

TELEVISION NEWS PRACTICES AND POLICIES' FOR REPORTING
CIVIL DISORDERS IN KANSAS AND KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

by 632

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, increased criticism has been directed against television news reporting of civil disorders. There has been a general feeling by the public that television not only covers riots, it contributes to them.

Television coverage is often blamed for the event, according to Reuven Frank, president of NBC news:

If television would go away, race troubles would go away; the Vietnam war would go away; long-haired foul-mouthed young people would go away. If television would go away, the well-meaning Scarsdale householder, for twenty years vocal on the moral side of every public issue, would worry less about his teen-age daughter, about her travelling on the New York subways, about pot. . .

A new love-hate relationship has suddenly burst forth between television and its audience. Not between television and the intellectuals and upper-middle brows, . . . But between television and the basic American audience, the most middle-class majority in the history of man.

They don't watch any less, but after several years of telling polltakers they trust television above other media of news and information, they are now telling the networks that era of trust is over. Network mail has reached surprising volume, and the letters which approve are treasured and hoarded, they are so few.¹

Commission studies on civil disturbances in our nation have revealed that television has not created civil disorders. The basic causes of discord are to be found elsewhere. However, there is some indication that indiscriminate practices of televising conflicts can inflame a tense situation. Several commissions have indicated the need for media guidelines in reporting civil disorders.

Need for media guidelines

On December 2, 1965, the Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots published its report, Violence In The City--An End Or A Beginning? The Commission urged that members of all media meet and consider whether there might be wisdom in the establishment of voluntary guidelines for reporting inflammatory incidents.²

The Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, The Kerner Report, stated in March, 1968, that news organizations, particularly television networks, had taken substantial steps to minimize the effect of their physical presence at a news event. However, the commission reported instances of individual newsmen staging events, coaxing youths to throw rocks and interrupt traffic, and otherwise acting irresponsibly at the incipient stages of a disturbance.

In order to eliminate such conduct, the commission recommended:

. . . the implementation of thoughtful, stringent staff guidelines for reporters and editors. Such guidelines, carefully formulated, widely disseminated, and strictly enforced, underlie the self-policing activities of some news organizations already, but they must be universally adopted if they are to be effective in curbing journalistic irresponsibility.³

The commission stated that the content of the guidelines is probably less important than the fact that the subject has been thoughtfully considered and hammered out within the organization, and an approach developed that is designed to meet the organization's particular needs and solve its particular problems.⁴

In Violence and the Media, a staff report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, released in November, 1969, it was pointed out that many journalists believe the basic requirements for good reporting--intelligence, judgment, lack of bias, responsibility

restraint, and balance--provide adequate standards for meeting any challenge. The Commission agreed that no set of government or industry guidelines can adequately replace these long-standing fundamentals of good journalism. However, others in the news media believe that coverage of disorders requires elaboration of these principles in the form of specific rules. The Commission concurred that these rules are necessary:

During periods of stress, general principles are not self-executing. The guidelines adopted by many news organizations acknowledge that the problems of covering violence in an unstable, often racially troubled social environment make more specific rules of behavior necessary.⁵

The Commission stated that although no set of guidelines will cover all eventualities, the more specific they are, and the more they are discussed within the news organization, the greater the probability that the reporter or correspondent under stress will adhere to them.⁶

Need for study

Cities in Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri, have not escaped the tragedy of loss of property and lives due to civil disorders. In the summer of 1970, a university student was killed in a civil disturbance at Lawrence. Recent black and white student confrontations in Kansas high schools have required police intervention.

There is little available information on the philosophy behind television coverage of these incidents in Kansas or in Kansas City, Missouri. It is not known what policies, if any, govern the actions of broadcast newsmen when they report civil disorders in this locality.

Statement of problem

Because a lack of information exists on Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri, reporting practices, the primary purpose of this study is to

determine television news practices and policies for reporting local or regional civil disorders in the state of Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri.

Specific questions to be answered by the survey are:

1. Do television stations in Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri have a news policy for reporting local and regional civil disorders?
2. What guidelines have been used for reporting past local/regional civil disorders?
3. What guidelines do stations expect to use for reporting present or future local/regional civil disorders?
4. What guidelines are considered most important for reporting local/regional civil disorders?
5. What guidelines are considered impractical for reporting local/regional civil disorders?

Definition of terms

Civil disorder does not seem to be carefully defined in relevant literature. Webster's Unabridged Dictionary does not define civil disorder, but it defines breach of peace as follows: A violation of the public peace, as by a riot, affray, or any tumult which is contrary to law, and destructive to the public.⁷

Civil disorder is not defined in the Kansas statutes. However, the section Crimes Against The Public Peace in the 1969 Session Laws of Kansas lists the following relevant definitions:

Section 21-4101: Disorderly conduct. Disorderly conduct is, with knowledge or probable cause to believe that such acts will alarm, anger or disturb others or provoke an assault or other breach of the peace:

- (a) Engaging in brawling or fighting; or
- (b) Disturbing an assembly, meeting or procession, not unlawful in its character; or
- (c) Using offensive, obscene, or abusive language or engaging in noisy conduct tending reasonably to arouse alarm, anger or resentment in others.

Section 21-4102: Unlawful assembly. Unlawful assembly is meeting or coming together with four (4) or more other persons for the purpose of engaging in conduct constituting either disorderly conduct, as defined by Section 21-4101, or a riot, as defined by Section 21-4104, or when lawfully assembled with

two (2) or more other persons, agreeing to engage in such conduct.
Section 21-4103: Remaining at an unlawful assembly. Remaining at an unlawful assembly is willfully failing to depart from the place of an unlawful assembly after being directed to leave by a law enforcement officer.

Section 21-4104: Riot. Riot is any use of force or violence which produces a breach of the public peace, or any threat to use such force or violence if accompanied by power or apparent power of immediate execution, by five (5) or more persons acting together and without authority of law.

Section 21-4105: Incitement to riot. Incitement to riot is by words or conduct urging others commit acts of force or violence against persons or property or to resist the unlawful authority of law enforcement officers under circumstances which produce a clear and present danger of injury to persons or property or a breach of the public peace.⁸

For the purpose of this study, civil disorder is defined as a collective violation of the public peace by two or more persons who create commotion contrary to law, and in which law enforcement officials are involved in restoring order.

FOOTNOTES

¹Reuven Frank, "The Ugly Mirror," Television Quarterly, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Winter 1969), pp. 82-83.

²Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots, Violence In The City--An End Or A Beginning?, (Los Angeles: State of California, December 2, 1965), pp. 84-85.

³National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, The Kerner Report, (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., March 1968) p. 377.

⁴Ibid., p. 308.

⁵David Lange, Robert Baker, and Sandra Ball, Violence and the Media, A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, November 1968) p. 116.

⁶Ibid., p. 118.

⁷Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged Second Edition (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company, 1957)

⁸1969 Session Laws of Kansas, pp. 481-482.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

After 20 years experience in broadcast news, Reuven Frank, president of NBC News, describes news as a happening:

News records change. News, to be news, must happen; it may not merely exist. From time to time a continuing situation becomes news because it had escaped attention until that time. In this case, the news is the discovery. What happened is that somebody found out.

News is change as seen by an outsider. He may like it or dislike it, but he may not consider himself a part of it. He tries to see, and talk about what he has seen, without reference to whether he likes it or dislikes it.

That is the key to professional journalism, to journalism as a profession. In this the reporter is never entirely successful. He is a person and not a thing. All news involves only human beings and their fallibilities, the participants, the reporters, the audience.

News is change as seen by an outsider in behalf of other outsiders. These are the people the reporter reports for, the viewers, the hearers, the readers. When they are participants they often tend to dislike the report, usually complaining it is incomplete. They do not mean it did not tell them everything they wanted to know, because they already know everything they want to about what happened. They took part in it. They mean it did not tell other people, the outsiders, what the insiders wanted known. But an insider in one situation will be an outsider in all others, and in those outside situations, the news he gets is about as much as he wants or is interested in.

News is change which is interesting. If it is uninteresting it cannot be news. It cannot be news to anyone who is uninterested because he will not watch or listen or read. Importance does not make news, although if enough of the audience thinks something is important, that makes it interesting, and therefore news. No newsman ever achieved success by grabbing people by the throat, saying: "Pay attention, dummy. This is important."¹

Many Americans depend upon television as a news source. Figures from Roper Research Associates reveal that in 1968, 59 per cent of the public rely on TV as one of their major sources of news. Newspapers

were listed by 49 per cent; 25 per cent listed radio; 7 per cent, magazines; 5 per cent, people; 3 per cent, don't know or no answer.²

All of the mass media face problems of reporting for a mass audience.

The massiveness of the audience is a particular problem for news media, for as the size and diversity of a given medium's audience increase, so do the difficulties of communicating effectively to all segments of the audience. This, then, makes it increasingly difficult to maintain a high level of satisfaction and trust among the members of a society that places a high value upon individual rights and identity. The media today can transmit more information to more people more quickly than ever before. In doing this they can help to reduce anxiety within the public. However, there is also the less happy possibility that they can be used, inadvertently or intentionally, to increase anxiety. As institutions, the media consist of professional staffs made up of fallible human beings who are a potent technology under an implicit mandate of the society. Just how potent that technology is has still not been determined, but as the technology is developed and improved its ability to effect good and evil becomes stronger, more immediate, and far-reaching. But in the final analysis, technology is only the tool; it is the members of society who must determine the manner of its use.³

Harold D. Lasswell has suggested the mass media have three functions:

- (1) Surveillance of the environment, disclosing threats and opportunities affecting the value position of the community and the component parts within it;
- (2) Correlation of the components of society in making a response to the environment;
- (3) Transmission of the social inheritance.⁴

In Violence and the Media these functions are applied to the news media:

Surveillance of the environment describes the collection and distribution of information about events both inside and outside a particular society. Roughly, it corresponds to what is popularly called "news". Correlation of the components of society to respond to the environment includes news analysis, news interpretation and editorials, and prescriptions for collective response to changing events in the environment. Transmission of culture includes messages designed to communicate the attitudes, norms, and values of the past and the information which is an integral part of these traditions. This third category is the educational function of the media.⁵

In carrying out these functions, it is stated that journalists do not have principal roles in making the news and only have limited power

to determine what will be read, watched, or believed. But it is emphasized they do have the power to determine the relative availability, and non-availability, of millions of daily transactions, their mode of presentation, and the context in which they will be cast.⁶

In Violence and the Media, it is stated that television has not yet defined its role in the news communication system.

A desire to be first with the news, linked with the logistical problems of providing pictures and action, plus an inherited show-business ethic, have imposed serious limitations on the medium. The heavy reliance of a majority of Americans for their news on a medium that is unwilling or unequipped to provide no more information than the front page of a newspaper has resulted in additional stress. The limited number of channels, television's relatively greater impact, and a preoccupation with pictures substantially increase the burdens of the medium. Finally, the requirement that television serve a truly mass audience and that it be licensed and subject to regulation by a Congressional agency has made it both more timid and more responsible than other media.⁷

Much attention has been focused upon television's news reporting, particularly in the area of protest and civil disorder.

The increased frequency of boycotts, sit-ins, picketing, parades, and large-group protest meetings has generated public and governmental concern over the news media's--and particularly television's--coverage of these events. In the late 1950's and early sixties, many southerners believed that if the media would not cover these events, they would not happen. Today many in the North share that view. Some Americans thought such events were one continuous dramatic production staged for and sometimes by the television networks. Criticism has ranged from claims that the media distort the events they report, to bald assertions that they incite riots simply by their presence.⁸

The criticism that "media coverage of conflict causes conflict" proceeds from an inaccurate assumption: that media coverage is both a necessary and sufficient condition for conflict. It is neither. The causes lie elsewhere, in social conditions and tensions.⁹

Media performance is subject to criticism on at least two grounds. As suggested earlier, to the extent the media have not focused on the conditions underlying much of today's protest, they have reduced the likelihood that these problems would be met before growing to such serious proportions. Even here, however, the failure of the media performance cannot be regarded as the only cause. Some

of these conditions were covered but were largely ignored. The second criticism is that the news media slight the causes of protest at the expense of reporting the manifestations of discontent, physical confrontation.

If there were systematic balanced surveillance of the community, the need for demonstrations as vehicles for communication would not be so great. If the news media did not place such a high value on conflict and action, the character of protest might be quite different. If the public and its government had attended to the problems which beset them today, our society would not be in such a state of upheaval.¹⁰

It is pointed out in Violence and the Media that prior to the disorder in Watts in 1965, the American news media had little recent experience in covering the civil disorders which have plagued the nation since.

Media personnel made errors of judgment, as did others involved in these civil disorders. The judiciary, for example, was not equipped to handle the large number of arrests and arraignments required in Watts in 1965, Detroit in 1967, or Washington, D. C., and Chicago in 1968. Detention facilities were inadequate. The police were trained to act as individuals or groups of two and three. This training was clearly inadequate to deal with the massive disturbance which required a well disciplined force acting in unison in groups of 20 or more. . . . Although the slow response of other organizations directly charged with maintaining the peace in our cities does not justify the errors of the media performance, it does suggest that the media have a good deal of company. Moreover, it contains another important lesson: because an organization makes mistakes in the course of a civil disorder--whether it be the police or the news media--it does not necessarily follow that their role should be abolished. The mistakes should not be repeated and the salutary activities should be continued.¹¹

Rights In Conflict is a case study of the difficulties in assuring both a people's right to dissent and a community's right to protect its citizens and property. The disorders convulsing Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention involved the media in more than regular reporting. Many members of the press were attacked by law enforcement officials. Several of the incidents were described as follows:

At about 10:30 p.m., CBS-TV cameraman Delos Hall was filming the demonstration on Division Street near Wells and LaSalle, shooting without artificial lights, behind three policemen. Ten or 12 other policemen ran up to Hall from behind as he continued taking pictures of the demonstrators. One officer hit Hall on the head with his club, opening a scalp wound. (It later required seven stitches at Passavant Hospital). Hall fell to one knee, but then got up to continue filming the police as they charged the demonstrators. He was jostled and threatened by policemen, but was not hit again. Hall was wearing no visible press identification but his movie camera was labeled "CBS NEWS" on both sides.¹²

Winston S. Churchill II, reporting for the London Evening News, and James Auchincloss of NBC were standing together in front of the Hilton Hotel, apparently after the first police sweep, when, they report, they saw a plainclothes man catch a girl demonstrator and beat her with a blackjack. Both of them went to help the girl and asked the man to identify himself. They say that Auchincloss was hit twice by the plainclothes man as a result, and Churchill was knocked to ground. As Churchill rose, a policeman on a three-wheel motor cycle charged them, pinning both of them against the hotel for a moment.¹³

Complaints made against the press by Chicago police involved in controlling demonstrators are as follows:

1. That they persisted in using lights which blinded them--making them better targets for missiles thrown by demonstrators;
2. That they refused to obey police orders and requests;
3. That they interfered with police performing their duties;
4. That they staged incidents two ways--by faking stories and by attracting demonstrators by their presence;
5. That their mode of dress made them difficult to distinguish from the demonstrators.¹⁴

On July 27, 1967, President Lyndon Johnson established the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. Known as the Kerner Report, the results of the Commission's investigations were released in March, 1968. President Johnson asked the Commission to answer specifically: "What effect do the mass media have on the riots?"

The Commission reached three conclusions:

First, that despite instances of sensationalism, inaccuracies, and distortions, newspapers, radio and television, on the whole, made a real effort to give a balanced, factual account of the 1967 disorders.

Second, despite this effort, the portrayal of the violence that occurred last summer failed to reflect accurately its scale and character. The overall effect was, we believe, an exaggeration of both mood and event.

Third, and ultimately most important, we believe that the media have thus far failed to report adequately on the causes and consequences of civil disorders and the underlying problems of race relations.¹⁵

The Commission reported that most errors involved mistakes of fact, exaggeration of events, overplaying of particular stories, or prominently displayed speculation about unfounded rumors of potential trouble.

This is not only a local problem; because of the wire services and networks, it is a national one. An experienced riot reporter told the Commission that initial wire service reports of a disturbance tend to be inflated. The reason, he said, is that they are written by local bureau men who in most cases have not seen a civil disorder before. When out-of-town reporters with knowledge in the field, or the wire services' own riot specialists arrive on the scene, the situation is put into a more accurate context.¹⁶

Television was charged with a contrasting criticism.

Television sometimes may have leaned over too far backward in seeking balance and restraint. By stressing interviews, many with whites in predominantly Negro neighborhoods, and by emphasizing control scenes rather than riotous action, television news broadcasts may have given a distorted picture of what the disorders were all about.

The media--especially television--also have failed to present and analyze to a sufficient extent the basic reasons for the disorders. . . . As the content analysis findings suggest, however, coverage during the riot period itself gives far more emphasis to control of rioters and black-white confrontation than to the underlying causes of the disturbances.¹⁷

Violence and the Media, a staff report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, stresses that television has acute problems in providing balanced coverage.

First, television communicates in two modes, audio and visual. Certain kinds of visual portrayals can have an impact out of proportion to the accompanying verbal statements. Where pictures become available of some elements, and are especially dramatic, extra effort is needed to balance them with commentary. Under some circumstances, it may be impossible to present certain picture sequences and retain balance; then, perhaps, the sequence ought to be eliminated or softened. Second, certain segments of the audience are less receptive to verbal than visual messages.

The second characteristic that makes balanced television reporting difficult applies to almost any kind of story. With only 30 minutes to cover all the news, network television can provide little more than a headline service.

The third reason television coverage tends to be less well-balanced than other media is that the entertainment ethic is somewhat stronger in television and, accordingly, action scenes tend to dominate.¹⁸

The staff report elaborates in a later chapter on violence in the news as it is covered by television:

Violence in entertainment feeds into the news department. Television executives know what sells in entertainment programming, and the desire exists to get it into the news, to "spice up" the news.

The same corporate criteria exist for news programs--size of audience, cost of production, return on investment. All this may occur without conscious awareness on the part of news personnel and certainly without explicit approval.

Television is primarily an entertainment medium, even when operating in an information-giving capacity. The response set brought to television news is an entertainment set. News people are celebrities in much the same way as program heroes. They are expected to deal with similar content, and they do. The emotional tone of news is the tone of the drama, of the conflict.

News values for television demand immediacy, being first, and presenting visual action. Thus, the obvious event becomes the criterion; e.g., the fire or accident in contrast to the monetary crisis. Swift, decisive acts make the best visual news presentations, exactly as they make the most enticing drama.¹⁹

The importance of visualness is discussed by Andrew Miller Jones in The Impact of Vision:

How visual should television be? Is there too much sound radio on television? Is there too much talking heard? . . . Almost everyone working in television today pays lip service at least to the power of the image, but how many of us really appreciate the relative importance of what is said and what is seen? There would seem to be a case here for independent scientific research, as there might be for aptitude tests to assess the powers of visualization in would-be producers. American psychologists assert that we remember 20 per cent of what we hear and 30 per cent of what we see, and combined with sound and vision instruction we remember 50 per cent of what we see and hear.²⁰

John Whale in The Half-Shut Eye discusses aspects of television news reporting with the practical approach of a seasoned broadcast newsman:

Television is pictures. It feeds on them. It must always have them. There can be silence on the screen: no words, no music, no sound effects: but there must be pictures. This is the first datum that all television journalists have to come to terms with.²¹

Television does not simply need pictures. It needs interesting pictures. But people are not disposed to be interested by what they see every day. So there is a premium on the unusual, the abnormal.²²

Yet perhaps television is under stronger pressures than newspapers to show the abnormal at the expense of the normal. The trouble with normal is that it is dull: it has been seen before. Most newspapers can afford dull patches, because no one expects to read a newspaper right through. News broadcasts cannot, on television or radio: if they once lose a listener's willing

attention he may switch his set off altogether--or worse, switch it to another station.²³

Whale describes his personal experience in attempting to cover the Detroit riots:

Television's special problems in avoiding the appearance of sensationalism were illustrated in the report published in March 1968 by the presidential commission which had been appointed under Governor Otto Kerner of Illinois to enquire into the city riots of the previous summer. Although newspapers, radio and television made a real effort, the commissioners said, to give a balanced and factual account of the disorders, "the overall effect was, we believe, an exaggeration of both mood and event." Their chief complaint was that the riots were reported not enough as a rejection of life in the ghetto and too much as a war between black and white; and they seemed to attach the chief blame to television when they said that television newscasts "tended to emphasize law enforcement activities, thereby overshadowing underlying grievances and tensions."

Their evidence for this was that although the 955 television sequences their staff examined were predominantly calm in tone, there were a lot of policemen, national guardsmen and soldiers in the pictures. It took a special conference with journalists at Poughkeepsie in November 1967 to point out to the commissioners that television cameramen dwelt on those scenes because that was the best they could get. It was unlikely that a camera crew would be on the scene when trouble first erupted: the most they could do was to arrive in time to see the forces of order trying to manage the situation.

During the four days of the Detroit riots in July 1967, several television units spent some of the hours of daylight photographing the places where Negroes lived. It was the nearest we could come to the despair of the ghetto. But the detail of buildings does not come out well on television, and the pictures were too static to be held for long. During part of each night we drove around the town. Because of the curfew, there was no one to be seen except the press and the forces of order. Although the streets were not lit, we took such pictures as we could to show their emptiness, and to show that this was not a whole city in flames. But it seemed unlikely that these pictures could be interesting to look at for more than thirty seconds. We fell back perforce on the activities of the federal parachute troops, the Michigan national guard, and the state and city police. They were at any rate moving about.²⁴

The importance of light for the use of television cameras is considered a difficult problem by the broadcast newsman.

The difficulty about light will have vanished when cameras can record as much as the human eye can see. Until then it will remain a

nuisance. It comes up when news develops in darkness out of doors: a military manoeuvre, an accident, a demonstration. The battery-powered hand lights which cameramen call sun guns can illuminate a foreground; but instead of a middle distance there is blackness. The extent of the scene, the size of the crowd, is hidden. This is why there was a slightly disproportionate emphasis on fires in the television coverage of such disturbances as the one at Cleveland in July, 1968. Besides being a powerful symbol of pillage and ruin, a fire is its own source of light.²⁵

Whale discusses the relationship between television and public disorder:

It is nevertheless clearly true that there are links between television and public disorder. Most people who take part in demonstrations of dissent are understandably aware of television. They also have some notion of what it cannot do. A few of them realise that there are one or two missiles and combat methods which television cannot show as clearly as the more obtrusive weaponry brought up by the forces of order. Many of them know that television cannot work without light.²⁶

Television's reporting of political activity has itself produced new political methods: new ways, and yet not necessarily better ways, whereby citizens can study their society and seek to change it.²⁷

Another television practitioner, William B. Monroe, Jr., Director of NBC News, discusses the riots of 1968:

I had the curious impression that many of us in Washington, who had not previously had what you might call our own riot, got the feeling as our time came that, after all, we had been there before. We had experienced it vicariously in Watts, Newark, and Detroit. So it seemed somehow, while still a time of nerves and anxiety, perhaps a little less frightening than it could have been because. . . riots happen, don't they? They go on about three days. Afterward, there is a clean-up effort and some organizing is done to try to get at problems that were only tinkered with before. The riot is becoming an accepted part of the American scene. It has a recognizable shape to it. Rules are emerging for the guidance of the policeman, the soldiers, and the looters. Not that the riots are not still cruel and laden with fear and worry for both Negroes and whites. But, on all sides, we are beginning to learn how to play these games of violence. The riots of past years have become the rituals of 1968. And the suspicion emerges that we are going to have more of them, and that we are going to survive them, and that our new skills--of rioting and coping with riots--are not in themselves going to take care of all the problems.²⁸

A study by John Slater and Maxwell McCombs indicates that age, not source of news, is the key correlate of riot participation.

Public opinion has been quick to blame the broadcast media, and particularly television, for contributing to riots and large-scale disturbances. . .

Further information bearing on this subject is available in a survey conducted by the Detroit Free Press in the weeks following the Detroit riots in July, 1967. The Free Press survey used a random sample of residents of areas where rioting had occurred. All the respondents were Negroes, as were all the interviewers. Sample size for that portion of the survey which was used for this secondary analysis was 360. When asked "How did you first hear about the riot?" 50% of the respondents said they heard about it from friends or family members. Another 30% got the news from radio or TV, while 19% learned of the riot by seeing or hearing it for themselves.

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Age, then, and not learning method, appears to be the key to participation in riots. It is young people who join in riots, irrespective of how they learn of them. Self-imposed censorship thus may be ineffective in preventing the spread of a riot, since would-be participants have access to other (uncensorable) media for information. A caveat may be in order here. The Detroit data are descriptive only of the relationship between first learning of the riot and riot participation. The possible influence of continued television coverage on riot participation remains to be studied. Furthermore, no inferences can be drawn from these data about the impact that a TV camera may have on a rioter who is already on the scene. Further research is needed in these areas.²⁹

The influence of television on Negro aspirations and on civil unrest was studied in Indianapolis. The following specific questions were researched: "What relationships do viewers perceive between television and civil unrest? How interested are viewers in reports on it? Do viewers perceive news of such disorders as "fair"? To what extent, if any, is television seen as an instigator of racial disorder? What steps do viewers think television can take to maintain order during periods of civil unrest?"³⁰

Following are the data compiled in response to the preceding questions:

Among white viewers who reported being "very" or "somewhat"

concerned over civil unrest and rioting, only 15% said they were "very interested" in television "reports on rioting and racial disorder." Negroes showed a greater interest in such reports. Not unexpectedly, militant Negroes (47%) were more likely to express high interest in news and reports on rioting and racial disorders than those of middle (27%) or low (9%) militancy. Regardless of race of interviewer or respondent, two out of three questioned judged television news as "fair. . . in reporting both sides" of racial disorders. Among the most militant of the Negroes, however, 40% considered news reports as unfair, while only 15% of the least militant thought so. Of the concerned whites, 32% believed such news reports were unfair.

Among Negroes and whites who felt televised coverage of racial disorders was unfair, half maintained that television stations were masking the "truth" in their coverage of rioting; half requested more balanced news coverage. Some viewers maintained that coverage of situations was unfair because it focused primarily on the sensational--failing to balance sensational rioting with the mundane. Several specified that de-emphasis could be undertaken by placing the riot situation in the context of those (assumedly less inflammatory) events which preceded it as well as those which followed. The majority of Negro respondents who commented said they did not feel that one station did a better job than others in such reporting.

Among viewers who reported they were concerned with "civil unrest" and interested in "seeing television news reports" of it, the majority--whether white or Negro--thought that blaming television for riots was primarily "talk." Only one in three whites (36%) thought that television news reports helped to cause riots. When speaking to Negro interviewers, no Negroes voiced this opinion. Even when talking to whites, only three out of ten (29%) thought so. Although up to 23% of nonmilitants voiced the opinion that television contributed to rioting, no nonmilitant thought so. Overall, among the viewers who reported "concerned with civil unrest," clear, albeit limited agreement was given to the belief that television plays an aggravating influence.

Those who believed that television might contribute to riots saw the effect as one of providing an example to potential rioters among viewers and as stimulating greater exhibitionist behavior among those being televised. Only a handful of Negroes interested in civil unrest and television coverage of it agreed that "television helps cause riots." To mitigate the influence of television, this group suggested that television cover the bulk of the nonparticipants in and around the riot situation and the medium report steps being taken by authorities to contain potentially riotous situations. This group also believed that interviews with Negro community leaders would also mitigate the stimulating effect of televised riot coverage.³¹

Guidelines, codes, and recommendations for news reporting of civil disturbances have been suggested by commissions, networks, and the mass media. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders listed several

recommendations to improve riot coverage:

What is needed first is a series of discussions, perhaps a combination of informal gatherings and seminar-type workshops. They should encompass all ranks of the police, all levels of media employees, and a cross-section of city officials. At first these would be get-acquainted sessions--to air complaints and discuss common problems. Working reporters should get to know the police who would be likely to draw duty in a disorder. Police and city officials should use the sessions for frank and candid briefings on the problems the city might face and official plans for dealing with disturbances.³²

At the request of the Kerner Commission, the Community Relations Service of the Department of Justice surveyed and analyzed eleven major cities and their experiences with formal codes. The major findings and conclusions were:

All codes and guidelines now in operation are basically voluntary arrangements usually put forward by local authorities and accepted by the news media after consultation. Nowhere has an arrangement or agreement been effected that binds the news media without their assent.

No one interviewed in this survey considered the code or guidelines in effect in his city as useless or harmful. Community Relations Service thought that, where they were in effect, the codes had a constructive impact on the local news media. Observers in some cities, however, thought the increased sense of responsibility manifested by press and television was due more to experience with riot coverage than to the existence of the codes.

The more controversial and often least understood aspect of guidelines has been provision for a brief voluntary moratorium on the reporting of news. Some kind of moratorium is specified in the codes of six cities surveyed (Chicago, Omaha, Buffalo, Indianapolis, Kansas City, and Toledo), and the moratorium was invoked in Chicago and Indianapolis. In each case, an effort to prevent quite minor racial incidents from escalating into more serious trouble was successful, and many thought the moratorium contributed.

The confusion about a moratorium, and the resulting aversion to it, is unfortunate. The specific period of delay is seldom more than 30 minutes. In practice, under today's conditions of reporting and broadcasting, this often will mean little if any delay before the full story gets into the paper or on the air. The time can be used to prepare and edit the story and to verify and assess the reports of trouble. The only loss is the banner headline or the broadcast news bulletin that is released prematurely to avoid being beaten by "the competition." It is just such reflexive responses that can lead to sensationalism and inaccuracy. In cities where a moratorium is part of the code, Community Relations Service interviewers detected no discontent over its presence.

The most frequent complaint about shortcomings in existing codes

is that many of them do not reach the underpinnings of crisis situations. Ghetto spokesmen, in particular, said that the emphasis in the codes on conduct during the crisis itself tended to lead the media to neglect reporting the underlying causes of racial tension.³³

Recommendations pertinent to the reporting of civil disorders in the staff report of Violence and the Media are as follows:

Beyond re-examining existing standards for reporting violence, newsmen should reconsider the contemporary utility of well-established news-gathering practices. Perhaps most important is that interpretive news stories--which can be written with time for calm reflection and balanced judgment--be allocated more resources and be given greater prominence. For newspapers, this means running such stories regularly on page 1. For network television, this requires expansion of the existing time slot for the evening news to one hour and changing to a mixed news/news magazine format. A similar change in format is desirable for local news. If necessary, this should be done at the expense of documentaries.

We recommend that every news medium establish a code or other form of guideline to be followed in the coverage of riots or other events involving group violence. Although we do not propose to recommend specific guidelines, we suggest that at least some effort be made to establish advance contacts with the police and with various dissident groups in the community before violence erupts. We also recommend the establishment of rumor-clearance centers and close liaison between these centers and the press. In the case of reporting incidents likely to spark group violence, we recommend a minimum delay of 30 minutes in broadcasting the news, perhaps longer delays in giving the precise location of potentially explosive crowds, and very careful and restrained reporting until the police have the situation under control. We recommend that news organizations resist those critics who would have them deny coverage to protest. The news media can reduce substantially whatever incentive they provide for violence by providing balanced treatment of at least four aspects of demonstrations:

- (1) The purpose of the demonstration. What is the nature of the grievance? Why are the demonstrators there?
- (2) The events leading up the demonstration. Have other remedies been sought; if so, what has been the response of those addressed?
- (3) The demonstration. How many people were present? How did they conduct themselves? Do not focus only on the most extreme conduct or dress.
- (4) The provocations, if any, and the official response. Why were the demonstrators trying to provoke the police? Did the police use more force than necessary to maintain order? Were there any extenuating circumstances, such as physical exhaustion or personal security of political candidates?

The standard for determining whether an event will be covered should place more emphasis on the nature of the grievance, the number of people affected, the severity of the grievance and less emphasis on the willingness of the aggrieved to engage in violence or the likelihood that they will.³⁴

The Federal Communications Commission does not have specific guidelines for the reporting of civil disorders. It does have statutory power to force broadcasters to study the needs of their communities and to produce programming to meet these needs. Section 309(a) of the Communications Act requires that a determination be made whether a licensee has operated in the public interest. This section gives the FCC the power to force a balanced treatment of issues and a fair treatment of individuals.³⁵

The National Association of Broadcasters has also not dealt specifically with civil disorder news reporting guidelines. It's voluntary Television Code does contain the following guidelines for treatment of news and public events:

V. Treatment of News and Public Events.

1. A television station's news schedule should be adequate and well-balanced.
2. News reporting should be factual, fair and without bias.
3. A television broadcaster should exercise particular discrimination in the acceptance, placement and presentation of advertising in news programs so that such advertising should be clearly distinguishable from the news content.
4. At all times, pictorial and verbal material for both news and comment should conform to other sections of these standards, wherever such sections are reasonably applicable.
5. Good taste should prevail in the selection and handling of news; morbid sensational or alarming details not essential to the factual report, especially in connection with stories of crime or sex, should be avoided. News should be telecast in such a manner as to avoid panic and unnecessary alarm.
6. Commentary and analysis should be clearly identified as such.
7. Pictorial material should be chosen with care and not presented in a misleading manner.
8. All news interview programs should be governed by accepted standards of ethical journalism, under which the interviewer selects the questions to be asked. Where there is advance agreement materially restricting an important or newsworthy area of questioning, the interviewer will state on the program that such limitation has been agreed upon. Such disclosure should be made if the person being interviewed requires that questions be submitted in advance or if he participated in editing a recording of the interview prior to its use on the air.
9. A television broadcaster should exercise due care in his supervision of content, format, and presentation of newscasts originated by his station, and in his selection of newscasters, commentators, and analysts.

Public Events

1. A television broadcaster has an affirmative responsibility at all times to be informed of public events, and to provide coverage consonant with the ends of an informed and enlightened citizenry.
2. The treatment of such events by a television broadcaster should provide adequate and informed coverage.³⁶

All three of the major commercial networks--ABC, CBS, and NBC--subscribe to the NAB Code and have general broadcast news policies and standards to guide their news operation and personnel. "All three networks have adopted, and now have in effect, policy guides specifically for coverage of riots. The genesis of these policy guidelines at CBS and NBC go back to 1963 in both cases, and they have been augmented periodically in the intervening years. ABC's guidelines were formalized at least as early as July, 1967."³⁷

The following is a checklist that highlights the points of overlap and differences in the written policy guidelines of ABC, CBS, and NBC in reporting disorders:

	CBS	ABC	NBC
Use unmarked or camouflaged cars and equipment	X		X
Avoid using lights	X		
Obey all police instructions	X		
Caution in characterizing and estimating size, intensity, and mood of crowd or disturbance	X	X	X
Confirm all rumor and eye-witness, wire service, reports, strict attribution	X		X
Balance all statements by rioters, responsible officials	X	X	
Avoid catchwords and stereotyped phrases (such as police brutality, angry mob), play news straight, without emotion	X	X	X
Cap cameras if contributing to situation	X		
Avoid giving exact location, specifics about weaponry, etc.	X		X
Report underlying issues and causes	X	X	X
Do not reenact, simulate, stage, or aid demonstration		X	X
No live TV coverage	X	X	
Advise affiliates when network coverage may conflict with local voluntary restrictive agreements			X
Do not describe disturbance as "riot" or "racial" until officially designated		X	X
Specific editing cautions			X
Swift dispatch of reporters to scene of disturbance			X
Avoid interviews with participants, self-appointed leaders ³⁸			X

In Responsibility In Mass Communication by William Rivers and Wilbur

Schramm, a list of guidelines for reporting civil disorder was recorded.

1. Avoid emphasizing stories on public tensions while the tensions of a particular incident are developing. Ask the law enforcement agency involved whether the developing incident is designated as a disturbance of the peace or otherwise. Report the official designation of the incident.
2. Public reports should not state the exact location, intersection, street name or number until authorities have sufficient personnel on hand to maintain control.
3. Immediate or direct reporting should minimize interpretation, eliminate airing of rumors, and avoid using unverified statements.
4. Avoid reporting trivial incidents.
5. Because inexperienced use of cameras, bright lights, or microphones may stir exhibitionism, great care should be exercised by crews at scenes of public disorders. Because, too, of the danger of injury or even death to news personnel, their presence should be as unobtrusive as possible. Unmarked vehicles should be used for initial evaluation of events of this nature.
6. Cruising in an area of potential crisis may invite trouble. Reporters should make full use of the law enforcement headquarters nearest such an area until a newsworthy event occurs.
7. Reporters who are at the scene of an explosive or potentially explosive situation should avoid reporting of interviews with obvious "inciters."
8. Reporters should inform in advance any person who is interviewed that the interview may be made public.
9. Scare headlines, scare bulletins, and sensationalism of other kinds should be avoided in magazines, newspapers, radio, and television.
10. All news media should make every effort to assure that only seasoned reporters are sent to the scene of a disaster.
11. No report should make use of superlatives or adjectives which might incite or enlarge a conflict, or cause renewal of trouble in areas where disturbances have quieted.
12. Advisory data for discretionary use by newsmen should be written in calm, matter-of-fact sentences. This is to avoid inflammatory results from unintended public report of discretionary information.
13. Reporters should not detail how any weapon is obtained, made, or used.
14. Reporters should not identify precise locations of command posts of public officials, police, fire units, or military units.
15. Every reporter and technician should be governed by the rules of good taste and commonsense. The potential for inciting public disorders demands that competition be secondary to the cause of public safety.³⁹

Edwin O. Guthman, National News Editor of the Los Angeles Times,

states that basic to the planning of the newspapers guidelines is the

"belief that we face violence on a much greater scale now than in the past

and that it may be of somewhat different character. . .we believe that our major problem no longer is trying to explain why a riot started, but in keeping our reporting in perspective, particularly in an election year."⁴⁰

Guthman stated that the following guidelines had been developed for covering violence:

- A. Key points of coverage if there is a serious effort to curtail our movement or block sources:
 - 1. Hospitals. Wounded must be counted and should be interviewed. So should doctors and nurses.
 - 2. Jails and courts where the arrested are officially accused. The confusion of these places under even the hairiest general will allow a reporter to operate and get stories.
 - 3. Police and arm headquarters and city halls. One can do a reasonable job of covering strategy from these places. And, if access to areas is denied us, we have all been GI's and we all know GI's can tell graphic tales if they are interviewed properly. We can use troops to check out the officers.
 - 4. If there is major incident within a riot and we cannot be there at the time it happens, we should give top priority to getting in as soon as possible afterward to find out what happened.
- B. Key aspects of riots we should watch consistently:
 - 1. The magnitude and type of riot.
 - a) A careful analysis of sniper action. Do not accept police narrative.
 - b) A continuing analysis of white reaction--the mood of the people. Especially emphasize any tendency of whites to invade a rioting ghetto.
 - c) A personal evaluation, by the team on the spot, of the age and status of the rioters--how dressed, what kinds of cars do they drive during the riot, how do they speak, etc.
 - d) An effort to determine degree of organization at the beginning, during and immediately after the riot. This should range from judgments about common interests of looters to cohesion of economic groups and neighborhoods.
 - e) An effort to evaluate the rioters' attitudes toward the police, firemen, and soldiers. We will have to try to work out some standards of judgment here.
 - f) Attempt to estimate, personally, the number of persons involved in a riot--and this must always be compared with the number of Negroes in the metropolitan area and with the total population in the area.
 - 2. The actions of government.
 - a) Actions of city and state officials. Must try to analyze for our readers the political aspects of violence. Violence

as such is not related to the political development of the city until someone relates it. We ought to watch this very carefully. We must make clear in each riot which of the politicians or commanders involved controls the official movement and what the influences are.

- b) Police. Attitudes. Weapons. Deployment.
 - c) Soldiers. Training, deployment, attitude, discipline. Must try to gauge the effects on the people of what they do.
 - d) Courts and jails must be analyzed at each riot. These may be the keys to judging the total reaction of the country to violence on a large scale. Bonds, methods of accusing and booking, words of judges, conditions of jails, escalation of charges, availability of lawyers--all this is the very root of the organization of society.
 - e) In all these cases, there must be a continuing effort to gauge and analyze government anticipation of violence and signs of repression before the fact.
3. Actions of people.
- a) Churches, private organizations, refugee groups, ad hoc committees, neighborhood defense organizations, etc., schools.
 - b) Companies and businesses.
 - c) Unorganized people. Note work schedules, movement, entertainment, etc.

We should avoid the rhetoric or racial politics wherever possible, since the language of riot coverage has descended into chaos rather more rapidly than one might have expected. The rhetoric of groups is especially dangerous.

Any figures used in a story--damage, casualties, wounded--should be cited only by source and should be compared daily with all previous citations from the same source or with other figures from other sources. We must operate on the assumption that the governments involved in these things may not be wholly candid with us for one reason or another. On the other hand, any eye-witness account of a murder, burning, act of heroism, flight, fright, or freak should be given priority by reporters and editors over any other type of story. Understanding the individual in chaos is imperative.

The political statements of political leaders in a riot should be so characterized in all stories and there should be an effort to define, or judge, the possible reasons behind them.

Since violence can come from the government as well as the rioters, it will be very important to give closest attention to new tactics and strategies--the use of roadblocks and traps, the types and uses of weapons, the appearance of new weapons such as new types of gas, barricades, wire, foam, tanks, helicopters, guns; what kind of places and people are being protected, the allocation of troop strength. Of course, we should, conversely, pay very close attention to what rioters attack, especially if they start after rail roads, utilities, highways, or airports.⁴¹

Following are guidelines for reporting civil disorders established by the National Radio and Television News Directors Association:

The following suggestions are to be considered as guidelines for voluntary use by broadcast newsmen during possible or actual widespread civil disorder. They are the product of a committee of the Northern California Chapter of the Radio and Television News Directors Association formed to consider carefully the sensitive and influential role of the electronic news operation in its coverage of such disorders and recommend ways and means in which broadcasters may better serve the public interest, safety and welfare.

Voluntary acknowledgment of these suggestions is based on the following factors:

1. A majority of broadcast news directors in this region must indicate they feel such a set of guidelines is necessary in this one area of coverage because an instance of widespread civil disobedience, particularly one involving racial strife, is entirely unique from any other kind of story in that its coverage could affect the direction of its development and intensity, its duration and outcome and therefore demands exceptional treatment.
2. The civil disorder must be of such size, or indicate a potential for developing into such size, that it could be a considerable threat to the community.
3. Competition between broadcasters in coverage of such disorders should continue to be vigorous but, in this one volatile area, more thought should be given to changing the focus from dynamic impact to authoritative and calm reporting of vital information to the public with maximum assistance in the re-establishment of control as the primary goal.
4. Law enforcement authorities should take the necessary steps to ensure that adequately informed staff members will be on duty at command posts who will be readily informed to supply properly identified broadcast newsmen with pertinent information concerning the disorder.

Guidelines

(Prior to reaching the scene)

1. Stories of civil disorder, particularly when the disorder is in its early stages, should not be over-emphasized nor should a "scare" approach be taken by the broadcasters in their initial reporting.
2. The official designation of the incident should be used by the broadcasters, employing the term "riot" only after authorities do.
3. At the outset of the disorder, broadcast newsmen should be dispatched to law enforcement command posts, rather than directly to the scene where their presence may heighten the disturbance or interfere with efforts to establish control. An authoritatively staffed command post will undoubtedly be in communication with the scenes of disorder and be capable of providing newsmen with any desired information.
4. Determination of when newsmen may be sent to the scene without danger of inflaming or inciting further discord is the individual responsibility of each broadcast news director and his outlet.
(From the scene, command post, and studio)
5. Broadcasts which might tend to inflame or incite further violence should not be allowed.
6. Emphasis should be on the steps being taken to restore order.

- advisements to the public to keep out of the general disturbance area and, if a curfew has been invoked, of obeying that curfew.
7. Reports should be calm, objective and present the "overall picture" and should be devoid of sensationalism, speculation and rumors which could incite or further extend the disturbance or stir a new outbreak in a controlled area. It should be emphasized that reports from the field are describing only those segments of the disorder that are being witnessed by that particular newsman.
 8. Caution should be taken against over-emphasizing isolated and, for the most part, trivial incidents. Such incidents should be incorporated into the "overall picture" and their importance fully explained, thus avoiding inflammatory editing of audio tape and film.
 9. Exact locations of intersections, street names and addresses of flareups should not be revealed by the broadcaster until authorities have announced order has been established and control being maintained in that particular area.
 10. Avoid broadcasting interviews with obvious lawbreakers in the disorder who are on the side which opposes law and order when the interview could be considered inflammatory and may add further problems to the disorder. Whenever possible, the broadcast newsman should seek out a responsible spokesman for the community in which the disturbance occurs.
 11. Broadcast newsmen should avoid creating further disturbances through the indiscriminate use of cameras, lights of microphones; i.e., avoid filming a milling crowd if it does not add to the story and might inspire a disorder by that crowd. When possible, cameramen should attempt to film with a long lens so as not to expose the presence of a camera and should use natural lighting whenever feasible. In short, use good taste and common sense.
 12. Unless and until a situation reaches the point of martial law, all Constitutional guarantees are deemed to be in force and applicable. Hence, the aforementioned constitute guidelines to the public and law enforcement officials in the treatment of civil disorders and, at the same time, provide essential information to the public.
 13. Therefore, the basic goal of all broadcast newsmen participating in the coverage of civil disorder should be to encourage, by exemplary performance, responsible reporting that will produce an even greater fulfillment of their obligation to serve the public interest and safety, as well as defend the aims of duly constituted law and authority.⁴²

The Kerner Report summarized the usefulness of guidelines as follows:

...the Commission concludes that codes are seldom harmful, often useful, but no panacea. To be of any use, they must address themselves to the substance of the problems that plague relations between the press and officialdom during a disorder. But they are only one of several methods of improving those relations. Ultimately, no matter how sensitive and comprehensive a code or set of guidelines may be, efficient, accurate reporting must depend upon the intelligence, judgment, and training of newsmen, police, and city officials together.⁴³

FOOTNOTES

¹Reuven Frank, "An Anatomy of Television News," Television Quarterly, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Winter 1970), p. 14.

²Journal of Broadcasting, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Winter 1969-1970), p. 2.

³David Lange, Robert Baker, and Sandra Ball, Violence and the Media, A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. (Washington D. C. : US Government Printing Office, November, 1968), p. 214.

⁴Ibid., p. 36.

⁵Ibid., p. 36.

⁶Ibid., p. 35.

⁷Ibid., p. 35.

⁸Ibid., p. 87.

⁹Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 89.

¹¹Ibid., p. 104.

¹²Daniel Walker, Rights In Conflict, A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company., Inc., 1968), p. 312.

¹³Ibid., p. 323.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 302.

¹⁵The Kerner Report, Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., March 1968), p. 363.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 372.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 373.

¹⁸Lange, Violence and the Media, p. 96.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 19.

²⁰Andrew Miller Jones, "The Impact of Vision," The Progress of Television, (London and New York: Focal Press, 1967), p. 195.

²¹John Whale, The Half-Shut Eye, (London: Macmillan and Company, 1969), p. 19.

²²Ibid., p. 25.

²³Ibid., p. 26.

²⁴Ibid., p. 26.

²⁵Ibid., p. 30.

²⁶Ibid., p. 47.

²⁷Ibid., p. 50.

²⁸William Monroe, Jr., "Television Coverage of Urban Violence," The Media and the Cities, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 67.

²⁹John W. Slater and Maxwell E. McCombs, "Some Aspects of Broadcast News Coverage and Riot Participation," Journal of Broadcasting, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Fall 1969), pp. 367-370, passim.

³⁰Herschel Shosteck, "Some Influences of Television on Civil Unrest," Journal of Broadcasting, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Fall 1969), p. 372.

³¹Ibid., pp. 382-383.

³²The Kerner Report, p. 379.

³³Ibid., p. 381.

³⁴Lange, Violence and the Media, pp. 159-161.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 153-154.

³⁶The Television Code, National Association of Broadcasters, Fourteenth Edition, September 1969, pp. 11-12.

³⁷Lange, Violence and the Media, p. 219.

³⁸Ibid., p. 222.

³⁹William Rivers and Wilbur Schramm, Responsibility In Mass Communication, (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper and Row, 1969) pp. 186-187.

⁴⁰Edwin O. Guthman, "The Commission Looks At The News Media," The Media and the Cities, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 39.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 40-42.

⁴²Lange, Violence and the Media, pp. 229-231.

⁴³The Kerner Report, p. 382.

CHAPTER III

METHOD OF PROCEDURES

Selection and development of the data gathering device

The mail questionnaire was chosen as the data gathering device. In Scientific Social Surveys and Research, it states that the questionnaire is designed to collect data from large, diverse, and widely scattered groups of people. Generally, the questionnaire is sent through the mail to informants to be answered as specified in a covering letter, but otherwise without further assistance from the sender.¹

Closed-form questionnaires are suggested for use when categorized data are required. The open-end responses allow free and spontaneous expressions on the part of the informant. The open-end responses are chiefly used for intensive studies of a limited number of cases or for preliminary exploration of new problems and situations.²

Both closed-form and open-end questions were incorporated into the questionnaire for this study. The questionnaire was designed to gather basic information regarding station policies and practices for reporting civil disorders. Closed-form questions were used primarily for achieving clarity and ease of responding. Open-end responses were offered for those who preferred to qualify their opinions.

Forty-four guidelines were compiled from the following resources: ABC, CBS, and NBC television networks, National Radio Television News

Directors Association, Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, Mass Media Staff Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, and the Los Angeles Times.

The guidelines were arranged into logical sections to aid explicitness and reduce monotony of reading. The sections were: Language Guidelines, Equipment and Lights Guidelines, Personnel Assignments Guidelines, Reporting Guidelines for Covering Any Civil Disorder, Reporting Guidelines for Covering Major Civil Disorders, and Editing and Presentation Guidelines. Each guideline was designed to obtain the broadcasters opinions on its value, practicality, and usage for reporting local or regional civil disorders.

Administration of the data gathering device

Twelve commercial television stations in Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri, were selected for the survey. KMBA-TV, Kansas City, Missouri, was not included because it only recently began broadcasting. Satellite stations were not used because their news reporting derives from the parent station.

The questionnaire was sent to station managers rather than news directors. Station management usually determines what news is aired when controversial issues are involved. However, through follow-up phone calls, it was evident many of the news directors were asked by management to complete the form. Several stations stated the news director and manager completed the form together.

In a cover letter, station managers were assured that their station policies would be held confidential. Any release of the findings would not list individual stations or cities.

Since the questionnaire is long, the managers were also informed that completing it required about 15 minutes due to its check-list format. A stamped self-addressed envelope was enclosed for return of the questionnaire.

Follow-up of questionnaire

Follow-up for the questionnaire involved phone calls to station managers and news directors. This form of follow-up was valuable because the broadcasters expressed their concern about this area of news reporting. They also commented on the number of questionnaires they receive and the difficulty in finding time to complete the forms. Several stated they preferred personal interviews in which they could qualify their answers. Difficulty in applying guidelines to individual situations was also mentioned.

FOOTNOTES

¹Pauline V. Young, Scientific Social Surveys and Research (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), p. 186.

²Ibid., p. 190

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Questionnaires were sent to 12 commercial television stations in Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri. The purpose of the questionnaires was to determine policies and practices for news reporting of local or regional civil disorders. Nine questionnaires were returned, representing 75 per cent of the stations polled.

Number of stations with news policies for reporting civil disorders

Seven of the nine commercial television stations surveyed in Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri, reported their stations have a specific news policy for covering civil disorders. Six of these seven stations indicated that this news policy is a verbal one. The seventh station stated it had both written and verbal policies. Two stations indicated they had no specific news policy for reporting civil disorders. However, these two stations partially completed the questionnaire and their responses are incorporated into the findings.

Determination of news policy for covering civil disorders

The civil disorder news policy was determined by a combination of management and news staff in five of the nine stations. One station reported the policy was formulated by management, news staff and city officials. The news staff alone determined another station's policy.

Types of civil disorders covered by
television stations in past three years

Two of the nine stations stated no civil disorders had occurred in their locality and therefore, their stations had not covered civil disorders. Of the remaining seven stations, seven had covered rioting within the past three years in which destruction of life or property had occurred. Seven stations had also reported on black/white confrontations in public schools. Student/administration confrontations in public schools were reported by six stations. Five stations each had covered black/police confrontations in the black community and student/police confrontations on a college campus. Four stations had reported student/administration confrontations on a college campus. No other type of civil disorder was noted by the television stations.

Implementation of news policy
for reporting civil disorders

Three stations discussed how the policies were implemented. One of these stations stated staff meetings and a policy manual were its methods of implementation. Another station revealed that its news director makes the specific decisions in each case and order are transmitted verbally. This station's "over-riding concern is to report objectively--and at the same time avoid contributing to an atmosphere of violence."

The third station's policy is implemented "with a large degree of pragmatism and common sense. Each situation is different; wisdom, judgment and experience are essential."

Explanation of variance
in number of responses

Broadcasters were asked to rate the value of individual guidelines

as very important, important, unimportant, or other. The practicality of each guideline was rated practical or impractical. Usage of the guidelines was indicated by marking used in past disorders, expect to use, or will not use. Seven questionnaires were filled out completely. The two stations with no civil disorders in their cities partially completed the form. Several other broadcasters did not place a checkmark when they supplied written responses. Therefore, the total responses varied among the guidelines.

Major findings on the value and practicality of language guidelines

As shown in Table 1, the language guideline rated most valuable by the television stations was Guideline I-B, TV NEWS BROADCASTERS AVOID USE OF SUPERLATIVES, ADJECTIVES, CATCHWORDS, AND PHRASES WHICH MIGHT INCITE OR ENLARGE A CONFLICT. (I.E. "COMMUNIST INDUCED," POLICE BRUTALITY," "ANGRY MOB"). Seven of the respondents felt Guideline I-B was very important; one rated it important. A station commented the examples cited in the guideline were not similar, that TV newsmen could easily and fairly use "angry mob" terminology after making their own determination, but would not do so with the other two phrases.

Second in value was Guideline I-C, AVOID QUOTING THE RHETORIC OF GROUPS. It was marked very important by three stations; important by three stations; and unimportant by one station. Two stations commented on this guideline. Quoting rhetoric was avoided by one station except when sound on film of "involved participants contained such rhetoric." Another station did not respond to the guideline, stating "it depends upon content of the story and whether they had "actuality" sound on film of someone saying it."

TV NEWS BROADCASTERS DESCRIBE THE DISORDER AS "RIOT" OR "RACIAL" ONLY AFTER OFFICIAL DESIGNATION BY AUTHORITIES, Guideline I-A, was considered least practical to implement of the language guidelines. Four

TABLE 1

VALUE, PRACTICALITY, AND USAGE OF LANGUAGE GUIDELINES FOR NEWS REPORTING OF CIVIL DISORDERS ACCORDING TO NINE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATIONS IN KANSAS AND KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

	VALUE			PRACTICALITY			USAGE						
	Total Num-ber	Very Important	Important	Unimpor- tant	Other	Total Num-ber	Prac- tical	Imprac- tical	Other	Total Num-ber	Used In Past	Expect To Use	Will Not Use
GUIDELINE I-A	5	3	1	1		6	4	2		6	4	1	1
GUIDELINE I-B	8	7	1			7	6	1		6	5		1
GUIDELINE I-C	7	3	3	1		6	4	1	1	6	3	1	2

GUIDELINE I-A: TV news broadcasters describe the disorder as "riot" or "racial only after official designation by authorities.

GUIDELINE I-B: TV news broadcasters avoid use of superlatives, adjectives, catchwords, and phrases which might incite or enlarge a conflict. (i.e. "communist induced," "police brutality," "angry mob")

GUIDELINE I-C: Avoid quoting the rhetoric of groups. (i.e. "Man, we're gonna burn every Whitey in sight," "Those long-haired lazy kids are going to be shown who's boss," "We'll get every pig that comes in our block.")

marked it practical and two indicated it was an impractical guideline.

Major findings on the value
and practicality of equipment
and lights guidelines

Table 2 shows that Guideline II-B, AT SCENES OF DISORDERS, AVOID USING LIGHTS FOR LOCATION FILMING OR VIDEOTAPING, is rated very important by four of the stations responding. Two considered the guideline unimportant and two checked it as important. It seems that these dissimilar responses reflect the controversy over the impact of television lights on demonstrations.

The same value was placed on Guideline II-C, AT SCENES OF DISORDERS, USE UNMARKED OR CAMOUFLAGED CARS AND EQUIPMENT, and Guideline II-D, AVOID FILMING A MILLING CROWD IF IT DOES NOT ADD TO THE STORY OR MIGHT INSPIRE A DISORDER BY THAT CROWD. Four stations considered each of these guidelines important; three indicated important, and one regarded each as unimportant. One station commented II-C was not important to implement after the fact.

Equipment and lights guidelines were generally considered practical. Guideline II-E, WHEN POSSIBLE, CAMERAMEN SHOULD ATTEMPT TO FILM WITH A LONG LENS SO AS NOT TO EXPOSE THE PRESENCE OF A CAMERA, was marked as impractical by the highest percentage, with four marking it practical; three, impractical.

Major findings on the value
and practicality of personnel
guidelines

Personnel assignment guidelines were generally regarded as valuable by the broadcasters as indicated in Table 3. ONLY SEASONED REPORTERS SENT TO THE SCENE OF A DISORDER, was rated very important by five stations and important by three. Guideline III-B, DISPATCH BROADCAST NEWSMEN TO LAW

TABLE 2

VALUE, PRACTICALITY, AND USAGE OF EQUIPMENT AND LIGHTS GUIDELINES FOR NEWS REPORTING OF CIVIL DISORDERS
ACCORDING TO NINE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATIONS IN KANSAS AND KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

	VALUE			PRACTICALITY			USAGE						
	Total Num-ber	Very Important	Important	Unim- por- tant	Other	Total Num- ber	Prac- tical	Imprac- tical	Other	Total Num- ber	Used In Past	Expect To Use	Will Not Use
GUIDELINE II-A	7	1	6			6	4	2		6	6		
GUIDELINE II-B	8	4	2	2		7	5	2		7	4		3
GUIDELINE II-C	8	3	4	1		7	6	1		6	5	1	
GUIDELINE II-D	8	3	4	1		7	5	1	1	8	6	1	1
GUIDELINE II-E	1	6	1			7	4	3		7	6		1

GUIDELINE II-A: Avoid cruising in an area of potential crisis. Use law enforcement headquarters nearest such an area until a newsworthy event occurs.

GUIDELINE II-B: At scenes of disorders, avoid using lights for location filming or videotaping.

GUIDELINE II-C: At scenes of disorders, use unmarked or camouflaged cars and equipment.

GUIDELINE II-D: Avoid filming a milling crowd if it does not add to the story or might inspire a disorder by that crowd.

GUIDELINE II-E: When possible, cameramen should attempt to film with a long lens so as not to expose the presence of a camera.

TABLE 3

VALUE, PRACTICALITY, AND USAGE OF PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS GUIDELINES FOR NEWS REPORTING OF CIVIL DISORDERS
ACCORDING TO NINE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATIONS IN KANSAS AND KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

	VALUE				PRACTICALITY			USAGE					
	Total Num- ber	Very Impor- tant	Impor- tant	Unim- por- tant	Other	Total Num- ber	Prac- tical	Imprac- tical	Other	Total Num- ber	Used In Past	Expect To Use	Will Not Use
GUIDELINE III-A	8	5	3			7	6	1		7	6	1	
GUIDELINE III-B	7	2	5			7	5	2		7	6	1	

GUIDELINE III-A: Only seasoned reporters sent to the scene of a disorder.

GUIDELINE III-B: Dispatch broadcast newsmen to law enforcement command posts, rather than directly to the scene; later determine when newsmen may be sent to scene without danger or inciting further discord.

ENFORCEMENT COMMAND POSTS, RATHER THAN DIRECTLY TO THE SCENE: LATER DETERMINE WHEN NEWSMEN MAY BE SENT TO SCENE WITHOUT DANGER OR INCITING FURTHER DISCORD, was considered somewhat less important as five stations indicated it was important and two felt it very important. One respondent stated that "even then, some danger is still involved."

The above two guidelines were considered quite practical. III-A was designated as practical by six; impractical by one. Five stations marked III-B practical; two, impractical. One station stated it was not always practical to send seasoned reporters to cover a disorder.

Major findings on the value and practicality of reporting guidelines for any civil disorder

In Table 4 it is noted that eight of the stations rated IV-G, DO NOT RE-ENACT, SIMULATE, STAGE OR AID DEMONSTRATION, as very important. Rated next in importance was IV-H, CONFIRM ALL RUMOR AND EYE-WITNESS, WIRE SERVICE AND OTHER REPORTS, with seven marking very important and one, important. A station commented that all rumors are confirmed, but not necessarily eye-witness and wire service reports.

SEEK OUT A RESPONSIBLE SPOKESMAN FOR THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH THE DISORDER OCCURS, Guideline IV-F, was considered very important by five of the respondents, with three marking it important. The following two guidelines were rated equal in value: REPORT UNDERLYING ISSUES AND CAUSES (Guideline IV-I) and AVOID OVER-EMPHASIZING ISOLATED OR TRIVIAL INCIDENTS (Guideline IV-D). Four stations considered the above guidelines very important; four indicated their value as important. Two stations questioned the reporting of any trivia as implied in Guideline IV-D.

Regarded as unimportant by three of the stations was Guideline IV-E, AVOID BROADCASTING INTERVIEWS WITH OBVIOUS LAWBREAKERS IN THE DISORDER.

TABLE 4

VALUE, PRACTICALITY, AND USAGE OF REPORTING GUIDELINES FOR NEWS REPORTING OF ANY CIVIL DISORDER ACCORDING TO NINE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATIONS IN KANSAS AND KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

	VALUE			PRACTICALITY			USAGE						
	Total Num-ber	Very Impor- tant	Impor- tant	Unim- por- tant	Other	Total Num-ber	Prac- tical	Imprac- tical	Other	Total Num-ber	Used In Past	Expect To Use	Will Not Use
GUIDELINE IV-A	7	2	3	1	1	7	3	2	2	6	3	1	2
GUIDELINE IV-B	6	1	3	1	1	6	2	4		6	2	2	2
GUIDELINE IV-C	8	3	4		1	7	5	2		5	4		1
GUIDELINE IV-D	8	4	4			6	6			5	5		
GUIDELINE IV-E	6	1	2	3		6	2	4		6	3	1	2
GUIDELINE IV-F	8	5	3			7	5	2		6	5	1	
GUIDELINE IV-G	8	8				6	6			5	4		1
GUIDELINE IV-H	8	7	1			7	5	2		5	4	1	
GUIDELINE IV-I	8	4	4			7	5	1	1	7	5	2	

GUIDELINE IV-A: Do not state the exact location, intersection, street name or number until authorities have sufficient personnel on hand to maintain control.

GUIDELINE IV-B: Reporters inform in advance any person who is interviewed that the interview may be made public.

GUIDELINE IV-C: Reports from the field describe only those segments of the disorder that are being witnessed by that particular newsmen.

TABLE 4--Continued.

GUIDELINE IV-D:	Avoid over-emphasizing isolated or trivial incidents. Such incidents should be incorporated into the overall picture and their importance fully explained.
GUIDELINE IV-E:	Avoid broadcasting interviews with obvious lawbreakers in the disorder.
GUIDELINE IV-F:	Seek out a responsible spokesman for the community in which the disorder occurs.
GUIDELINE IV-G:	Do not re-enact, simulate, stage or aid demonstration.
GUIDELINE IV-H:	Confirm all rumor and eye-witness, wire service and other reports.
GUIDELINE IV-I:	Report underlying issues and causes.

Two stated this guideline was important and one rated it as very important. One station marking it as unimportant stated that lawbreakers were not always "obvious." Another station stated this guideline "depends upon the case."

Guideline IV-C, REPORTS FROM THE FIELD DESCRIBE ONLY THOSE SEGMENTS OF THE DISORDER THAT ARE BEING WITNESSED BY THAT PARTICULAR NEWSMAN, was declared important by four stations; very important by three, other by one. Guideline IV-A, DO NOT STATE THE EXACT LOCATION, INTERSECTION, STREET NAME OR NUMBER UNTIL AUTHORITIES HAVE SUFFICIENT PERSONNEL ON HAND TO MAINTAIN CONTROL, was specified as important by three stations; very important by two; unimportant by one, and other by one. One broadcaster stated they warn people to avoid a particular area because sometimes control is not gained for hours or days.

Guideline IV-B, REPORTERS INFORM IN ADVANCE ANY PERSON WHO IS INTERVIEWED THAT THE INTERVIEW MAY BE MADE PUBLIC, was declared important by three of the stations; very important, one; unimportant, one; and other, one. A station observed that "all interviews are sound on film, anyone and everyone knows you don't film for practice. We edit the film later." Another station said that IV-B is not always stated since the inference is obvious.

Two guidelines, IV-B and IV-E were considered impractical to implement. Two marked the two guidelines practical; four indicated they were impractical. Guideline IV-A was set forth as somewhat impractical with three listing it practical; two as impractical, and two as other.

Major findings on the value and practicality of reporting guidelines for major civil disorders

Broadcasters recorded a diverse reaction to the guidelines for

TABLE 5

VALUE, PRACTICALITY, AND USAGE OF REPORTING GUIDELINES FOR NEWS REPORTING OF MAJOR CIVIL DISORDERS ACCORDING TO NINE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATIONS IN KANSAS AND KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

	VALUE			Unim- por- tant	Other	PRACTICALITY			Total Num- ber	USAGE			
	Total Num- ber	Very Impor- tant	Impor- tant			Total Num- ber	Prac- tical	Imprac- tical		Other	Used In Past	Expect To Use	Will Not Use
GUIDELINE V-A	8	5	3			7	6	1		5	5		
GUIDELINE V-B	6	2	2	1	1	6	4	1	1	4	2		2
GUIDELINE V-C	5	1	2	2		3	1	2		2	1		1
GUIDELINE V-D	7		2	4	1	5	4	1		1	1		
GUIDELINE V-E	8	1	5	1	1	6	6			5	3	2	
GUIDELINE V-F	7	4	3			5	4	1		5	4	1	
GUIDELINE V-G	8	1	4	1	2	6	4	2		6	3	2	1
GUIDELINE V-H	7	2	4	1		6	3	3		4	2	1	1
GUIDELINE V-I	6	2	3	1		6	4	2		5	3	1	1
GUIDELINE V-J	7	2	5			5	3	2		2	2		
GUIDELINE V-K	6	1	4	1		5	2	3		4	2	2	
GUIDELINE V-L	7	2	4	1		6	2	4		6	3		3
GUIDELINE V-M	8	1	5	1	1	6	4	2		5	3	2	
GUIDELINE V-N	7	3	3		1	4	3	1		5	3	2	

TABLE 5--Continued.

GUIDELINE V-J:	Evaluate the rioter's attitudes toward the police, firemen, and soldiers.
GUIDELINE V-K:	Attempt to personally estimate the number of persons involved in a riot--and this must always be compared with the total number of students or blacks or others in the metropolitan area and with the total population.
GUIDELINE V-L:	Analyze the attitudes, weapons, deployment and discipline of police and soldiers.
GUIDELINE V-M:	Analyze courts and jails as to bonds, methods of accusing and booking, words of judges, conditions of jails, any escalation of charges, and availability of lawyers.
GUIDELINE V-N:	Gauge and analyze government anticipation of violence and signs of repression before the fact.
GUIDELINE V-O:	Analyze political statements of city and state political leaders during a riot. Attempt to judge or define the possible reasons behind the statements.
GUIDELINE V-P:	Give close attention to city and state government tactics and strategies; use of roadblocks and traps, types and uses of weapons, appearance of new weapons such as new types of gas, barricades, wire, foam, tanks, helicopters, guns; what kind of places and people are being protected.
GUIDELINE V-Q:	Give close attention to what rioters attack, especially if they start after railroads, utilities, highways, or airports.

reporting major civil disorders as shown in Table 5. The guideline rated as most valuable in this grouping was Guideline V-A, ANY FIGURES IN A REPORT--DAMAGE, CASUALTIES, WOUNDED--SHOULD BE CITED ONLY BY SOURCE AND SHOULD BE COMPARED DAILY WITH ALL PREVIOUS CITATIONS FROM THE SAME SOURCE OR WITH OTHER FIGURES FROM OTHER SOURCES. Five marked this guideline as very important; three as important.

Guideline V-F, BALANCE AUTHORITIES' STATEMENTS WITH CHECKS AT KEY POINTS SUCH AS HOSPITALS (WOUNDED COUNTED AND INTERVIEWED: DOCTORS AND NURSES INTERVIEWED); JAILS AND COURTS WHERE THE ARRESTED ARE OFFICIALLY ACCUSED; POLICE HEADQUARTERS AND CITY HALLS, and Guideline V-Q, GIVE CLOSE ATTENTION TO WHAT RIOTERS ATTACK, ESPECIALLY IF THEY START AFTER RAILROADS, UTILITIES, HIGHWAYS OR AIRPORTS, were valued equally with four designating the guidelines as very important and three as important. EVALUATE THE RIOTER'S ATTITUDES TOWARD THE POLICE, FIREMEN, AND SOLDIERS, Guideline V-J, was rated important by five of the respondents and very important by two.

The guideline valued least in reporting major civil disorders was V-D, REPORTERS SHOULD NOT DETAIL HOW ANY WEAPON IS OBTAINED, MADE OR USED. Four checked this as unimportant; two, important; and one, other. Two stations remarked that telling how weapons are obtained is allowed, but not how they are made.

Varied responses and comments were given for Guideline V-C, ANY EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT OF A MURDER, BURNING, ACT OF HEROISM, FLIGHT, FRIGHT, OR FREAK SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY BY REPORTERS AND EDITORS OVER ANY OTHER TYPE OF STORY SINCE UNDERSTANDING THE INDIVIDUAL IN CHAOS IS IMPERATIVE. This guideline extracted from the Los Angeles Times guidelines for reporting civil disorders, was considered unimportant by two of the stations; important by another two; and very important by one. Comments included "impossible to determine" and "have no idea what this means."

The most diverse responses were expressed for Guideline V-O, ANALYZE POLITICAL STATEMENTS OF CITY AND STATE POLITICAL LEADERS DURING A RIOT. ATTEMPT TO JUDGE OR DEFINE THE POSSIBLE REASONS BEHIND THE STATEMENTS. One station felt this was a very important guideline; one, important; one, unimportant; and two marked other. A station commented it was impossible to answer without a definition of "political" as opposed to official statements of city and state leaders.

Guidelines for reporting major civil disorders received a higher percentage of impractical responses than did other guidelines. No respondents considered Guideline V-O practical. Three marked it impractical and one marked other. Guideline V-L, ANALYZE THE ATTITUDES, WEAPONS, DEPLOYMENT AND DISCIPLINE OF POLICE AND SOLDIERS, was considered impractical by four stations and practical by three. Three of the stations indicated that V-H was impractical to implement, and three marked practical.

Six stations felt Guideline V-E, REPORTERS MUST BE AWARE THAT VIOLENCE CAN COME FROM THE GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS FROM RIOTERS, and Guideline V-A, ANY FIGURES IN A REPORT--DAMAGE, CASUALTIES, WOUNDED--SHOULD BE CITED ONLY BY SOURCE AND SHOULD BE COMPARED DAILY WITH ALL PREVIOUS CITATIONS FROM THE SAME SOURCE OR WITH OTHER FIGURES FROM OTHER SOURCES were practical to implement.

One broadcaster felt Guidelines V-N and V-P were "loaded questions." Both of these guidelines were from the Los Angeles Times guidelines for covering civil disorders. Another broadcaster qualified many of his practical responses in this section with "sometimes, usually, and occasionally."

Major findings on the value
and practicality of editing
and presentation guidelines

Eight of the responding broadcasters listed as very important

TABLE 6

VALUE, PRACTICALITY, AND USAGE OF EDITING AND PRESENTATION GUIDELINES FOR NEWS REPORTING OF CIVIL DISORDERS
ACCORDING TO NINE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATIONS IN KANSAS AND KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

	VALUE			PRACTICALITY			USAGE						
	Total Num-ber	Very Important	Important	Unim- portant	Other	Total Num-ber	Prac- tical	Imprac- tical	Other	Total Num-ber	Used In Past	Expect To Use	Will Not Use
GUIDELINE VI-A	6	2	2	2		5	3	2		3	2		1
GUIDELINE VI-B	8	6	1		1	6	5	1		5	4	1	
GUIDELINE VI-C	8	6	2			5	5			5	5		
GUIDELINE VI-D	8	5	2	1		6	4	1	1	4	3	1	
GUIDELINE VI-E	7	6	1			6	6			7	6	1	
GUIDELINE VI-F	8	8				7	7			7	6	1	
GUIDELINE VI-G	7	7	1			7	7			7	6	1	
GUIDELINE VI-H	7	4	3			6	5	1		6	4	2	

GUIDELINE VI-A: No live on-the-scene TV coverage.

GUIDELINE VI-B: Broadcasts which might tend to inflame or incite further violence should not be aired.

GUIDELINE VI-C: Avoid scare bulletins or sensationalism.

GUIDELINE VI-D: Use immediate or direct reporting to minimize misinterpretation, eliminate airing of rumors, or unverified statements.

TABLE 6--Continued.

GUIDELINE VI-E:	Emphasis should be on the steps being taken to restore order, advisements to the public to keep out of the general disturbance area, and if a curfew has been invoked, of obeying that curfew.
GUIDELINE VI-F:	Reports should be calm, objective and present the "overall picture" and should be devoid of sensationalism, speculation and rumor.
GUIDELINE VI-G:	Reports of civil disorder, particularly when the disorder is in its early stages, should not be over-emphasized nor should a "scare" approach be taken by the broadcasters in their initial reporting.
GUIDELINE VI-H:	Avoid emphasizing stories on public tensions while the tensions of a particular incident are developing.

Guideline VI-F in Table 6, REPORTS SHOULD BE CALM, OBJECTIVE AND PRESENT THE "OVERALL PICTURE AND SHOULD BE DEVOID OF SENSATIONALISM, SPECULATION AND RUMOR." Rated next in importance was Guideline VI-G, REPORTS OF CIVIL DISORDER, PARTICULARLY WHEN THE DISORDER IS IN ITS EARLY STAGES, SHOULD NOT BE OVER-EMPHASIZED NOR SHOULD A "SCARE" APPROACH BE TAKEN BY THE BROADCASTERS IN THEIR INITIAL REPORTING. Seven marked this guideline as very important, and one marked it important.

Responses to Guideline VI-A, NO LIVE ON-THE-SCENE TV COVERAGE, were divided evenly ~~among~~ very important, important, and unimportant with each marked by two stations. Comments on this guideline included "depends on circumstances," "question too broad to answer," and "civil disorders are covered by film." VI-A was listed as least practical of the editing and presentation guidelines with two feeling it was practical and three marking it impractical.

Major findings on the usage of
guidelines for covering civil disorders

Several respondents misunderstood how to mark the usage section of the questionnaire. Will not use was sometimes marked to indicate the intention to avoid the suggestions within the guideline, instead of intention to not use the guidelines as a whole. Also, sometimes used in past civil disorder, practical, and very important were all marked for a guideline, yet expect to use was often not marked. It would seem logical to have the latter marked if the three former checks had been made. Due to this confusion, the most accurate information on the usage section seems to be what guidelines have been used in the past. It appears that over-all a rather high percentage of the guidelines have been used in reporting past civil disorders.

Comments on practices regarded as
most important for effective TV
coverage of civil disorders

Broadcasters stressed "be factual and objective" when listing practices most effective for covering civil disturbances. One station emphasized factual reporting, plus "having news personnel properly equipped at every possible news source--cooperation with authorities, but establishing rapport with "rioters" when possible--using good news judgment on all facets of coverage."

Another station stated it was necessary to have "honesty in presenting both sides of the issue. Persons representing both sides must be allowed to present their views to the public, via the media."

One broadcaster summed up his opinion of effective practices as follows: "Experienced reporters must be precise, editors and broadcasters, knowledgeable, to deal with individual situations. A book of guidelines cannot substitute for knowing your community, the problems and pressures. Each situation must be faced with an open, analytical mind."

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Summary

Commercial television stations in Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri, displayed an interest in approaches for news reporting of civil disorders in their responses to this study. The purpose of the survey was to determine policies and practices for local and regional news reporting of civil disturbances. Questionnaires were sent to 12 commercial television stations. Nine questionnaires were returned, representing 75 per cent of the stations polled.

Civil disorder was defined for this study as: A collective violation of the public peace by two or more persons who create commotion contrary to law, and in which law enforcement officials are involved in restoring order. Two of the nine stations stated no civil disorders had occurred in their locality. Seven stations had covered rioting within the past three years where destruction of life or property had occurred. Seven stations had also reported on black/white confrontations in public schools. Student/administration confrontations in public schools were reported by six stations. Five stations had covered black/police confrontations in the black community and student/police confrontations on a college campus. Four stations had reported student/administration confrontations on a college campus. No other type of civil disorder was noted by the television stations.

Seven of the nine commercial television stations surveyed reported

their stations have a specific news policy for covering civil disorders. Six stations indicated that this news policy is a verbal one. One station stated it had both written and verbal policies. Two stations had no specific news policy for reporting civil disorders.

The news policy was determined by a combination of management and news staff in six stations. One station reported the policy was formulated by management, news staff and city officials. The news staff alone determined another station's policy.

A method for implementation of the policy was stated by only three stations. Staff meetings and a policy manual were specified as one station's method. A second station stated the news director makes the specific decisions and transmits orders verbally. The third station stated its policy was implemented with "a large degree of pragmatism and common sense. Each situation is different: wisdom, judgment, and experience are essential."

A list of 44 guidelines was compiled from ABC, CBS, and NBC television networks, National Radio Television News Directors Association, Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, Mass Media Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, and the Los Angeles Times.

Broadcasters were asked to rate the guidelines according to their value, practicality, and usage. The guidelines were valued as very important, important, unimportant or other. The practicality of each guideline was rated practical or impractical. Usage of the guidelines was indicated by marking used in past civil disorders, expect to use, or will not use.

Seven questionnaires were filled out completely. The two stations with no civil disturbances in their cities partially completed the form.

Several other broadcasters did not place a checkmark when written responses were supplied. Therefore the total responses vary among the guidelines.

Two guidelines were marked as very important by eight of the broadcasters. These were Guideline IV-G, DO NOT RE-ENACT, SIMULATE, STAGE OR AID DEMONSTRATION, and Guideline VI-F, REPORTS SHOULD BE CALM, OBJECTIVE, AND PRESENT THE "OVERALL PICTURE" AND SHOULD BE DEVOID OF SENSATIONALISM, SPECULATION AND RUMOR. These guidelines were also marked as practical to implement.

The guideline considered unimportant by the most broadcasters was Guideline V-D, REPORTERS SHOULD NOT DETAIL HOW ANY WEAPON IS OBTAINED, MADE OR USED. Four stations marked it unimportant; two marked important, and one marked other. Two stations remarked that telling how weapons are obtained is allowed, but not how they are made.

Guideline IV-E, AVOID BROADCASTING INTERVIEWS WITH OBVIOUS LAW-BREAKERS IN THE DISORDER, was considered unimportant by three of the respondents. Two marked this guideline important, one considered it very important. One station commented this guideline is not always "obvious". The guideline was considered impractical by four stations and impractical by two.

The most diverse responses were expressed for Guideline V-O, ANALYZE POLITICAL STATEMENTS OF CITY AND STATE POLITICAL LEADERS DURING A RIOT. ATTEMPT TO JUDGE OR DEFINE THE POSSIBLE REASONS BEHIND THE STATEMENTS. One felt this was a very important guideline; one marked important; one, unimportant; and two, other. One station commented it was impossible to answer without a definition of "political" as opposed to official statements of city and state leaders.

Several respondents misunderstood how to mark the usage section of the questionnaire. Consequently, the most accurate information on that section seems to be what guidelines have been used in the past. It appears that over-all a rather high percentage of the guidelines have been used in reporting past civil disorders.

Discussion

The percentage of returned questionnaires (75 per cent) suggests a willingness by broadcasters to disclose their opinions on the value, practicality, and usage of national guidelines for reporting local or regional civil disorders.

It is significant that seven of the nine stations have had to report on riots as well as other confrontations in their communities. This indicates a need for broadcasters to analyze television's potential for contributing to constructive resolution of community conflicts.

Most of the stations' policies for reporting disorders are verbal and, consequently, are probably quite general. This might imply a dependence upon newsmen to exercise their own judgment on techniques of reporting explosive situations. This inference would place importance on having astute reporters aware of the impact of television and informed about group struggles within the community.

The fact that management and the news staff plan the policy coverage together in most stations is important. Through discussion of reporting techniques, long range goals can be established for delving into community conflicts. Management can be aware of the need for in-depth coverage of underlying causes. News staffs can plan the most efficient and effective manner for providing access to the media by groups. Staff discussions can help reporters to develop keen and per-

ceptive judgment for covering strained or violent situations.

Several government commissions have encouraged discussion among the media and city or state officials to plan policies. This approach can help co-ordinate activities so a city does not panic during a riot. But the media should be wary of policies which might lead to news repression.

Two of the guidelines seemed particularly noteworthy to this author. The guideline emphasized by government commissions was Guideline IV-I, REPORT UNDERLYING ISSUES AND CAUSES. This was considered important by the broadcasters, but to a lesser degree than several other guidelines. Four designated it very important, and four felt it was important. The practicality of Guideline IV-I was also rated somewhat lower with five marking it practical; one as impractical; and one, other.

The varied responses and comments also seemed notable for Guideline V-C: ANY EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF A MURDER, BURNING, ACT OF HEROISM, FLIGHT, FRIGHT, OR FREAK SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY BY REPORTERS AND EDITORS OVER ANY OTHER TYPE OF STORY SINCE UNDERSTANDING THE INDIVIDUAL IN CHAOS IS IMPERATIVE. This guideline extracted from the Los Angeles Times guidelines for reporting civil disorders, was considered unimportant by two of the stations; important by two; and very important by one. Comments included "impossible to determine" and "have no idea what this means."

The diversity of answers to the above guideline seems significant, since the impact of events upon the individual is the essence of discerning reporting. However, the wording may have lessened the credibility of the guideline.

Comments from broadcasters on the practices they regard as the most effective for television coverage of civil disorders seems to summarize the general tone of the broadcasters' responses. "Be factual

and objective," was stressed by one station. Another emphasized factual reporting, plus "having news personnel properly equipped at every possible news source--cooperation with authorities, but establishing rapport with "rioters" when possible--using good news judgment on all facets of coverage."

Another station specified the importance of "honesty in presenting both sides of the issue. Persons representing both sides must be allowed to present their views to the public, via the media."

One broadcaster summed up his opinion of effective practices as follows: "Experienced reporters must be precise, editors and broadcasters, knowledgeable, to deal with individual situations. A book of guidelines cannot substitute for knowing your community, the problems and pressures. Each situation must be faced with an open, analytical mind."

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Return to: Deanne D. Wright
 P.O. Box 415
 Manhattan, Kansas 66502
 Phone: (913) 539-3497

1. How many full-time people are on your TV news staff? _____
2. How many part-time people are on your TV news staff? _____
3. How many TV "stringers" do you have? _____
4. What is your annual TV news budget? Below \$50,000 _____
 \$ 50,000-\$99,000 _____
 \$100,000-\$199,000 _____
 \$200,000 and over _____
5. Does your station have a mobile unit? _____
6. Number of newsfilm cameras owned by station?
 Silent _____
 Sound _____
7. Indicate approximate footage of newsfilm shot daily. _____
8. Indicate approximate footage of newsfilm aired daily. _____
9. Does your station have a specific news policy for covering
 civil disorders? Written _____
 Verbal _____
 None _____
 If possible, please enclose a copy of your policy.
10. Who determined the news policy for covering civil disorders?
 Management _____
 News staff _____
 City Officials _____
 Other (please list) _____
 (Check one or more)
11. How is the policy implemented?

DEFINITION OF CIVIL DISORDER: A COLLECTIVE VIOLATION OF THE PUBLIC PEACE BY TWO OR MORE PERSONS WHO CREATE COMMOTION CONTRARY TO LAW, AND IN WHICH LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS ARE INVOLVED IN RESTORING ORDER.

What type of civil disorders has your station covered locally or regionally in the past three years?

- _____ Student/administration confrontation in public schools.
- _____ Black/white confrontation in public schools.
- _____ Black/police confrontation in black community.
- _____ Student/administration confrontation on college campus.
- _____ Student/police confrontation on college campus.
- _____ Rioting in any part of the city which caused destruction of life or property.
- _____ Other (please list)

DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETING QUESTIONNAIRE: AFTER EACH GUIDELINE, PLEASE CHECK YOUR RESPONSE AS TO THE VALUE, PRACTICALITY AND USAGE OF THE GUIDELINES FOR YOUR STATION IN REPORTING LOCAL/REGIONAL CIVIL DISORDERS.

EXAMPLE: Obey all police instructions.

<u>Check one</u>	<u>Check one</u>	<u>Check one or more</u>
Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past _____
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING CIVIL DISORDERS

I. LANGUAGE GUIDELINES

- A. TV news broadcasters describe the disorder as "riot" or "racial" only after official designation by authorities.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past _____
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- B. TV news broadcasters avoid use of superlatives, adjectives, catchwords, and phrases which might incite or enlarge a conflict. (i.e. "communist induced," "police brutality," "angry mob")

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past _____
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- C. Avoid quoting the rhetoric of groups. (i.e. "Man, we're gonna burn every Whitey in sight," "Those long-haired lazy kids are going to be shown who's boss," "We'll get every pig that comes in our block.")

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

II. EQUIPMENT AND LIGHTS

- A. Avoid cruising in an area of potential crisis. Use law enforcement headquarters nearest such an area until a newsworthy event occurs.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- B. At scenes of disorders, avoid using lights for location filming or videotaping.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- C. At scenes of disorders, use unmarked or camouflaged cars and equipment.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- D. Avoid filming a milling crowd if it does not add to the story or might inspire a disorder by that crowd.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- E. When possible, cameramen should attempt to film with a long lens so as not to expose the presence of a camera.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

III. PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS

A. Only seasoned reporters sent to the scene of a disorder.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

B. Dispatch broadcast newsmen to law enforcement command posts, rather than directly to the scene; later determine when newsmen may be sent to scene without danger or inciting further discord.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

IV. REPORTING GUIDELINES FOR ANY CIVIL DISORDER

A. Do not state the exact location, intersection, street name or number until authorities have sufficient personnel on hand to maintain control.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

B. Reporters inform in advance any person who is interviewed that the interview may be made public.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

C. Reports from the field describe only those segments of the disorder that are being witnessed by that particular newsmen.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

D. Avoid over-emphasizing isolated or trivial incidents. Such incidents should be incorporated into the overall picture and their importance fully explained.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

E. Avoid broadcasting interviews with obvious lawbreakers in the disorder.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

F. Seek out a responsible spokesman for the community in which the disorder occurs.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

G. Do not re-enact, simulate, stage or aid demonstration.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

H. Confirm all rumor and eye-witness, wire service and other reports.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

I. Report underlying issues and causes.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

V. ADDITIONAL REPORTING GUIDELINES FOR MAJOR CIVIL DISORDERS

A. Any figures in a report--damage, casualties, wounded--should be cited only by source and should be compared daily with all previous citations from the same source or with other figures from other sources.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

B. Do not identify precise locations of command posts of public officials.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- C. Any eye-witness account of a murder, burning, act of heroism, flight, fright, or freak should be given priority by reporters and editors over any other type of story since understanding the individual in chaos is imperative.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- D. Reporters should not detail how any weapon is obtained, made or used.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- E. Reporters must be aware that violence can come from the government as well as from rioters.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- F. Balance authorities statements with checks at key points such as hospitals (wounded counted and interviewed; doctors and nurses interviewed); jails and courts where the arrested are officially accused; police headquarters and city halls.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- G. Carefully analyze sniper action--do not accept police narrative.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- H. Analyze the mood of the rioters.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- I. Evaluate the age and status of the rioters--how dressed, how do they speak. Do not dwell on the extremes.

Very important	_____	Practical	_____	Used in past	_____
Important	_____	Impractical	_____	civil disorders	_____
Unimportant	_____	Other	_____	Expect to use	_____
Other	_____			Will not use	_____

- J. Evaluate the rioter's attitudes toward the police, firemen, and soldiers.

Very important	_____	Practical	_____	Used in past	_____
Important	_____	Impractical	_____	civil disorders	_____
Unimportant	_____	Other	_____	Expect to use	_____
Other	_____			Will not use	_____

- K. Attempt to personally estimate the number of persons involved in a riot--and this must always be compared with the total number of students or blacks or others in the metropolitan area and with the total population.

Very important	_____	Practical	_____	Used in past	_____
Important	_____	Impractical	_____	civil disorders	_____
Unimportant	_____	Other	_____	Expect to use	_____
Other	_____			Will not use	_____

- L. Analyze the attitudes, weapons, deployment and discipline of police and soldiers.

Very important	_____	Practical	_____	Used in past	_____
Important	_____	Impractical	_____	civil disorders	_____
Unimportant	_____	Other	_____	Expect to use	_____
Other	_____			Will not use	_____

- M. Analyze courts and jails as to bonds, methods of accusing and booking, words of judges, conditions of jails, any escalation of charges, and availability of lawyers.

Very important	_____	Practical	_____	Used in past	_____
Important	_____	Impractical	_____	civil disorders	_____
Unimportant	_____	Other	_____	Expect to use	_____
Other	_____			Will not use	_____

- N. Gauge and analyze government anticipation of violence and signs of repression before the fact.

Very important	_____	Practical	_____	Used in past	_____
Important	_____	Impractical	_____	civil disorders	_____
Unimportant	_____	Other	_____	Expect to use	_____
Other	_____			Will not use	_____

- O. Analyze political statements of city and state political leaders during a riot. Attempt to judge or define the possible reasons behind the statements.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- P. Give close attention to city and state government tactics and strategies: use of roadblocks and traps, types and uses of weapons, appearance of new weapons such as new types of gas, barricades, wire, foam, tanks, helicopters, guns; what kind of places and people are being protected.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- Q. Give close attention to what rioters attack, especially if they start after railroads, utilities, highways or airports.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

VI. EDITING AND PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

- A. No live on-the-scene TV coverage.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- B. Broadcasts which might tend to inflame or incite further violence should not be aired.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- C. Avoid scare bulletins or sensationalism.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- D. Use immediate or direct reporting to minimize misinterpretation, eliminate airing of rumors, or unverified statements.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- E. Emphasis should be on the steps being taken to restore order, advisements to the public to keep out of the general disturbance area, and if a curfew has been invoked, of obeying that curfew.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- F. Reports should be calm, objective and present the "overall picture" and should be devoid of sensationalism, speculation and rumor.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- G. Reports of civil disorder, particularly when the disorder is in its early stages, should not be over-emphasized nor should a "scare" approach be taken by the broadcasters in their initial reporting.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- H. Avoid emphasizing stories on public tensions while the tensions of a particular incident are developing.

Very important _____	Practical _____	Used in past
Important _____	Impractical _____	civil disorders _____
Unimportant _____	Other _____	Expect to use _____
Other _____		Will not use _____

- VII. From past experience, what practices do you regard as the most important for effective TV coverage of civil disorders? Describe in your own words.

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER TO TELEVISION STATIONS

Post Office Box 415
Manhattan, Kansas 66502
October 8, 1970

Reporting civil disorders has become an important aspect of TV news. Would you please give your opinions on TV coverage of community confrontations?

I am a graduate student in the KSU Journalism Department with a special interest in television news reporting. My master's degree project is a survey of commercial television stations in Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri.

The survey's purpose is to determine television practices and policies for reporting local or regional civil disorders. Information is not available in this specific area.

Due to earlier graduate school deadlines this fall, please mail the completed questionnaire by Wednesday, October 14. The form requires about 15 minutes since it is primarily a checklist.

The enclosed questionnaire is compiled from guidelines by the networks, the National Radio-Television News Directors Association, and government commissions. Responses will be confidential. I will forward the completed study to you.

Thank you for assisting me in this project.

Cordially,

Deanne D. Wright
Graduate Student

APPENDIX C

LIST OF TELEVISION STATIONS SURVEYED
IN KANSAS AND KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

LIST OF COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATIONS SURVEYED

KCIT-TV, Kansas City, Missouri	KARD-TV, Wichita, Kansas
KCMO-TV, Kansas City, Missouri	KTVH-TV, Wichita, Kansas
KMBC-TV, Kansas City, Missouri	KAKE-TV, Wichita, Kansas
WDAF-TV, Kansas City, Missouri	KOAM-TV, Pittsburg, Kansas
KTSB-TV, Topeka, Kansas	KTVC-TV, Ensign, Kansas
WIBW-TV, Topeka, Kansas	KAYS-TV, Hays, Kansas

TELEVISION NEWS PRACTICES AND POLICIES FOR REPORTING
CIVIL DISORDERS IN KANSAS AND KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

by

DEANNE DELL WRIGHT

B. A., University of Kansas, 1959

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1970

Cities in Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri, have witnessed the tragic loss of property and lives due to civil disorders. The purpose of this study was to determine television news practices and policies for reporting local or regional civil disorders in these locations.

Twelve commercial television stations were surveyed in Wichita, Topeka, Hays, Ensign, and Pittsburg, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri. Nine questionnaires were returned, representing 75 per cent of the stations polled.

Civil disorder was defined for this study as: A collective violation of the public peace by two or more persons who create commotion contrary to law, and in which law enforcement officials are involved in restoring order.

Seven stations had covered rioting within the past three years where destruction of life or property had occurred. Black/white confrontations in public schools had also been reported by seven stations. Student/administration confrontations in public schools were reported on by six stations. Five stations had covered black/police confrontations in the black community and student/police confrontations on a college campus. Four stations had reported student/administration confrontations on a college campus. Two of the nine stations stated no civil disorders had occurred in their locality.

A specific news policy for covering civil disorders was in operation in seven of the nine television stations. This news policy was a verbal one in six of those stations. One station had both written and verbal policies. Two stations had no specific news policy for reporting civil disorders.

Forty-four guidelines were compiled for the questionnaire from ABC, CBS, and NBC television networks, National Radio Television News Directors Association, Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, Mass Media Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence and the Los Angeles Times.

Broadcasters were asked to rate the guidelines according to their value, practicality, and usage in reporting local disturbances. The guidelines were valued as very important, important, unimportant, or other. The practicality of each guideline was rated practical or impractical. Usage of the guidelines was indicated by marking used in past civil disorders, expect to use, or will not use.

Seven questionnaires were filled out completely. The two stations with no civil disorders in their cities partially completed the form. Several other broadcasters did not place a checkmark when written responses were supplied. Therefore, the total responses vary among the guidelines.

Two guidelines were marked as very important by eight of the broadcasters. These were Guideline IV-G, DO NOT RE-ENACT, SIMULATE, STAGE OR AID DEMONSTRATION, and Guideline VI-F, REPORTS SHOULD BE CALM, OBJECTIVE, AND PRESENT THE "OVERALL PICTURE" AND SHOULD BE DEVOID OF SENSATIONALISM, SPECULATION, AND RUMOR. These guidelines were also marked practical to implement.

Considered unimportant by the most broadcasters was Guideline V-D, REPORTERS SHOULD NOT DETAIL HOW ANY WEAPON IS OBTAINED, MADE OR USED. Four stations marked this unimportant; two, important; and one, other. Two stations remarked that telling how weapons are obtained is allowed, but not how they are made.

Guideline IV-E, AVOID BROADCASTING INTERVIEWS WITH OBVIOUS LAW-BREAKERS IN THE DISORDER, was considered unimportant by three of the respondents. Two marked this guideline important, and one considered it very important. One station commented this guideline is not always "obvious". The guideline was considered impractical by four stations, and two considered it practical.

The most diverse responses were expressed for Guideline V-0, ANALYZE POLITICAL STATEMENTS OF CITY AND STATE POLITICAL LEADERS DURING A RIOT. ATTEMPT TO JUDGE OR DEFINE THE POSSIBLE REASONS BEHIND THE STATEMENTS. One station felt this was a very important guideline; one marked it important; one, unimportant; and two marked other. One station commented it was impossible to answer without a definition of "political" as opposed to official statements of city and state leaders.

Several respondents misunderstood how to mark the usage section of the questionnaire. Consequently, the most accurate information on that section seems to be what guidelines have been used in the past. It appears that over-all a rather high percentage of the guidelines have been used in reporting past civil disorders.