists that introduce the news are female and have doubled as models, while on Fox news broadcasts the numbers dropped to 49%, and

at CNN it was only 39%. Other countries have gone even further. For example, in Moscow a female newscaster introduces all of the news of the day in an evening show, and gets naked in the process of explaining the news. This type of newscast is dubbed “The Naked Truth” (Contemporary Sexuality, 2000).

Hence, scholars observe that sex on news broadcast is another important strategy that media organizations use to promote their own channel and content. Thus, some contend, enhancing profits are the final goals (Reichert, 2007). Reichert posited, “sex has the ability to attract and maintain the attention of audiences, which can increase ratings and circulation with the ultimate result of generating greater revenue for the organization” (p. 6). Reichert also noted that there are several ways in which media organizations and advertisements use sex to promote their content for financial benefit, observing that “mediated sexual content in the form of images, frank discussions, and innuendo is more prevalent and more brazen than 10 years ago” (p. 4). Reichert further explained that there are obvious ways in which specific words or clear sexual behavior is shown, as well as more subtle ways in which the way the newscaster includes sexual connotation through dress or the way in which the news is introduced.

As an example of sexual content’s influence on broadcast choices and audience interest, one of the most important sex-related news reports on American television was the scandal concerning President Bill Clinton and White House Intern Monica Lewinsky (Lafayette & McConville, 1998). More than nine months of sexual content and gossip in news coverage of the President’s sexual scandal brought in higher television audience ratings. The Nielsen Media Research reported that 22.5 million viewers watched on different channels (ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, MSNBC and Fox) the tape in which

President Clinton shared his jury testimony. The report also showed the combined household rating to be between 18.6 and 18.8 million households. In explaining the reason for such extensive coverage of a sexually provocative topic, Barbara Cochran, the president of the Radio-Television News Directors Association (RTNDA), explained that in the end everyone agreed the issue was important and therefore it was covered in order to satisfy the audience.

Not all audiences interact equally with sexual content, however. Fisher, Byne, White, and Kelley (1998) clarified that individual characteristics such as personality, gender, age, and religiosity moderate the reactions that sexual content causes in audiences (such as involvement, affectionate feelings, and physiological changes). When the vice-president of a national broadcasting company, Williams S. Rubens, delivered his 1978 speech *Sex on Television, More or Less* for the Association for Consumer Research, he declared:

There is no such agreement about sex on television. Some people feel that sex is a legitimate topic for television to handle. Others feel that showing or discussing anything sexual on TV is bad taste- or “filthy.” But the opinions of both groups are based on moral value judgments (p. 172).

Additionally, the use that audiences give to broadcast news usage is not only to be informed, but also to satisfy other needs. As Reichert explained, “because viewers, listeners, and readers desire exposure to sexual information because of its hedonic value, uses-and-gratifications approaches...can help to explain how and why psychological and physiological needs and wants translate into viewers choices” (p. 7).

The Relationship Between Audiences & Media (TV): General Overview

Theories about television have progressed and have modified over the past seven decades. With the beginning of commercial television in the late 1930s, various effects models appeared as a result of a common concern about influences mass media could have on audiences. The continuous development of these models lead to changes from the powerful media model of the hypodermic needle (Katz & Lazarfeld, 1955) to less powerful models such as the theory of uses and gratifications (Blumler and Katz, 1974), which argued audiences are actually active. More specifically, news-related theories lagged behind media effects models to a certain degree, so the news theories of the 1970s were very different compared to present theories. The news processes theory was initially defined as:

Participants in a production process, sharing certain values and operating within hierarchical structures whose immediate goal is to collect, organize, and present aspects of humanity's collective experiences under inexorable deadline pressures (Gollin, 1980, p. 276)

Is television losing audiences? Is the content of television a cause of the decrease of television audiences or are other technologies poaching these audiences? In a world with 6.6 billion inhabitants (U.S Census Bureau, 2008), people are beginning to avoid broadcast news, and many producers are beginning to have to defend its indispensability and try to avoid its demise.

Numerous studies have observed the influence of television on its audiences. In recent studies scholars argued that it is essential to not underestimate the active nature of audience members who are free to make their own media choices, though arriving at this audience-centric view of media usage required the analysis of audiences and television to pass through many different stages. If television audiences were seen as defenseless

before (Ang, 1985), it is now understood that there are other social and environmental factors that influence viewers (Stuart, 1997). For example, David Morley (1986) posited that audiences are active, and that it is in the family environment where individuals learn how to use media.

While television broadcasting in general covers shows, films, and even advertisements, broadcast news' more focused concentration on ongoing information and facts that take place at local, national and international levels result in different criteria for judging quality content and audience approval. Twelve factors have been identified to measure the news and identify a good news piece: timeliness, proximity, exceptional quality, possible future impact, prominence, conflict, number of people involved or affected, consequence, human interest, pathos, shock value, and titillation (Hanson & Wearden, 2004). However, it is purpose, credibility, and trustworthiness that audiences value most highly. Individuals want to not only believe but also to trust the channel that is providing news information. And trustworthiness is linked with what Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001, p. 36) called "the truth." They asserted, "Truth is the first and most confusing principle of journalism." They also agreed with the words of Jack Fuller (1996) who stated "The central purpose of journalism is to tell the truth so that people will have the information that they need to be sovereign" (cited in Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001. p. 19).

However, a television study conducted by Switzerland's Federal Office of Communications in 2006 revealed that television continues to be considered an important element of people's lives. This study also stresses that while television is one of the main sources of information for most youth, it serves also as a companion and connection with

the world for elderly people. Therefore, while different reasons motivate people's use of television, these reasons contribute to an endorsement of television as a source of understanding reality, even as a source of political decision-making, for most of the population. Nevertheless, the results of the study also showed that 81% of audiences would like to have more programs that promote self-thinking and analysis of the topics covered in the news. This last finding evidences the audience-perceived influence that television has upon viewers and the desire of audiences to be influenced from a more intelligent perspective.

For many, television programming and content has changed in such a way that individuals tend to distrust media and see it as a destructive tool rather than a source of empowerment. Individuals may consider broadcasts news as a cause of disturbance and negative affects instead of a source of education and enlightenment. They may also feel that one's choice of channels could affect his or her mental and spiritual health.

Badaracco (2005) emphasized that media is in charge of "shaping" the attitudes of the audiences. As a consequence of the evolution of the content of television, specifically broadcast news becoming more violent and offering more sexual content, audiences have been affected and have also reacted to the present scope of television content. Moreover, Klijn (2003) observed the contradiction between the opinion of audiences that affirm there is too much violence on television and the fact that audiences' interests are one of the main aspects that television channels consider when programming such content. Rosenstiel, Gottlieb, and Brady (2000) noticed the decline of the audiences' interest for bad news; specifically they affirm that interest declined even more when the news is not given within an appropriate context. Likewise, surveys have confirmed the desire of

audiences of having more constructive and optimistic stories (Klein, 2003). Therefore, while channels have been looking at audiences as a number, trying to obtain the highest percentage of viewers in a potential market, audiences have possibly been able to perceive this superficial treatment and have been losing their trust in television. Thus, broadcast news suffers in the controversial debate between institutions, television content, and individual's choices.

Several studies confirm that not only has there been a change on the concept of news, but also that "television news influences public concern and not vice versa" (Behr & Iyengar, 1985). News has become an entertainment show in order to reach the viewers in a fast and easy way. It has become a hard task for viewers to recognize the importance of news and then to respect and trust that news. Networks have noticed the decrease in news viewers, and networks such as CNN, MSNBC, and FNC "look for ways to 'reinvent' news" (Streisand, 1997).

The Pew Center for People and the Press reported in 1993 that only one in four Americans follow national news. In 2006, a report from the Project for Excellence in Journalism discovered that for the first time in years, every sector of television news showed a decrease in audience size. The report explained that technology grew faster than newsrooms can afford and that broadcast news viewers are becoming Internet news users. Additionally, the 2007 Pew Research Center for People and the Press study on Internet news audiences found that 38% of those Internet news users "have an unfavorable opinion of cable news networks such as CNN, Fox News Channel and MSNBC, compared with 25 percent of the public overall, and just 17 percent of

television news viewers” (Pew Research Center, 2007, Summary of findings section, ¶ 2).

Religiosity: Definition of Religiosity and General Overview

As it has been observed with the passage of the time audiences in general have changed their attitudes towards television content, especially broadcast news content. The fact that the choices audiences make could be affected by multiple factors such as gender, age, and social status, leads to the consideration of religiosity as a possible element that would influence the choices of religious audiences. Therefore, religion could influence the perception that broadcast news audiences have towards its content.

Defining religiosity and offering a general overview of studies that have portrayed this term is essential to this study. Therefore, besides the definition of religiosity, this section attempts to establish the differences between audiences in general and religious audiences in particular. Furthermore, besides examining the definition of religious audiences, considering the way in which such audiences view media and investigating the impact that religion could have on broadcast news choices are fundamental to the present study. To analyze how religion is presented in news and how religions in general view media will increase understanding about the relationship between religiosity and broadcast news usage.

It is the freedom to choose what to watch that makes an individual play an active role in selecting the content according to personal tendencies. In this sense, religiosity, as part of the environment of an individual, could be a factor that may influence the sensitivity of religious people and their decision to watch or not watch certain television

content, specifically broadcast news. Therefore, religion could play a main role in influencing—even directing—the relationship between media and audiences.

Religion by itself is a very abstract concept. Scholars agree on the complexity and sensitive nature of the subject, but have tried to clarify it differently. For example, Hoover (2002, p. 33) saw religion as a “reel of human life,” while Hill et al (2000) considered spirituality and religiosity to be compatible. Thus, as either a moral concept or as a practical guide, it can influence the way one acts.

Alston (1975, p. 116) defined religiosity as “the degree of one’s connection or acceptance of their religious institutions, participation in church attendance and activities, as well as one’s regard for the leaders of the religion and church.” Moreover, Roof (1999) described religion as having an interactive relationship with the cultural and social environment, which relationship reproduces and changes the interpretations of symbols, beliefs, and practices. Golan (2002) concluded through his quantitative study that even though there is not a correlation between religiosity and media perception in non-moral issues, there is a significant link between religiosity and third person media perception in moral issues. Even though Golan’s study did not examine the behavior component in religious people, it does open the door for further research.

Because new religious values and denominations frequently arise and the number of churches has been increasing, it is important to balance the character of religion with the actual practice of it. Defining religiosity, as measuring religiosity, is one of the biggest challenges of religion researchers. In their book *Measures of Religiosity*, Hill and Hood (1999) compiled a variety of scales to help in gauging it. Lippy (1994) differentiated between private and personal aspects within popular culture. He believed

these aspects somehow affect Americans even in the cultural images of gender roles. He stated: “religion simply became more firmly stretched in the private sphere, where unstructured, unorganized popular piety had long flourished” (p. 197).

De Jong, Faulkner and Warland (1976) distinguished six different dimensions of religiosity for Americans: belief, knowledge, social consequences, individual moral consequences, religious practices, and religious experience (p. 871). Their results suggested that for Americans, religious knowledge and social consequences are different dimensions that do not influence each other (p. 879). However, the individual moral dimension *is* related. The authors further suggested that religiosity should be double-defined, as a general approach *and* as a specific approach (p. 882).

The potential for religiosity to explain and direct some social behavior and the fact that broadcast news reflects the acts and information of society make consideration of these two subjects important. If religion can influence individual news preferences, and if broadcast news is important as a social source of information, it is necessary to observe the influence that religion could exert on audiences when they make news choices. The direction of influence in the relationship between religious beliefs and media use is hard to determine—each seems to have an effect on the other. Thus, if viewers trust media content and religiosity influences the lives of people, does religion influence the viewers’ interpretation of that news content?

Marcus Prior’s (2005) suggested through his content preference analysis that the inclination of the audience is a predictor of knowledge in different fields. For example, people who like politics will increase their exposure to channels that offer political content; people that tend to be attracted by entertainment will choose channels that offer

that content. This concept would support the idea of religion being not only a primary factor in choosing channels, but also one that influences viewers in choosing particular *topics*.

Theoretical Framework

In determining what the relationship is between religious audiences and their broadcast news exposure, as well as their perception of violence on television content, uses and gratifications and selective exposure theories will provide a firm foundation to explain why audiences play an active role in selecting the information they want to watch.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Since the 1970's, uses and gratifications theory (UG) has studied television from the viewer's perspective of the viewer's situation—their level of involvement and/or cognitive complexity. Sociologists could perceive the needs of the audience as reflected in the kind of channel they choose (use) and the kind of information they want (gratification). As Harris (1999, p. 23) adds, "The experience and effect of media depend in part on the uses one is putting those media to and the gratifications one is receiving from them."

Studies have concentrated on the fact that the active character of the audience makes them free to use media as a tool to satisfy their own necessities and desires (McQuail, 2005; Ruggiero, 2000). Thus, the active character of the audience makes UG theory one of the most important and influential theories—seeing the object in media and

the subject in the audience. This theory has been applied in multiple television studies analyzing how audiences determine their channel selection (Catril & Allport, 1935; Dobos, 1992; Van den Bulck, 2006; Zohoori, 1988) and in specific broadcast news usage (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). Multiple media studies have confirmed what Huston, Wartella, and Donnerstein (1998, p.48) affirm, that audiences “are active in seeking out and choosing or avoiding certain media content.” Therefore, an important part of the analysis of this media use is why audiences choose certain kinds of content. Thus, satisfaction is a main factor in the conscious or unconscious process of selecting whether to watch broadcast news as well as other media content.

This theory also offers the perspective that “personality factors might influence media use and that media use in turn might affect outcome behavior—some of which are unintended effects” (Greene & Krcmar, 2005, p. 72).

Didi and LaRose (2006) explain that the on-going question about how people select news sources has been studied and analyzed for a long time without arriving at a clear answer. To begin with, it is important to consider that different types of media lead to different types of choices (Holvert, 2005). Didi and LaRose include the opinions of Henke (1985), O’Keefe and Spetnagel (1973), and Vincent and Basil (1997) when they affirm that:

All forms of news media are said to be selected by those with surveillance needs seeking in-depth information and local news, whereas the gratification of surveillance needs has been closely associated with the print media, and television is preferred by those with entertainment and escapism (p. 194).

Diddi and Robert LaRose also affirm that people approach news sources and television content in a very different way. Thus, they found that elderly people show more interest in health and religion news, while college students prefer sport and entertainment.

Palmgreen and Rayburn (1985) focus more on the gratifications side of the theory and compared the abilities of six alternative gratification/expectancy-value models to predict satisfaction with television news (p. 334). Through a questionnaire distributed to 178 college students who previously watched at least one network evening news program and one local news program per week, the students answered which of the gratifications given applied to them. For example, students responded to the statement “CBS news helps me to keep up with current events” (p. 339). Palmgreen and Rayburn found that the gratifications of the college students did not differ much from the general population. Moreover, the results indicate that the evaluation of the broadcast news gratifications was positive with one exception: “Television news is often dramatic” (p. 343). Thus, the results point out the great importance of the satisfaction that audiences get from news.

Blumer and Katz’s (1974) most relevant study of UG theory is characterized not for the analysis of what media does to people, but what people do with media. A more operational orientation exists in studies from Rosengren (1974), Wimmer and Dominick (1994), and Holbert, Kwak, and Shah (2003). These cases identify social and psychological variables. Thus, the level of religiosity, as a part of the personality of each individual, could moderate broadcast news viewing. Rosengren (1974) supports the notion that personal characteristics and social environment interact with individual necessities and thus build different perceptions. Religiosity can be considered a personal

characteristic that would determine the environment in which individuals make their choices.

Other studies also relate media use with personality factors (Conway & Rubin, 1991; Greene & Kcmar, 2005). Even though the Greene and Kcmar study is based in the observation of films, they support the conclusion that Weaver (1991) made about how individuals look for specific media content “to fulfill certain needs related to their own psychological characteristics” (p. 74).

Stout and Buddenbaum (1996) argue that the level of media exposure is an important indicator of the way people think and act. In their study, they distinguish between heavy and light viewers. Heavy viewers will allow media to monopolize their environment—leading not only the way they think, but also the way they act. Through exposure to the media, individuals construct their own social conception of reality. These experiences develop into norms that help them internalize the way to act and be. Personal experiences will also aid in building schema. In the same manner, religion influences people’s behavioral patterns. Members of the religious community help each other build faith and change their lives by adopting new values. They select appropriate sources of information that agree with their faith. The UG theory helps to deepen our understanding of the negative influence that media could have on the religious beliefs of society. An examination of variables such as news exposure and conceptions of social reality is essential in looking at the relationship between religiosity and broadcast news usage in individuals. It is important to not forget that according to the uses and gratifications approach, audiences differ in the gratifications they are seeking from the mass media, and

these orientations may be related to certain social conditions and functions or personality dispositions and abilities (Vincent & Basil, 1997).

Because of the characteristics and perspectives that the uses and gratifications theory contains, it is vital to use this theory in the present study in which the purpose is to observe the relationship between religiosity and broadcast news usage. Using the uses and gratifications theory could help determine if there is a specific use religious audiences have for television news, as well as help explain how the use is resulting in some type of gratification. While the theory by itself is very useful, complementing uses and gratifications with another theory that covers other aspects of the study would give a more in-depth analysis and understanding of the influence that religion could cause on audience's television news choices.

Selective Exposure

If uses and gratifications theory is based on the active character of the audience that select media to satisfy certain necessities, selective exposure theory also focuses on the active character of the audience while the audience looks for information that agrees with its point of view.

The fact that “an important part of television is goal-directed” (Marris and Thornham, 2000, p .440), and that audiences may tend to avoid certain broadcast content, is an important reason to observe if the direction in which television directs its content, specifically broadcast news, is in tune with the point of view of the audiences. Thus, selective exposure may be carried over to news choices as well.

To avoid cognitive dissonance, viewers engage in selective exposure (Festinger, 1957). Thus, it was the theory of cognitive dissonance developed by Leon Festinger the one to precede selective exposure (Cotton, 1985). Festinger states three hypotheses by which selective exposure relates to dissonance: inexistence of dissonance, little existence of dissonance, and high existence of dissonance. When dissonance does not exist, selective exposure is not necessary because there is no need for reinforcement. The avoidance of any kind of information contrary to the group is frequently a result. It is when a small amount of dissonance exists that the audience applies selective exposure to ensure what they are watching corresponds more closely with their beliefs.

Media also has the capacity to isolate individuals (Sussman, 1997). This theory speculates that in order to avoid isolation, individuals will select media topics that reinforce their beliefs. Thus, “something more fundamental is involved than just being informed” (Shaw, McCombs, Weaver, & Ham, 1999, p. 2). Another example is the laboratory study of Lazarsfeld (1942) on radio audiences. The results indicated that instead of learning tolerance from the educational programs, listeners selected information that agreed with their attitudes.

Knobloch-Westerwick, Carpentier, Blumhoff, and Nickel (2005) found that the reason positive news attracts greater audience attention is not due to the positive or negative character of the news, but rather because of the news topic. Culture is also an important factor in the selection of news. The same concept would be applied to television news selection. In this way, Fields (1988) affirms in his qualitative content analysis of television news, that the news message is compiled not only by words, but also by elements such as facial expressions, voice inflexion, camera techniques, and

visual symbols. This combined effect makes the audience receive a unified perception of the message. Hence, it is interesting to observe how media attracts viewers and how viewers make media choices according to their perception and interpretation of the news—which ultimately will influence their news usage.

Furthermore, Sears and Freedman (1967) assert that the word “selectivity” itself implies the concept of bias. They include in their critical review the words of Lazarsfeld: “Exposure is always selective; in other words, a positive relationship exists between people’s opinions and what they choose to listen to or read” (Sears and Freedman, 1967, p. 196; see also Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948, p. 164). It is important in this case to add the phrase “to watch.” This theory complements the uses and gratifications notion of an active audience. Audiences are active as soon as they select information that is not going to cause conflict with their personal beliefs and opinions. Numerous studies have not only analyzed the audience selection in general, but the audience selection on news related to political matters. Stroud (2007), for example, analyzed the polarizing effects of partisan selective exposure and explained that from those people who were asked to identify which cable network they watched most often, 92 percent acknowledged watching Fox, CNN, or MSNBC. They determined to select these networks because they offer “objective” news. The study also confirmed that the coverage of the Iraqi War on Fox News was inclined to support United States. Moreover, other studies have proved that Fox news tends to be more conservative and Republican (Center for Media and Public Affairs, 2003).

Therefore, different networks tend to offer the broadcast news from a different perspective, either more conservative or either more liberal. This is something that does

not go unnoticed by the audience. Even though there is not an official form that clarifies the political and ethical tendencies of each television channel, audiences are aware of the inclinations that the national and regional networks have. It's part of the social common knowledge. Thus, according to the selective exposure theory, audiences tend to select the channels, the programs and the specific information according to their own personal viewpoint (Stroud, 2007, p. 1).

Webster and Wakshlag (1985, p. 35) assert that the consumption of television is probably "the most extensively studied of all communication behaviors." According to Berelson and Steiner (1964, p. 529) comment, "People tend to see and hear communications that are favorable or congenial to their predispositions." To understand this better, they provide a list of predispositions such as sex, role, interest, ethnic status, educational interest and involvement, political attitude and even aesthetic position. Religiosity is also seen as one of these factors. Nevertheless, very few experiments have used religion as the domain for examining selective exposure (McFarland & Warren, 1992).

Whether or not religion can influence the convictions of an individual and his media choices deserves a deeper analysis. Furthermore, the diverse character of different religions makes the consideration even more difficult. McFarland and Warren (1992) distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic religion in their study. They included the definition given by Catril and Allport (1935) in which intrinsic religion is seen as a selfless and deep commitment. Contrary, extrinsic religion is considered to be self-focused and with a utilitarian point of view. Even though this study does not pay much attention to this distinction as it does not consider such divisions, it is important to

acknowledge the fact that even though scholars talk about religion or religiosity as a whole, the differences between the preachers from different religions could influence viewers in different directions. Nevertheless, it is equally important to find a common point that would allow us to examine religiosity as a whole.

“We are not isolated beings” (Eliot, 1920, p. 116), is a statement that correlates with selective exposure theory, which indicates that the main reason to select certain television content is to avoid isolation. Moreover, Christianity preaches living the “gospel” as a community. If the perception of news broadcasts is that its content does not contribute to the unification of communities, highly religious individuals would be more likely to avoid these programs.

McFarland (1996) affirms that believers use two processes to maintain their faith. The first is through the use of television, books, magazines and music that contain religious content. The second process involves selecting sources that challenge their faith to reaffirm even more their own faith. McFarland highlights the need of the people to maintain consistency among their values, beliefs and behaviors. Therefore, media and religion could both influence what individuals want to be exposed to. It is fundamental to include selective exposure theory in the present study to analyze if this assessment is valid.

In conclusion, it would be naïve to pretend that the evolution that television programming has experienced in terms of content do not affect the audience. Whether they perceive and trust media or they choose to select certain channels over others, audiences are part of the evolution. To observe other aspects that could influence television news choices of the audiences, such as religiosity or their perception towards

violence, is equally important for the understanding of the relationship between media and audience. Therefore, it is vital not only to observe the actual relationship between media and audiences, but to consider the relationship between media and religious audiences.

Because religiosity may influence the behavior of people in their broadcast news choices, and media is essential for being informed and creating an opinion about national and international issues, it is crucial to know if there is any correlation between the two. Thus, applying uses and gratifications and selective exposure theories are essential to this study. Uses and gratifications theory asserts that audiences are active participants in choosing what they watch, how often, and for what purposes. The selective exposure theory states that individuals make choices in order to avoid cognitive dissonance. The two theories complement each other and provide a solid foundation in the evaluation of religiosity and broadcast news exposure.

CHAPTER 2

Religiosity

Besides the importance that television plays in the lives of most Americans, another dominant factor in the lives of people within the United States is that of religion. The results of the most extensive survey on religion conducted in America to date indicated that the “United States is by far the most religious of all advanced, industrial, democratic nations” (Stout & Buddenbaum, 1996, p.3). In this chapter religious audiences are analyzed and defined in order to understand more clearly the relationship between religious beliefs and the way believers perceive and expose themselves to broadcast news content.

Religious Audiences: Differences and Particularities

The significance individuals place on television—specifically broadcast news—and on religion suggests that they are two of the most important aspects of American life. Thus, these two variables need to be considered and analyzed in tandem. It would be naïve to assume that religion has absolute control in dictating the way audiences act. However, discovering whether religiosity has any relationship to the choices of audiences would net valuable information. Insight into those thought processes would prove useful both to audiences’ understanding of themselves and news producers’ understanding of their audiences. In the most extensive survey about religion in America, Kosmin and Lachman (1993, p.8-9) show that more than 9 out of 10 Americans believe in God, with almost three-fourths believing in life after death. Almost two-thirds say that religion is

very important to them. More than half say they attend church regularly, while about one-fourth do so at least occasionally.

As previously indicated, there are differences between general broadcasts and broadcast news. If their modes of operation and communication differ, it is possible that the relationship between religiosity and broadcast news and the relationship between religiosity and broadcast in general would differ as well. Audiences would be prone to selecting and using media in different ways depending on what aspect of broadcast they are watching.

Therefore, it is possible that spirituality and preaching may play an important role in the minds of religious people in determining what is appropriate or inappropriate to watch. In the same way, media plays an important role in the minds of all audiences (religious or not), influencing their decisions on what is important to watch in order to be well-informed.

Religious Audiences: How Religious Audiences Understand Media

Vollmer, Frelinghuysen and Rothenberg (2006) noted a 2005 Nielsen/Net study in which 20% of the participants recognized they need to spend less time watching television. These studies all assume that there is a decrease in the number of news viewers, although the reasons for this decrease are not adequately established. The Pew Center reported in 2005 that news media are focused on attracting the biggest audience more than informing the public. Gunther (1992, p. 147) affirms that the reason why viewers are not exposed to media is because they become skeptical about the information they watch on television and read in newspapers. He says the question is not what people

do with messages, but what messages do to people (p. 148). These facts seem to contradict the idea that “Television is the central and most pervasive mass medium in America culture” (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980, p. 12). Robinson and Levi (1996) believe that even though television seems to be American’s main news source, it is no longer the most relevant daily news source. However, much has changed between 1983, 1990 and now. Kovack and Rosenstiel (2001, p. 24) affirm, “The audience becomes not consumers, but ‘pro-sumers,’ a hybrid of consumer and producer.”

Haller and Norpoth (1997) came up with the premise of lack of news exposure, citing in their study *News Exposure and Economic Opinion* that half of the American public admits not getting any economic news. Streisand (1997) also attempts to answer questions about why there are so few people watching news. She thinks the increase in the number of channels gives viewers more entertainment choices and therefore less connection with news broadcasts. Where is the concept of fresh and innovative news? She argues that the competition between channels transforms minor content such as traffic, weather, and school board issues into top stories.

Numerous studies have not only observed the influence of television on audiences, concluding that bad news depresses and desensitizes viewers (Galician & Pasternack, 1986), but also the credibility of media as a function of the message source. Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz (1969) believed the reputation or establishment of the news source or channel being watched does not attain credibility on its own. Their assertion is that it was the audience who perceives whether or not a source is credible. Albert Gunther (1992) agrees there are many variables related to credibility. He specifically points out that, “Membership in political, religious, ethnic or other social groups carries with it

attitudes, beliefs and a personal stake in group concern” (p. 152). Gunther also believes that religion is one of the variables, together with gender, education, and income, that can affect an individual’s opinion on a source’s reliability and whether or not to watch its broadcasts. Other studies have also established media credibility as being a result of the audience’s religion. In order to establish discord between religious and media values, it is necessary to conscientiously analyze media content. McDonnell (1992) recommends observing political bias of news, observing the values and attitudes presented, and observing the control and organization of broadcasting. He also emphasizes that the goal is not to be skeptical, but to have critical appreciation.

Gunther cites an interesting experiment conducted by Vallone, Ross, and Lepper (1985). They found that Arab and Israeli students observe more bias in news related to the Middle East than those with other ethnicities. This example supports the assessment of Gunther that “There is a connection between an individual’s personal stake in an issue and media credibility judgments” (p. 150). Therefore, the individual religious condition could determine the choice and trustworthiness on media in terms of television news viewing.

The Impact of Religion on Specific Types of Television Content.

Previous research found people who attend church are more likely to use newspapers and watch television than those who do not (Stout & Buddenbaum, 1996). There is also ample evidence of a relationship between religiosity and a lack of trust of the media (Golan, 2002). Roberts (1983) found that viewers that watch more religious programs are those who have religious beliefs and tend to look for that kind of content.

Armfield and Holbert (2003) found a negative relationship in their study about the relationship between Internet and religiosity. They concluded the more religious an individual is, the less Internet he or she uses. Nevertheless, the results of their study are not significant in terms of explaining a high percentage of human behavior. Kenneth D. Loomis (2004) shows in his study how individuals' levels of spirituality, together with media images, can bias their interpretation of the media.

Even though the number and extent of studies found that analyze the influence religion can have on individuals and their news choices was small, studies based on the Internet and religiosity could shed light on the field. In their study, Armfield and Holbert (2003) center their attention on religiosity as a potential predictor of Internet activity. They applied mail and telephone surveys to investigate their relationship. They found religiosity to be a "significant unique contributor to the variance accounted for in Internet use" (p. 139). Therefore, religiosity plays a role in the lives of religious Internet users.

Studies have proven that as the level of informational utility increases, the level of selective exposure to those messages also increase (Knobloch-Westerwick, Carpentier, Blumhoff, and Nickel, 2005). Thus, religious audiences looking for informational utility will reject any information (broadcast news) that would not contribute to or support their community. Whether or not to watch broadcast news related to war or any kind of violent content could be part of the selection criteria that religion tries to instill.

The Portrayal of Media in Religion

Religions have been worried about the way they are represented in the media and the influence it exercises on their communities. However, even though many media

studies have focused on the portrayal of religion in media, little or no attempts have been made to ascertain the influence of religion on viewer's broadcast exposure. To explain religion's influence upon news media content, Mark Silk (1995, p. 102) quotes Paul Rock: "Much news is, in fact, ritual. It conveys an impression of endlessly repeated drama whose themes are familiar and well-understood."

Many churches teach their followers the belief that they should "be in the world, but not of the world." M. Russell Ballard (2003) from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) says:

The new morality preached from the media's pulpit is nothing more than the old immorality. It attacks religion. It undermines the family. It turns virtue into vice and vice into virtue. It assaults the senses and batters the soul with messages and images that are neither virtuous, nor lovely, nor of good report, nor praiseworthy (p. 16).

Religion tends to believe that the media can have a detrimental effect upon one's level of belief. In 1989, Ballard talks about media. In his talk given in a General Conference to the LDS Church, he advised members about the consequences of television. He also said that the detrimental effects of television can be a temptation that individuals should avoid. Others have also asserted that: "Television is addicting" (De Franco, 1980, p. 4); "Television is a *physically* passive activity and generally discourages creative play" (National Institute of Mental Health, 1987, p. 45); "Television tends to overpower and desensitize a child's sense of sympathy for suffering" (Moody, 1980, p. 91-92); and children "lose the ability to learn from reality" (Logan & Moody, 1979, p. 43).

Elizabeth Thoman (1981), founder of *Media & Values* magazine, indicated that U.S. religious leaders search many different sources in order to talk about a current event

in an educated manner. Therefore, even religious leaders use the media as a tool to be informed and to preach or give sermons. They are careful in choosing what they watch, however, and advise their followers to be the same. Most religious leaders agree with Gerbner (1993, ¶ 13) who stated, “Those who tell the stories hold the power in society. Today television tells most of the stories to most of the people most of the time.”

Religious leaders invite individuals to analyze the television content they watch in order to ensure harmony between religious and media values and to put some of that power back into the hands of the audience.

Many religions feel the media is an invaluable tool in communicating their beliefs and reaching out to members. The LDS Church has been broadcasting its biannual General Conference since 1924. Its *Music and the Spoken Word* began the following year and has become the longest continually-running radio program in the history of the United States (Baker and Stout, 2003).

Baker and Stout also agree with other authors that affirm there has been a change in the focus of study within the last 20 years. Previous studies focused on the content of media. Recent trends have shifted it to observing the audience as an essential factor of the effects of media. They have shown that religious individuals may understand and apply media in a different way than non-religious individuals. Because the media perception of religious individuals may be different, the selection of broadcast news may be different as well.

The Catholic Church and other faiths also support the idea that, “we must be in the world, but not of the world” (Catholics United for the Faith, 2007).

The LDS Church shares a similar view:

Be in the world (emphasis in original). Be involved; be informed. Try to be understanding and tolerant and to appreciate diversity. Make meaningful contributions to society through service and involvement. *Be not of the world* (emphasis in original). Do not follow wrong paths or bend to accommodate or accept what is not right (Ballard, 1989, p. 78).

Religion proclaims that it is the responsibility of the individual to choose what is good and what is going to contribute to their own development. “We are being exposed to growing amounts of inappropriate material if we choose to watch TV without being selective” (Ballard, 2003, p.17). Thus, even though churches accuse media of proclaiming unethical values, those same churches give viewers the responsibility to select appropriate media content. Moreover, parents are responsible for this instruction: “Not only must parents put good things into the minds of children; we must keep bad things out. That is why we have been cautioned against the unrestricted invasion of our homes by the media” (Tuttle, 1979. p. 27).

Most religions have these same media concerns. Ballard (1989) was speaking for all denominations when he stated:

Many individuals, churches, and other organizations are raising their voices. Let us join with them, brothers and sisters, to persuade TV scriptwriters, executives, and sponsors to use their talents and resources to help build a better and safer world (p.79).

Another aspect of the conflict between religion and news has its roots in the fact that religions do not consider the media as good portrayers of theology itself (Allen, 2006). Allen includes in his work the opinion of many experts. He states, “We cover religion like politics, and we cover politics like sports, so everything is about winners and losers, what the score is, rather than serious issues.” (¶5)

Longinow (2004, p. 78) declares, “Religions and the depths of belief and spirituality have also become enormously influential forces in film, radio, television

drama, and published fiction in recent decades.” What is the line between feeling religious and at the same time feeling connected with media? Can both complement each other? DeVries & Weber (2001) believe that religion and communication are inseparable.

Is it possible to keep track of news from around the world and at the same time be an actively religious person? Longinow believes that even though Americans want to believe what they are being told, the way stories are transmitted has become dull—without any deep substance.

It is interesting to observe the controversial images that are broadcast in news programming and how those images could hurt the feelings of viewers—but at the same time recognize that the media still plays an important role in society and individual’s lives. Longinow says “faith has been a hard sell among many historians of journalism and culture” (p. 79). He analyzes the work of two studies: Underwood and Stamm (1991) and DeVries & Weber (2001). In his study, Longinow includes Underwood’s belief that American journalists are working hard to project using faith-based principles.

Many have long recognized the guiding aspects religion can have for society. On one hand, whether or not to be religious is considered a personal conviction, a private decision, and a very personal matter. On the other hand, personal religiosity changes to a universal concern when religion influences decisions and perceptions of the world. Thus, religiosity can be either a link or a barrier between individuals. And religion is part of the moral hegemony that can influence society. Longinow concludes, “It is the expectations we have of media and religion, globally and next door, that trip us up more than the complexities of religion lived large” (p. 80).

Some religions have also protested against violent media content. President Hinckley (1983), former president of the LDS Church, said:

These are the people [TV script writers and executives] who, through the medium of entertainment, are educating us in the direction of their own standards, which in many cases are diametrically opposed to the standards of the gospel (p. 45–46).

Ballard (1989, p. 79) concurred, quoting Randal Wright who said, “Not only is violence increasing on TV, but every form of immorality, vice, and corruption is also being paraded before our family’s eyes in ever-increasing amounts.” Excessive exposure to violence on television could also develop dysfunctional behavior (Paik & Comstock, 1994).

It is important to remember that other factors such as family, school, and environment will make an important difference in answering the question, “Why doesn’t everyone exposed to the same media content perform the same behavior?” Perhaps other external factors related to religion will aid in answering that question.

The Influence of Religiosity on People’s Choices.

In addition to the power that religion can have on media content, there is an underestimation or even under-analysis of the power that religion may have on audience’s choices. Silk (1995) also believes that religion is similar to journalism in the way religion has and pays attention to certain stereotypes that are familiar. Moreover, Guy Golan (2002, p. 108) studied the “influence of religiosity on the manner in which individuals perceive media effects on themselves and others.” He measured the following religiosity patterns: church attendance, religious guidance, and importance of religion in people’s lives.

The purpose of this study is to observe the religious audience's perceptions of broadcast news, not the impact of media. If religion influences the way in which individuals identify and choose broadcast news, it is necessary to investigate and define the relationship between religion and broadcast news usage. This may clarify the dilemma of why audiences avoid certain kinds of media content.

It is the intent of this study to identify if religiosity influences religious individuals regarding their broadcast news exposure as well as their perception of violence. The study is not designed to investigate if religion is well represented, if the stories about religion are accurate, or whether media exercises some kind of influence on religion.

This study not only examines the relationship between religiosity and broadcast news exposure, but also considers the importance of religion and news on people and the common Christian church mantra of "being in the world but not of the world." The relationship between religiosity and the perception of violence in broadcast news content is also studied. By investigating two main fields, religiosity and broadcast news exposure, and observing their possible connection, this study hopes to understand how religious audiences perceive and expose themselves to media.

Hypotheses

As it has been presented, the actual scope in which media is involved in individuals' lives indicates that even though television is important, audiences may be skeptical about the actual information that broadcast news offers. Different factors could cause the decrease in the number of traditional television viewers, with religion possibly

being one of these factors. The differences between non-religious audiences and religious audiences specifically make the field even more interested in answering the question about how religious individuals perceive media, but even further, how religiosity influences viewers when they expose themselves to broadcast news.

Religious audiences' perception of broadcast news as having more violent and sexual content could be a reason for them to avoid broadcast news. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to observe religious audiences' perceptions of violence and exposure to broadcast news, not the impact of media.

It is this study's intention to identify religious individuals, ascertain how strictly they live by their beliefs, and determine their broadcast news perception. The final goal will be to determine if religion influences audiences' choices, and to determine the relationship between religiosity and broadcast news.

By investigating two main fields, religiosity and broadcast news usage, and observing their possible connection and influence on individuals, this study hopes to understand how religious audiences perceive media. For the reasons already mentioned, uses and gratifications and selective exposure theories are the ideal theoretical framework to give a better understanding of the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis One

H1: As religiosity increases, broadcast news exposure decreases.

Hypothesis Two

H2: As religiosity increases, broadcast news violent perception increases.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The sample was collected via an Internet survey posted on several message boards from November 20 through December 5, 2006. The data was collected and stored through the research site <http://www.qualtrics.com> and was only accessed and retrieved by the researchers.

The survey was structured in two sections. The first division measured “broadcast news exposure” and the second division searched for “religiosity.” A question about violence was also asked to see if religious people think broadcast news shows too much violence. As discussed, the object of the study was to determine the relationship between religiosity and the exposure of broadcast news. For that purpose, the dependent variables used in the study were broadcast news exposure and violence.

In order to measure broadcast news exposure, people were asked questions about how often they watched the news. For example, “Over the last week, how many hours did you spend watching news or related shows?” The question was measured using a 6-point scale ranging from 0 (hours) to 5 or more (hours). It was also asked about three different types of news: local news, national news, and cable news. These questions were taken from a study conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and Press (2007).

The study also gave special attention to violence in media, considering that violence could or could not be one of the main reasons for broadcast news usage. Therefore, the perception of violence in broadcast news was measured by asking for participants’ perceptions of how news is presented. It specifically posed the question,

“Does the news you watch show too much violence?” This was considered a dependent variable and was measured with a 4-point scale.

The independent variable used in the study was religiosity. Religiosity was measured following the patterns of Thomsen and Rekve’s (2003) study in which they measure the level of religiosity through three basic questions. The two first questions measured religious behavior. The questions asked: “How often do you attend Sabbath day religious services?” using a 4-point scale ranging from 0 (never) to 3 (almost every week); “How often do you attend weekday religious services?” using a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (more than once a week). The third question measured the attitudinal component of religiosity. The question asked: “How important is religion in your life?” using 3-point scale ranging from 0 (not very important) to 2 (very important) (p. 98).

Wallace and Williams (1997) were the creators of the multidimensional measurement of religiosity used by Thomsen and Rekve. Wallace and Williams identified organizational affiliation, behavior, and attitude as the three main elements of religiosity. Thomsen and Rekve followed Wallace and Williams’ pattern with the exception of religious affiliation because Thomsen and Rekve’s study used high school students and schools would not allow questions regarding religious affiliation.

Because of the nature and purposes of the present study, the religiosity measure chosen was based on the Thomsen and Rekve’s study. Therefore, no questions regarding affiliation were asked to any of the volunteers that completed the survey. The internal consistency for the religiosity scale was good as measured using Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = .83$).

Questions such as: “Have you ever had a religious experience?”; “Do you wear or display any religious symbols?”; “Do you give money to some religious organization?”; and “How important is faith as a religious term to you?” were used. The first 15 questions of the survey measured the participant’s opinions about media, and the subsequent nine questions measured the religiosity of the audience. One question measured the perception of violence in broadcast news. The combination of these three variables provided a measure of the influence that religiosity has on the way people expose themselves to news broadcasts and their thoughts about violence on TV news. Other questions such as gender, age, and political preference complete the total of the 25 question survey.

CHAPTER 4

Results

The present quantitative study was designed using a survey as the research tool. This method was chosen as the most effective way to bring the study to a heterogenic population in a short period of time. The low cost of the method and the flexibility of time in which any individual could take the survey contributed to the decision to choose the survey as the ideal method. Placing the survey on different messages boards under topics such as Yahoo!, women, sports, and Gmail, was an attempt to reach as many individuals as possible from differing demographics. The survey was preceded by a brief explanation of the topic and clarification that no compensation would be given to survey respondents. Participation was voluntary and no compensation was given to any person that completed the survey. To participate in the survey, a respondent had to be 18 years old of age and older. The preamble to the survey also gave the information that the duration of the survey was approximately seven minutes. This information was given in order to be clear about the demands and scope of the survey and the volunteer nature of it. Therefore, individuals acted as volunteers to complete the survey.

From the 267 surveys collected, 24 surveys were excluded due to respondents not meeting the age requirements or due to incomplete surveys. Thus, a total of 243 surveys were completed and analyzed as the final sample. The purpose of the present study is to not only measure the level of religiosity of individuals, but to observe if religion influences individuals in how they choose to expose themselves to broadcast news. The relationship between religiosity, exposure, involvement, and following of broadcast news, taking into account how people perceive media are important factors of the

broadcast news in general and were included in the overall analysis. These three factors will also be a complementary indicator of broadcast news usage.

The internal consistency of the measured variables: religiosity ($\alpha = .828$), broadcast news usage ($\alpha = .723$), following the news ($\alpha = .721$) and involvement ($\alpha = .769$) were sufficiently adequate.

The first question to complete was related to demographics. From the 243 surveys, 242 answered the question of gender. Therefore, from the 242 surveys completed, the demographics indicate that there were a total of 108 females (44.6 %) and 134 males (55.4%) who answered the survey and identified themselves as male or female. The mean age of respondents was 40 years old. This first analysis is relevant in order to have an idea of what kind of volunteers filled out the survey and therefore determine if the age may have something to do with levels of religiosity or with broadcast news exposure.

One of the main factors of the survey and the study in general was religiosity, which was considered as an independent variable. Religiosity was measured following the pattern of the additive scale created by Wallace and Williams (1997) and adapted by Thomsen and Revke's (2003).

The first hypothesis predicts that as the religiosity of an individual increases, their broadcast news exposure decreases. Participants reported that on average they watch more than eight hours of news or news related shows each week. These hours were divided almost equally between national networks (2.9 hours at week), local news (2.8 hours at week), and cable news (2.9 hours at week). To test the first hypothesis, which

predicts that as religiosity increases broadcast news exposure decreases, a Spearman statistical test was run, giving a significant negative correlation:

$r_s(238) = -.13$ $p < .05$ in which r^2 equals $.02 = 2\%$ of the time religiosity influences people to use media.

Consequently, while the correlation is significant, the effect size is very small, so the variables may not be as significant in terms of explaining why more religious individuals watch less news.

To answer the second hypothesis that claims the more religious an individual is the more violence on broadcast news content he will perceive, a Spearman statistical test was run, giving the results:

$r_s(238) = .18$ $p < .01$ in which r^2 equals $.03 = 3\%$ of the time religiosity influences people's perception of violence on broadcast news.

The results indicate that the positive correlation is significant; nevertheless the effect size, as the first hypothesis, is very small.

An interesting Finding

An analysis was run to examine the relationship between religiosity and political tendency. On a one-way ANOVA, Democrats scored an average of 23.15, while Republicans scored 17.9. These results were found to be statistically significant ($p < .005$, $F = 6.871$, $df = 4$), indicating that Republicans are less religious than Democrats in this sample.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The results of the present study related to the first hypothesis confirm that there is a negative relationship between religiosity and broadcast news exposure: the more religious someone is, the less exposure they will choose to have to broadcast news. There are several possible explanations of this negative relationship: one is that as people become more involved in their religious community, the less time they have to actually make use of television and expose themselves to broadcast news. Another possible reason is that the more religious an individual is, the more sensitive she becomes about the content of broadcast news. Therefore, religious individuals avoid violence and sexual content that disturb them. A third possible reason for this negative relationship is simply that with the increase of other technologies such as the Internet, mp-3 players, and cell phones, audiences tend to use other sources of information besides television to access news.

In order to measure the relationship between religiosity and violence perceptions, a Spearman statistical test was performed. The results confirmed a positive relationship between religiosity and perceptions of violence in the news, indicating that the more religious an individual is, the more violence he will perceive in broadcast news content. This may be because of the emphasis religions give to the negative influence that media have on the lives of believers. Therefore, awareness of paying attention to what media offers causes individuals to perceive more violence and sexual content. Another explanation of the results is that within churches there is a special humanitarian sense of

helping others and contributing to the peace of the world. In short: to be good and create a better world. This idea leads religious individuals to be more sensitive about their environment in order to find those opportunities to help others. Thus, awareness of one's surroundings is a main religious characteristic that makes believers be more sensitive to the suffering of others. As broadcast news informs viewers of calamities, wars and other disasters of a violent or sexual nature, this content could have a greater impact on religious audiences that would perceive more violence on news than non-religious audiences.

The fact that in the results from testing both of the hypotheses the sample size is small could be due to other factors that influence the lives of religious individuals. Thus, while religiosity influences religious individuals, religiosity is not the only factor that could influence whether an individual exposes himself to broadcast news. Social status, age, and even gender are factors that could influence the way audiences expose themselves to broadcast news.

Overall, the present study suggests that while religiosity could not be the best predictor of the broadcast news exposure, it's definitely a mediating factor that explains a percentage of the behavior of religious audiences related to broadcast news. Therefore, the results should not be overestimated, but considered as important contribution to understand the relationship between religious audiences and broadcast news.

Limitations

The biggest limitation came from the fact that survey was the chosen methodology for the study. Researchers registered to several message boards in order to

post the surveys. This process limited participation only to message board users of a limited number of randomly selected websites. Moreover, because the survey was voluntary and participants were informed, individuals knew the subject before the completion of the survey, and thus any individual with religious or news biases could have exempted themselves from the study. Second, invitations to participate in the survey were also extended via frequent e-mails, which may have been mistaken for spam, resulting in fewer respondents and a respondent pool that was potentially significantly different from the general message board member population

The demographic information may be sufficient for the purposes of the study. Nevertheless, more questions in this field including demographic details such as social status, profession, geographic area lived in, etc., would provide a greater understanding to who these results might be generalized. It would be interesting, for example, to observe if the social status of individuals may affect level of religiosity and exposure to broadcast news.

Fourth, the limited number of participants (243) made the study not as strong as could be. It is important to consider that the higher the sample number, the greater the probability of obtaining credible results. This idea is also important when the purpose of the study is to generalize. Thus, in order to apply a sample to a general population, it is necessary to increase the sample number for the study to be supported. Consequently, it would be possible to generalize and transfer the results to a wider and more heterogeneous population. Therefore, a larger sample would help to support and maybe confirm the hypotheses with a stronger base.

Fifth, the dependent variables used in this study in additive index—*news exposure and violence perception*—were built from questions that could not fulfill the whole news exposure analysis. Thus, a deeper analysis would facilitate a more accurate observation.

Suggestions for Future Research

The fact that Republicans were reflected as less religious than Democrats opens the field to studies to answer questions related to how Republicans and Democrats consider religion and the perception that both political parties have about news.

It would also be useful to enlarge the sample in order to provide a more detailed study about the relationship between religiosity and violence on media.

Finally, future interesting research on the relationship between religiosity and broadcast news exposure should clarify why local and cable news usage supports the first hypothesis, but national news usage does not. In depth interviews combined with additional quantitative studies would aid in understanding why individuals avoid watching news.

Future research could also explore the relationship between religiosity and broadcast news exposure on different social levels in order to know if social class influences the conception of religiosity and thus broadcast news exposure.

Conclusion

This study reveals that religiosity is negatively related to broadcast news exposure in people eighteen years of age and older, and almost equally among women and men. This indicates that religious individuals are more likely to lose interest in broadcast news than non-religious individuals. The general pattern emerging suggests that religion may

influence decisions about how individuals expose themselves to broadcast news. Nevertheless, even though religiosity is a factor that could influence the choices of audiences, the level of influence that religiosity has upon religious individuals does not explain a significant portion of that behavior. Thus, religiosity explains a small fraction of the behavior of religious individuals concerning television choices. Other factors such as monetary or social status may give another important perspective in understanding the behavior of audiences.

This study applies uses and gratifications theory from the perspective of the active character of the audience with the choice that selective exposure theory asserts. Individuals actively select the information they want to watch. Because few studies about the relationship between religiosity and broadcast news exposure have been found, one could speculate from these results that the influence which religion exercises on individuals is oriented towards rejecting broadcast news exposure. Some religions, particularly Christian faiths, preach the necessity to remove oneself from any source that can hinder the “spirit.” Broadcast news, however, transmits any information, including violence and sexual content, which could be considered news, and therefore may inhibit viewers from keeping their lives in harmony with their religious beliefs and desires.

It is possible that religious individuals have more active behavior than less religious people in selecting what to watch. Moreover, religious individuals would be more conscious than non-religious people about broadcast news exposure as a contradiction of religious instruction about the media from their church leaders. What may need to be investigated is whether religious instruction helps individuals find the balance between broadcast news exposure and the effects that news could have on them.

Nevertheless, it is also possible that as religious attendance increases, people spend less time at home and thus watch less TV news.

The negative relationship between religion and local as well as cable broadcast news exposure could be due to the fact that broadcast news has experienced an increase in violent and sexual content (Walker, 2000). As religious leaders counsel followers to limit the amount of time spend watching television, it appears that less people are tuning in to watch the news. It may no longer be considered an informative and interesting source of information, but as a source of violence and sexual content affecting the behavior of individuals by making them more aggressive and inviting them to construct an ideal far from the reality. Nevertheless, the fact that national news usage does not support the first hypothesis could indicate that national news content is less violent and shows less sexual content than local or cable news, though content analysis would be needed to confirm such a proposition. It may also indicate that individuals tend to perceive national news as more important than local or cable news. Further studies should analyze the positive relationship between religiosity and national news exposure.

The interpretation of the findings that show what affinity women and men have for broadcast news supports the study by Kamhawi and Grabe (2008), in which females were more likely to avoid negative news than men. It might be assumed, therefore, that women are more likely to perceive broadcast news as more violent than men and would avoid broadcast news content. However, the present study did not find this difference.

An interesting analysis demonstrated that Republicans might be classified as less religious than Democrats. This information surprises the general assumption that Republicans are more religious than Democrats. These results may come from a possible

inconsistency in the study about the subjects' political tendency. Even though the results indicate that Democrats are more religious than Republicans, it should become an object of more careful analysis. Based on the results obtained through the data collected, not only are Democrats more religious than Republicans, but also they are less likely to watch broadcast news than Republicans.

In sum, religion exerts an influence on individuals guiding them in their broadcast news exposure, affinity, and constancy. The probability that violent and sexual content is increasing in broadcast news may cause religious individuals to avoid exposure to it. If religiosity largely determines broadcast news exposure, and religion and media apply an opposite philosophy about how to see the world, it would be convenient to deepen the analysis of how individuals balance their media priorities as well as their religious preferences. To include other social, economic, and even personal factors would help gain a better understanding of the actual situation between audiences and television news, especially religious audiences and the kind of choices they make when they expose themselves to television news. Thus, a better perspective of religiosity and media may allow individuals to be knowledgeable about the world and at the same time live according to their beliefs.

SURVEY

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey about religiosity and broadcast news. We appreciate your valuable time and comments. All of your responses will be held confidential. Thank you for your time.

By completing the following survey you are agreeing to participate in a study being conducted by BYU students relating to TV viewing and religion. All individual answers to the survey will remain confidential and all collected data will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. The results of this study will be published as part of the original study. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. There is no known risk to participants taking this study. If you decide at any time that you do not wish to participate in this study you may withdraw with out penalty. If you have any questions regarding this study you may contact Dr. Quint Randle at quint_randle@byu.edu.

1. Sex

- Male
 Female

2. Age _____

3. Do you happen to watch any news TV programs regularly, or not?

- Yes
 Sometimes
 No
 Rarely
 Don't know

4. Did you watch THE NEWS OR A NEWS PROGRAM on television yesterday, or not?

- Yes
 No

5. Over the last week, how many HOURS did you spend watching News and News related shows?

- | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------|
| • National Network (ABC, CBS, ...) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 or + |
| • Local News | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 or + |
| • Cable News (CNN, FOX...) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 or + |

6. Here there are some stories covered by news organizations this past month. Did you happen to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely?

- News about the current situation in Iraq



Very closely



Fairly closely



Not too closely



Not at all closely

- News about candidates for the presidential election



Very closely



Fairly closely



Not too closely



Not at all closely

- The Sept 11 commemoration



Very closely



Fairly closely



Not too closely



Not at all closely

- The high price of gasoline these days.



Very closely



Fairly closely



Not too closely



Not at all closely

7. How accurate do you think the news is?



Highly accurate



Very accurate



Accurate



Close accurate



Not accurate

10. To watch the news is necessary to have a better understanding of the world.

- Strongly agree
- Highly agree
- Agree
- Strongly disagree
- Not agree

11. Which of the following two statements best describes you: "I follow news closely ONLY when something important is happening" OR "I follow news closely most of the time, whether or not something important is happening"?

- When something important is happening
- Whether or not something important is happening.

12. Do you completely agree with it, mostly agree with it, mostly disagree with it, or completely disagree with it.

- I find that I often watch the news with my remote control in hand, flipping to other channels when I'm not interested in the topic.

- Completely agree
- Mostly agree
- Mostly disagree
- Completely disagree

- People who decide what to put on TV news or in the newspapers are out of touch with people like me.

- Completely agree
- Mostly agree
- Mostly disagree
- Completely disagree

- Watching and reading the news often depresses me

- Completely agree
- Mostly agree
- Mostly disagree
- Completely disagree

- I often don't have enough background information to follow news stories

- Completely agree
- Mostly agree
- Mostly disagree
- Completely disagree

- I often don't trust what news organizations are saying

- Completely agree
- Mostly agree
- Mostly disagree
- Completely disagree

- I want the news to contain information that is helpful in my daily life

- Completely agree
- Mostly agree
- Mostly disagree
- Completely disagree

13. For major news stories, what do you usually want in the news? Are you mostly interested in the HEADLINES, do you want the headlines PLUS some further reporting on what happened, or do you want in-depth analysis of the news by experts?

- The headlines
- Headlines plus some reporting on what happened
- In-depth analysis of the news by experts
- Don't know/Refused

14. Which comes closer to describing your view of the news media?

- All the news media are pretty much the same to me
- There are a few news sources I trust more than others
- Don't know

15. There are a lot of different ways the news is presented these days. Do you generally LIKE it or DISLIKE it when a news source or doesn't it matter to you?

- Is sometimes funny



Like



Dislike



Doesn't matter



Don't know/ refused

- Includes ordinary Americans giving their views



Like



Dislike



Doesn't matter



Don't know/ refused

- Has too much violence



Like



Dislike



Doesn't matter



Don't know/ refused

- Stirs your emotions



Like



Dislike



Doesn't matter



Don't know/ refused

- Makes the news enjoyable and entertaining



Like



Dislike



Doesn't matter



Don't know/ refused

- Has reporters and anchors with pleasant personalities



Like



Dislike



Doesn't matter



Don't know/ refused



The next few questions have to do with religiosity.

16. Do you believe in a supreme being?

- Yes
- No

17. How often do you attend weekday religious services?

- More than once at week
- Once at week
- Less than once at week
- Never

18. How often do you pray?

- Twice a day
- More than twice at day
- Once at day
- Sometimes
- Never

19. How often do you attend Sabbath day religious services?

- Every week
- Once at month
- Rarely
- Never

20. Do you wear or display any religious symbols?

- Yes
- No

21. Have you ever had a religious experience?

- Yes
- No

22. How important is faith as a religious term to you?

- Strongly important
- Very important
- Important
- Poorly important
- Not important

23. Do you give money to some religious organization?

- Yes
- No

24. How important is religion in your life?

- Strongly important
- Very important
- Important
- Poorly important
- Not important

25. What is your political preference?

- Democrat
- Republican
- Independent
- Libertarian
- Other

Thank you for completing this survey.

Please contact raquel_marvez@yahoo.es if you have any questions regarding this survey.

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