GLORIOUSLY BORING:

A CASE STUDY OF

THE NEWSHOUR

WITH JIM LEHRER

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Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of
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in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
August, 2002

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Thesis Approved:

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PREFACE

This study focuses on *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, an hour-long news and public affairs program carried by more than 300 Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) stations and broadcast weeknights from the studios of WETA-TV in Arlington, VA. The purpose of the study is twofold: (1) To distinguish between *The NewsHour* and its commercial competitors; and (2) to determine the extent to which *The NewsHour* is fulfilling its mission to deliver objective and disinterested news, free from commercial pressures and committed to public service. Primary source materials for the study include an interview with *NewsHour* anchor Jim Lehrer and seven videotaped *NewsHour* broadcasts, one for each year and chosen through a process of random selection, from 1995 through 2001.

I am indebted to my advisory committee—Dr. Barbara DeSanto, Dr. John DeSanto, and Dr. Tom Weir—for keeping me on track during the course of my research. Thanks also go to Ms. Julie Vanags of Strictly Business in Leawood, Kansas, for helping me to obtain videotaped broadcasts. I would also like to thank Ms. Roma Hare of *The NewsHour* staff for her hospitality during my visit to WETA-TV, and Mr. Rob Flynn, Director of Communications for MacNeil/Lehrer Productions, for providing me with information on *NewsHour* history, ratings, and demographics. Most of all, I want to express my appreciation to the anchor of America's "gloriously boring" newscast, Mr. Jim Lehrer, for participating in this study in the unaccustomed role of interviewee. Not only does he have a bus of his own; he also has a television program of his own that has filled a vital niche in the news business for more than a quarter century. For his time, and for his unfailing commitment to his trade, I am truly grateful.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> Noncommercial television should address itself to the ideal of excellence, not the ideal of acceptability—which is what keeps commercial television from climbing the staircase. I think television should be the visual counterpart of the literary essay, should arouse our dreams, satisfy our hunger for beauty, take us on journeys, enable us to participate in events, present great drama and music, explore the sea and the sky and the woods and the hills. It should be our Lyceum, our Chautauqua, our Minsky's and our Camelot. It should restate and clarify the social dilemma and the political pickle. Once in a while it does, and you get a glimpse of its potential.
>
> *Letter from E. B. White to the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, 1967*

Background

For the architects of the Great Society, all things were possible. Archimedes claimed that a long pole and a platform to stand on were all he needed to move the world. In the 1960s, a government war chest and an army of idealists were the basic ingredients needed to stymie Communism abroad and eradicate systemic poverty at home. Given the *zeitgeist* of those heady days, it was perhaps inevitable that someone would issue a clarion call to raise public television to a standard commensurate with the needs of a great democracy. Toward that end, the Carnegie Corporation of New York financed a commission to "conduct a broadly conceived study of noncommercial television" and to "focus its attention principally, although not exclusively, on community-owned channels and their services to the general public" (Carnegie Commission, 1967, vii). Ultimately, the commission was expected to provide recommendations for the development of

noncommercial television. None were more enthusiastic about this component of the Great Society than the master architect himself, President Lyndon Johnson, who had this to say in his letter endorsing the Carnegie Commission:

> From our beginnings as a nation we have recognized that our security depends upon the enlightenment of our people; that our freedom depends upon the communication of many ideas through many channels. I believe that educational television has an important future in the United States and throughout the world...I look forward with great interest to the judgments which this Commission will offer (quoted in Carnegie Commission, 1967, vii).

The Carnegie Commission's final report, Public Television: A Program for Action, laid the foundation for the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, a piece of legislation that aimed to revolutionize the public airwaves by strengthening programming of "all that is of human interest and importance which is not at the moment appropriate for support by advertising, and which is not arranged for formal instruction" (Carnegie Commission, 1967, 1). The changes that ensued, fostered an environment that gave rise to one of public television's most successful programs: *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report*. In stark contrast to network news, *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report* "was founded on the conviction that the attention span of thirty seconds or a minute that formed the basis of most television journalism was an artificial formula imposed on the nation by the industry" (MacNeil, 1983). The program's principals, Robert MacNeil and Jim Lehrer, are veteran reporters from vastly different backgrounds but who share a belief in public television as an appropriate venue for serious daily news and public affairs programming (Lehrer, 1992).

Moreover, they have always insisted on maintaining editorial control of their newscasts and giving stories the time and in-depth coverage they deserve.

True to their mission, MacNeil and Lehrer created a program that has been acknowledged even by critics as a bastion of fair and objective reporting. Neil Postman, perhaps the harshest detractor of television culture, praises the program for its dearth of visual distractions, in-depth reporting, and focus on background that provides context and lends coherence to stories (Postman, 1985). David Horowitz, chairman in the early 1990s of the Committee on Media Integrity who added his voice to the chorus of critics interested in curtailing and even abolishing public television altogether, conceded that the renegade newscast was "perhaps the best product" of public television since the legislative overhaul in 1967 (Horowitz, 1991).

All commentary aside, one has only to consider the show's longevity to determine its success. Launched in October 1975 as *The Robert MacNeil Report*, and renamed *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report* when Jim Lehrer came on board as the Washington correspondent six months later, the program has survived hostile legislators, bail outs of corporate sponsors and even the retirement, in 1995, of cofounder Robert MacNeil. Since then, Jim Lehrer has gone it alone as anchor of *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. And every weekday, from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, before a weekly audience estimated at 8 million (Online NewsHour: Show History and Fact Sheet, 2001), he frustrates the pundits with a format that was dubbed by one commentator as "gloriously boring" (quoted in Hickey, 1995, 31). For those who can't get enough over the airwaves or who are looking for insight into the *NewsHour*'s inner workings, a website at

<www.pbs.org/newshour> offers biographical sketches about the program's principals, audience profiles, *NewsHour* archives, and other valuable information.

As Robert MacNeil and Jim Lehrer worked to devise a formula that would meet the Carnegie Commission's challenge, critics from both ends of the political spectrum were questioning the very existence of public television and the propriety of supporting it with taxpayer dollars. As a hostage to the federal appropriations process, public television, with its alleged liberal bias, has always been an easy target for legislators with an ideological ax to grind. Faced with the prospect of funding cutbacks, public television programs have come to rely heavily on corporate sponsors. Yet this, too, is problematic insofar as corporate interests are often at loggerheads with the independent spirit that has guided public television since its inception (Day, 1995).

Commercial broadcasters, too, have been defending themselves against a chorus of criticism, but for entirely different reasons. Scholars and media critics, alarmed by declining voter turnout and disturbing levels of ignorance concerning the basics of citizenship, have turned their attention to television news and its alleged shortcomings. Inaccuracies, biases, increasing commercialization, the consolidation and conglomeration of media companies, the "happy talk" format of evening news that seems to value entertainment at the expense of serious reporting—these and other problems have raised doubts about the content, processes and effects of commercial newscasts. Scholars have shown that commercial newscasts, for all their massive resources and technological wizardry, have actually eroded faith in democratic institutions, contributed to economic illiteracy, and threatened the entrepreneurial spirit that is so central to the American way of life.

The Problem

When it comes to news and public affairs programming, consumers have a choice: They can either tune in to the vast array of offerings on the commercial networks, or they can brace themselves every weeknight for an hour of in-depth and commercial-free programming on *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. But just how stark is the contrast between the networks and *The NewsHour*? In an age of rampant homogenization, with cookie-cutter suburbs fanning out across the land and franchises at every crossroads, can newscasts really be all that distinctive? As Robert MacNeil used to say, "We're not in the business of saying that our news is better than their news. We're just there to report the news (quoted in Lehrer interview, 2002)."

Another way of framing the issue is to determine the extent to which *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* has lived up to Carnegie Commission's mandate. Like so many ideas spawned in the 1960s, the desire to overhaul the public airwaves grew out of a profound sense of idealism. "Public Television," wrote the authors of Public Television: A Program for Action,

> is capable of becoming the clearest expression of American diversity, and of excellence within diversity. Wisely supported, as we conclude it must be, it will respect the old and the new alike, neither lunging at the present nor worshipping the past. It will seek vitality in well-established forms and in modern experiment. Its attitude will be neither fearful nor vulgar. It will be, in short, a civilized voice in a civilized community (Carnegie Commission, 1967, 18).

Outline of the Thesis

This thesis attempts to differentiate *The NewsHour* from its commercial competitors and to determine whether or not it is fulfilling the mission envisioned by advocates of public programming. The inquiry begins in Chapter II, where background on public television and *The NewsHour*'s emergence as the medium's most prominent news and public affairs program sets the stage for a literature review revealing the problematic nature of commercial news. Reference is also made to critiques of television culture and doubts about the medium's effectiveness as a venue for news and public affairs programming. The chapter concludes with a look at three scholarly analyses comparing *The NewsHour* to several commercial newscasts. Chapter II provides an appropriate framework for Chapters III and IV, where the two key elements of this case study—the transcript of an interview with Jim Lehrer conducted by the author on January 22, 2002, and synopses of seven randomly selected *NewsHour* broadcasts, one for each year, from 1995 through 2001—are examined. In the final chapter, Mr. Lehrer's comments are analyzed in the context of the videotaped broadcasts, and conclusions are drawn about *The NewsHour*'s distinguishing characteristics and the extent to which it fulfills its lofty mission on behalf of the public it is intended to serve. Appendixes include a transcript of the interview with Mr. Lehrer, summaries of the seven *NewsHour* broadcasts used for this study, and background information on *The NewsHour* provided via email by MacNeil/Lehrer Production's Department of Communications.

Importance of the Study

Answers to the research questions posed in this inquiry have implications for at least three constituencies. The first is *The NewsHour* itself. "We're always experimenting," said Mr. Lehrer during the interview,

> but within a basic philosophy and within a basic format. We fool with the details; we do it all the time, and hopefully always will. A program like ours without an open mind toward change and all of that isn't going to last very long. You always have to remember: The programs that don't last very long are those that have to reinvent what they're doing, and why they're doing something, every day. We know why we're doing it, but we have to keep an open mind on how we do things, and we do (Lehrer interview, 2002).

Evidently, Mr. Lehrer's willingness to experiment and embrace change doesn't imply that he keeps an eye on what the networks are doing. Asked to share his thoughts about Disney's purchase of ABC and the effects that mergers of this sort have on news programming, Mr. Lehrer replied simply, "I don't know." Then he continued,

> You'd have to ask somebody else about that. I don't watch them. I'm on the air when these other people are on the air, and I'm not a student of that sort of thing (Lehrer interview, 2002).

Mr. Lehrer and his colleagues could benefit from keeping track of what their counterparts are doing on the commercial airwaves. Such monitoring could work both ways: It could help *NewsHour* staff avoid potential pitfalls, and it could generate ideas for improving content and format.

Network television journalists also stand to benefit from this kind of inquiry. Early in the interview, Mr. Lehrer was asked to comment on media consolidation and concentration of ownership. "I think, frankly, the jury is still out on all of this," he replied.

> These people—the television part of it, at least, and the newspapers too, to some degree—they're in a kind of desperation phase right now. Nobody really knows where all of this is headed...As the channels increase and the options increase—and of course with the Internet thing at about the same time, and the websites of various news organizations, including our own—everybody's kind of flailing out there, in a very competitive environment...The effects have been panic in some cases. There has been some good experimentation and some bad experimentation. Where it's all headed, nobody knows (Lehrer interview, 2002).

Mr. Lehrer went on to point out that the kind of journalism practiced on *The NewsHour*, "whatever it is" (Lehrer interview, 2002), was once standard fare on the commercial airwaves. In the nearly three decades since it first went on the air, *The NewsHour* has gone through considerable experimentation and innovation, but it has all been undertaken in the context of a core philosophy of news. If Mr. Lehrer is right about the current state of commercial broadcasting—that is, if network news is the offspring of desperation rather than a clearly articulated set of values—then perhaps the time has come for journalists to look back at the road they've traveled in their quest for market

share. They might discover ways to silence their critics and, in the process, uncover valuable lessons from America's much-maligned public broadcasting system.

A third and final constituency that stands to benefit from this study is the community of communication scholars. A review of the literature yields relatively little scholarship on news and public affairs programming on public television in general, and *The NewsHour* in particular. By analyzing *The NewsHour* in the context of noncommercial television's public service mission and the alleged weaknesses of network news, this thesis advocates inclusion of *The NewsHour* in studies of the content, processes and effects of television news. Ideally, this thesis can play some role, however modest, in fostering further study into *The NewsHour*'s unusual brand of journalism.

Outcomes of the Research

The conclusions presented in Chapter V can be briefly summarized. First, *The NewsHour* has five key characteristics: (1) in contrast to its commercial competitors, *The NewsHour* dedicates a great deal of time to stories; (2) there is a substantial commitment to covering foreign affairs; (3) there is an equally huge commitment to avoiding sensational and titillating stories; (4) the program is issue-oriented; and (5) the program avoids focusing on personalities at the expense of substantive issues. Second, *The NewsHour* is serious about the use of television as an instrument of public information and public service. Third, in keeping with the Jeffersonian notion that democracy depends on an informed citizenry, *The NewsHour* is committed to using television as an instrument to foster informed opinions about what Mr. Lehrer referred to as "the things that matter" (Lehrer interview, 2002). Fourth, the program adheres to the principle that

journalism should be "straightforward and even-handed" (Lehrer interview, 2002). Fifth, it functions for the most part independently from both corporate and government controls. Sixth, given the limitations inherent in television's one-way transmission, *The NewsHour* is serious about serving as an arena for public debate. Finally, and largely as a function of the anchor's background and personal convictions, *The NewsHour* exhibits the key tenets of the social responsibility theory.

As a case study, this thesis makes no attempt to compare *The NewsHour*'s range of story topics and news frames with commercial news offerings. Nevertheless, a review of the literature on network television news leaves little doubt that *The NewsHour* is fundamentally different from its commercial competitors and does indeed rise to the Carnegie Commission's challenge. Two caveats, however, point the way to further research. First, *The NewsHour*'s dependence on the "experts"—opinion leaders, government officials and policy makers—seems to marginalize "ordinary citizens." Granted, some stories, such as the proposed construction of a missile defense shield, leave little alternative to interviewing people who are competent to address complex and technical issues. But not all stories require expert testimony, and some would clearly benefit from a multiplicity of viewpoints. Media ethicists remind us that there is another reason to include diverse perspectives in news and public affairs programming: In today's mediated reality, justice for the powerless depends increasingly on the media's willingness to advocate on behalf of those who lie outside the socioeconomic establishment (Patterson and Wilkins, 2002). Research into the audience effects of *NewsHour* programming would shed light on the extent to which viewers feel under-represented on tax-supported airwaves.

Second, in its ongoing effort to be straightforward and even-handed, *The NewsHour* often presents so many valid and defensible opinions that viewers might walk away from their television sets more bewildered than ever. Again, studies are in order to determine the effects on viewers of programming that is so consistently balanced.

In future studies of the complex web of daily news coverage in the United States, researchers might find that *NewsHour* viewers are affected by an over-dependence on so-called experts and absolute balance on every issue. But they are unlikely to find evidence that guests and interviewees are treated with anything less than civility on *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. Early in the interview, Mr. Lehrer described the hyper-competitive atmosphere that has given birth to "shouting talk shows" (Lehrer interview, 2002). "They're not about the news," he said, "they're about shouting. They're about getting people to get on television and shout at one another about the news (Lehrer interview, 2002)." For viewers who enjoy shouting matches, there are plenty of alternatives. For everybody else, there's an hour every weeknight of gloriously boring news on PBS.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

> [Robert MacNeil and I] both believed the American people were not as stupid as some of the folks publishing and programming for them believed. We were convinced they cared about the significant matters of human events—war, poverty, corruption, government, politics and the other subjects that form the normal categories for news. And we were certain they could and would hang in there more than thirty-five seconds for information about those subjects if given a chance. And that, given enough information, they could even figure out on their own what to think.
>
> *Excerpt from Jim Lehrer's autobiography, A Bus of My Own*, 1992

Introduction

"Good evening, I'm Jim Lehrer. On *The NewsHour* tonight, a review of today's news, including..."

With this simple and thoroughly predictable introduction, one of America's most respected journalists and host of *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* begins an hour-long recap of the day's events. The program, produced by MacNeil/Lehrer Productions and WETA/26 in Washington, DC, in association with Thirteen/WNET New York, originates from the nation's capital, has a West Coast studio at KQED/San Francisco, and maintains a video production studio in Denver, Colorado. The program is carried by 309 Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) stations and is accessible to 97 percent of all U.S. households, giving it the most extensive reach of any PBS program. Thanks to satellite technology, *The NewsHour* is available in Asia, Europe, Latin America and Africa (Online NewsHour: Show History and Fact Sheet, 2001). *The NewsHour*'s unique brand

of journalism has won not only a loyal following; it has also garnered awards for quality programming and outstanding journalism, including numerous Emmy and Peabody awards.

First-time viewers of PBS's flagship news and public affairs program can see at a glance that this is no ordinary broadcast. In an age of dazzling special effects, *The NewsHour* offers little in the way of distracting visuals. Events and issues are covered exhaustively, sometimes to the brink of redundancy and even boredom. Interviewers, whether Lehrer himself or another member of *The NewsHour* team, treat their guests with respect and decorum. Most startling of all, there are no commercials. Other than sponsorship plugs at the beginning and end of the program, *The NewsHour* is uncluttered by the kind of advertising that has reduced network news to shrinking sound bites and seriously eroded the amount of time that commercial newscasts can devote to news and public affairs (Moy and Pfau, 2000). As far as its estimated eight million weekly viewers are concerned (Online NewsHour: Show History and Fact Sheet, 2001), *The NewsHour* stands as a bulwark of thoughtful programming and reasoned debate against a rising tide of commercialized journalism.

Success notwithstanding, *The NewsHour* has not been immune from critics who have assailed America's public broadcasting system since the first intrepid educational station—KUHT in Houston, Texas—went on air in May 1953 (Engelman, 1996). Nor has *The NewsHour* managed to dodge funding crises and ideological skirmishes that have, at times, threatened the very existence of America's public broadcasting system. Media scholars who have studied the troubled history of noncommercial broadcasting in America point out that the public sphere has never fared very well in a nation committed

to the principles of free market capitalism and wary of governmental controls (McChesney, 1999). Public television pioneer James Day expresses the opinion of many scholars in his assessment that noncommercial TV has never managed to stake a claim in mainstream American culture. "For more than four decades," writes Day,

> the public broadcasting system of this country has remained on the periphery of the playing field, its mission clouded in a vaguely defined concept of 'education,' its structure balkanized into more than a hundred competing fiefdoms, its financial needs grossly undermet, and its loosely joined elements neither having nor wanting strong national leadership (Day, 1995, 2).

Predictably, scholars have been skeptical of claims that *The NewsHour* has escaped the problems afflicting noncommercial television. Defenders of the program claim that *The NewsHour* continues to fulfill its historic mandate to deliver news and public affairs programming free from commercial pressures. Critics, on the other hand, point to the decline of federal funding and increasing reliance on corporate sponsorships as evidence of *The NewsHour*'s transformation into yet another mouthpiece for the ideology of the marketplace.

To establish an appropriate framework for this inquiry, this chapter begins with *The NewsHour*'s emergence as one of public television's most successful programs in spite of capricious legislative protections and a chorus of right-wing criticism that television programming should be denied federal funding and left to the dictates of the marketplace. The literature review that follows includes an overview of the history of public television, scholarship on television news, and recent studies of *The NewsHour*'s content and

format. This background paves the way for Chapters III and IV, where Jim Lehrer's perspectives on news and public affairs programming, along with an examination of videotaped broadcasts from 1995 through 2001, are considered.

News and Public Affairs Programming on Noncommercial Television

The outlines of what was to become America's public television system began to take shape in April 1952 when the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reserved 242 channels for noncommercial use (Day, 1995). With an ambiguity that was destined to plague public television throughout its tortured history, the FCC failed to provide a sense of direction for the fledgling system and left funding issues to the prerogative of local stations. As a harbinger of things to come, educational stations were denied the option of selling advertising as a revenue source, and commercial broadcasters were held to a loosely-defined public interest requirement that compelled those who benefited from the use of publicly owned frequencies to act in the best interest of the public they served (Day, 1995). For all intents and purposes, those daring enough to venture into public broadcasting were left to their own devices.

Among the first to enter the fray were the educators and community activists who founded KQED in San Francisco in June 1954 (Day, 1995). Adept at overcoming adversity and determined to generate culturally enriching programming in spite of a shoestring budget, KQED's pioneers set up shop "in three splintering wooden warehouses near San Francisco's Skid Row" (Stewart, 1999, 48) and went to work. An opportunity to add news and public affairs programming to their eclectic mix came in 1968, when a Newspaper Guild strike opened the door to an alternative source of news.

Hiring reporters off the picket lines for the beneficent sum of $100 a week, KQED launched *Newspaper of the Air*, a short-lived program that had long-term effects on news and public affairs programming. "In Marshall McLuhan's lexicon," recalled Day, "*Newspaper of the Air* was 'process.' It was news in the act of becoming a newscast—unedited, unformed, unfinished (Day, 1995, 54)."

The program lasted a mere nine weeks until the strike ended. But executives at the Ford Foundation, already heavily committed to public television, clearly saw something they liked, and their $750,000 grant enabled the show to remain on air. Christened *Newsroom* and dedicated to in-depth and, at times, contentious journalism, San Francisco's upstart broadcast became the model for news and public affairs programming across the nation. One of the most prominent stations to duplicate the program was KERA in Dallas, Texas, where Jim Lehrer, a former city editor at the *Dallas Times Herald*, was cutting his teeth in public television as director of news and public affairs (Lehrer, 1992). Early on, he was less than sanguine about television's effectiveness as a public affairs medium. "I had the normal newspaperman's attitude toward television," recalled Lehrer in his autobiography, A Bus of my Own.

> It was there mostly to make people giggle and to show the Dallas Cowboys winning NFL championships. With some exceptions, the on-air reporters were deep-voiced, hair-enthralled former disc jockeys who had turned to news because they couldn't keep up with the changes in rock and roll (Lehrer, 1992, 102).

Launched in 1970 and introduced each night with theme music from the Beatles' "Here Comes the Sun," KERA's *Newsroom*, like its counterpart in the Bay Area, "was a

kind of anti-newscast—an almost self-consciously unpolished and contraconventional nightly roundtable of information and opinion from a motley crew of six to ten reporters, only some of whom were journalists" (Atkinson, 1997, 67). The format, adopted by such prestigious programs as *The McLaughlin Group* and *Washington Week in Review*, would be familiar to public television news fans today. Lehrer, promoted to anchor, was seated in the middle of a circle of reporters, some in shirtsleeves, leading debriefing sessions on the news of the day as volunteers fielded phone calls from the television audience (Lehrer, 1992). For six years, *Newsroom* provided Dallas-area viewers with thirty minutes of no-nonsense reporting and difficult-to-digest details. As Lehrer recalled in his autobiography,

> I am proud to say that on *Newsroom*, Dallas got its first serious media, consumer and environmental reporting, as well as its first clean journalistic looks at the gigantically powerful First Baptist Church of Dallas, the glittery local world of debutantes, the then depressingly secret world of homosexuality (Lehrer, 1992, 106).

The Carnegie Commission and the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967

As Lehrer and other journalists around the country were experimenting with public affairs programming, executives at the Ford Foundation were coming to a consensus that their days as public television's primary benefactor were coming to a close. Fred Friendly, a long-time CBS executive who served as television adviser to Ford Foundation President McGeorge Bundy in the late 1960s, recognized that the Foundation's $10 million in annual funding was only a crutch that prevented educational television from

finding a financially secure base of its own (Friendly, 1967). In lieu of a presidential commission, the Johnson Administration gave its blessing to a proposal that the Carnegie Corporation of New York, a private foundation with a long history of support for educational and broadcasting policymaking, conduct a comprehensive study (Day, 1995). Armed with a $500,000 grant, the Carnegie Corporation funded a 15-member commission to conduct a year-long study with the stated purpose of recommending "lines along which noncommercial television might most usefully develop during the years ahead" (Carnegie Commission, 1967, vii).

Among the commission's most vexing concerns was the "jerrybuilt" system of funding that had emerged over the years to support public television. Most money came from state and federal governments acting through school systems, state universities, and other local institutions, and there was a modicum of direct federal support. Local stations relied on their own initiatives to organize fund raising efforts and entice subscribers, and underwriting was sometimes available for specific programs. But clearly, public television would have withered on the vine without foundation support. The time had come to clear the decks and, once and for all, put public television on secure financial footing.

The commission's long-awaited report, Public Television: A Program for Action, was published in 1967 and included 12 specific recommendations to overhaul public television from the inside out (Day, 1995). The commission's two most significant proposals addressed the independence of public television and, predictably, the rationalization of its funding. As a means of sheltering public television from political pressures, the commission called on Congress to charter a nonprofit, nongovernmental

corporation to receive and disburse federal and private funds. Funding was to come from a two percent manufacturer's excise tax on television sets, rising to a ceiling of five percent. Freed from the government's appropriations process, the newly established corporation would receive its money through a trust fund, and the "free communication of ideas in a free society" (Carnegie Commission, 1967, 8) would be greatly enhanced.

Most of the Carnegie Commission's recommendations were embodied in legislation that sailed through Congress in record time; only nine months elapsed between initial deliberations and the law's final passage in November 1967 (Hoynes, 1994). Under the provisions of the landmark Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, noncommercial television lost its somewhat outdated designation as "educational" and was henceforth to be known as "public." The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) was created to receive funds, and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) was designed to gather and deliver programming. Local stations were left to lobby Congress and protect their interests as best they could.

Two key recommendations were left out of the final package, and their absence would have far-reaching implications for news and public affairs programming on the noncommercial airwaves. First, funding was to come from Congressional appropriations rather than a manufacturer's excise tax on television sets. Second, the Carnegie Commission's preference for a nongovernmental corporation to serve as a shelter from outside influences was scrapped in favor of a 15-member CPB board consisting of presidential appointees, with no more than a bare majority coming from one political party. "It remained to be seen," wrote Engelman, "whether a new public broadcasting system, its very creation the outgrowth of a highly political process, funded by Congress,

governed by presidential appointees, and enmeshed in the bureaucratic intricacies of the nation's capital, could remain insulated from politics (Engelman, 1996, 160)."

The Public Broadcasting Service: Government Agency or Public Trust?

The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 laid the foundation for a long-awaited flowering of noncommercial television. Nourished by federal funding, the number of stations nearly doubled, to 223, between 1969 and 1972, and the audience grew by a third (Engelman, 1996, 166). Moreover, programming became even more innovative and creative. In 1970, PBS began distributing public affairs programming and gave birth to one of television's most enduring public affairs programs, *Washington Week in Review*.

Not surprisingly, the programming was altogether too bold for the newly ensconced Nixon administration, particularly now that one third of the PBS network schedule consisted of public affairs programming (Engelman, 1996). Riled by the likes of political commentators Robert MacNeil and Sander Vanocur, the Nixon administration sought to rein in what it perceived to be a federally funded liberal television network (Hoynes, 1999). In his memoirs, Jim Lehrer recalled that, for a time, at least, the Nixon people were winning.

> There was even serious talk of reducing public affairs programming dramatically. Some people in the system were suggesting we eliminate it altogether and stick to things for children and adults who liked classical music and English drama (Lehrer, 1992, 119).

Realizing that federal funding was the weak link in insulating public television from political pressure, and intent on exploiting the confusion between the CPB, PBS and local

stations, the Administration zeroed in on funding for CPB. The strategy worked: On June 30, 1972, Nixon vetoed a CPB appropriations bill that had been passed by large margins in both houses of Congress (Hoynes, 1994). The President signed a bill authorizing funding in August 1972 only after the CPB's chairman, president and director of television resigned, thus paving the way for Nixon appointees (Hoynes, 1994; Engelman, 1996).

The political vortex that engulfed Washington in the wake of the Watergate break-in gave public television a reprieve from politically motivated assaults. Nevertheless, the entire episode left a lasting legacy for noncommercial broadcasting. Despite the best efforts of the Carnegie Commission, public television was clearly vulnerable to political pressure. The CPB board's presidential appointees were far from immune to inside-the-Beltway politics, and the entire system was held hostage to the federal appropriations process. In the years to come, public television would be forced to rely more than ever on corporate underwriting as a source of revenue. At the same time, the burst of energy and creativity that had given such high hopes to advocates of public programming in the late Sixties and early Seventies gave way to caution and a fear of risk- taking. To many, Nixon's broadsides had reduced the CPB to the status of a government agency (Engelman, 1996).

The NewsHour: A New Brand of Journalism

In one of those great ironies of history, President Nixon's fall from grace was probably accelerated by the same "liberal" journalists whom he sought to discredit. In May 1972, Jim Lehrer left KERA in Dallas to accept a position with PBS in Washington,

DC, where he was expected to coordinate news and public affairs programming as well as coverage by Robert MacNeil and Sander Vanocur, both of whom occupied prominent positions at the top of Nixon's hit list. Lehrer, who fully expected to be sent packing back to Dallas in the politically charged atmosphere of the Nixon scandals, was saved by two fortuitous events: the Senate Watergate hearings; and Sander Vanocur's decision to leave public television (Lehrer, 1992). In Vanocur's absence, Lehrer teamed up with veteran reporter Robert MacNeil to co-anchor three months of all-day broadcasts on the Watergate hearings. As Lehrer later recalled,

> MacNeil and I were aware that this was new ground for public TV. We were on every night. This is the first time anyone had used prime time in a public affairs way. It was a huge thing, and we knew it (quoted in Stewart, 1999, 146).

Popular reaction to their reporting was overwhelmingly positive. In the ensuing years, MacNeil and Lehrer leveraged the support they had earned during the Watergate fiasco to build a loyal following that believed wholeheartedly in their commitment to precision, fairness, and in-depth coverage of stories that mattered (Lehrer, 1992; MacNeil, 1983). The irony of the situation was not lost on Lehrer. As he recalls in his autobiography, "[Nixon] and his minions were so distracted with the crumbling of his presidency that the plan to crumble us was abandoned and forgotten (Lehrer, 1992, 122)."

Following the Watergate hearings, MacNeil returned to his former employer in London, the BBC. He subsequently returned to the United States and went to work at New York's public television station, WNET. In September 1975, he launched an evening, half hour, single subject news program, *The Robert MacNeil Report*. As his Washington correspondent, he chose his old friend, Jim Lehrer, who was then working

for the National Public Affairs Center for Television (NPACT). When his organization was absorbed into Washington's public television station, WETA, Lehrer was part of the transition. With free rein from WETA's management, Lehrer was allowed to appear on *The Robert MacNeil Report* two to three times each week with news from the nation's capital.

Within six months, the program was rechristened *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report* and was broadcast weeknights to a national audience. According to Lehrer, all guests were treated courteously. Beating them up and embarrassing them were strictly forbidden. He and MacNeil were there to help their guests articulate their ideas and opinions, not score points for political purposes or to titillate viewers. Thomas Griffith of Time magazine, the first national commentator to take note of public television's first weeknight news and public affairs program, wrote simply, "They have the courage to be serious" (quoted in Lehrer, 1992, 142). When the show was expanded from thirty minutes to an hour in 1983 and renamed *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour*, one pundit commented that he thought the program was already an hour (Hickey, 1995). Another commentator went so far as to brand the show "gloriously boring" (quoted in Hickey, 1995, 31).

MacNeil and Lehrer have embraced all such criticisms as evidence that their commitment to unadulterated news and public affairs programming has been right on track. The distinguishing feature of their program, writes Paul Burka in Texas Monthly, has always been civility (Burka, 1995). Burka describes Lehrer as a newspaperman at heart "with a high regard for hard news, objective reporting, and the written word" who has avoided vitriolic exchanges with his guests and behaves more "like a basketball referee tossing up a jump ball and then getting out of the way" (Burka, 1995, 58). Nor,

according to Executive Producer Lester Crystal, does the program rely on research and ratings to determine program content. "We don't feel a need to research the composition of our audience" (quoted in Hatch, 2001, 25), claimed Crystal in an interview with Electronic Media.

Clearly, MacNeil and Lehrer's refusal to play by the rules of television journalism has paid off. According to Stewart (1999), by the time Robert MacNeil retired in late 1995, 63 percent of viewers thought that *The NewsHour* was the most credible news service on the air, and satellites were beaming the program far beyond America's shores to Europe, Asia and Africa.

Much was made of Robert MacNeil's decision to retire from public broadcasting. Walter Goodman of the Wall Street Journal lamented the loss of MacNeil's sober and authoritarian voice and hoped that Lehrer would be able to carry the freight as sole anchor (Goodman, 1995). But MacNeil was adamant that viewers would see little change once Lehrer took over the helm. Current data on the program seem to bear out MacNeil's prediction. Now that Jim Lehrer operates solo as anchor of *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, some eight million people tune into the program at least once each week, and 3.1 million watch the show every night. The program was ranked the number-one source of television news in a 1996 Wall Street Journal survey of more than 1,500 opinion leaders, and 55 percent of government leaders, business executives and other opinion leaders polled found *The NewsHour*'s broadcast to be most reliable (*NewsHour* Fact Sheet). Clearly, the decision to expand the program to an hour and go head-to-head with network news was a viable one (Lehrer, 1992).

MacNeil was equally adamant about the importance of public television in an age of insipid sound bites and flashy graphics. "The networks and newspapers are chasing what is attractive to viewers and paying less and less attention to what is important and serious" (quoted in Guly, 1995, 24), explained MacNeil in an interview on the eve of his departure. Asked in another interview if he thought there should be more journalism on public television, and why people chose *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* over the plethora of commercial alternatives, MacNeil chose to describe the main difference between commercial and public broadcasting:

> It isn't the number of hours, it's the quality of programming and the aesthetic that is different. People come to public television because what they get is different. It's quieter, it's more thoughtful, it's less intrusive, less abusive (quoted in Hickey, 1995, 28).

Lehrer concurs with his former colleague's assessment. Commenting in a recent interview for American Journalism Review, Lehrer described his attitude toward news and public affairs.

> I have an old-fashioned view that news is not a commodity. News is information that's required in a democratic society, and Thomas Jefferson said a democracy is dependent on an informed citizenry...That sounds corny, but I don't care whether that sounds corny or not. It's the truth (quoted in Robertson, 2001, 49).

Lehrer's perspective on the importance of an informed citizenry in democratic societies finds precedent in the *polis* of ancient Greece, where free citizens were expected to participate in the art of politics through rhetoric and participation in the assembly. Direct democracy was feasible in small communities. When the concept of self

government was resurrected in the more densely populated states of the eighteenth century, architects of government realized that participation in public affairs necessitated the development of representative democracy—that is, a political system in which citizens could make their voices heard through elected representatives.

As America's Founding Fathers understood all too well, the survival of such a revolutionary system depended on an independent press to facilitate the free flow of ideas. Their commitment to freedom of the press was embodied in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, a piece of legislation that continues to serve as the cornerstone of political society (Patterson and Wilkins, 2002). In terms of journalistic ethics, the First Amendment constitutes the bedrock of the social responsibility theory that has been instrumental in creating and protecting public broadcasting. Corny or not, Lehrer's reference to Jeffersonian principles serves as a reminder that he and his colleagues in the media are charged with nothing less than the maintenance of democracy (see Appendix C for a list of Mr. Lehrer's principles of journalism).

Public Television under Siege

The NewsHour's longevity and success in attracting viewers has provided scant insulation from public television's critics. Guided by the Reagan/Thatcher ethos of free market capitalism, the apostles of privatization have laid siege to groups and organizations whose survival depend on government funding, and public television has always been an easy target. In 1991, David Horowitz, chairman of the Committee on Media Integrity, wrote a scathing critique of the Public Broadcasting System's alleged left-wing bias and questioned the propriety of allocating federal dollars to programming

that depicted America as an evil empire and celebrated repressive regimes from Nicaragua to Libya. "[T]he current situation is inherently unstable," concluded Horowitz, "and will remain so as long as public television fails to live up to its statutory mandate by presenting a fair balance of views reflecting the broad interests of the population that is being taxed to help support it (Horowitz, 1991, 32)."

No sooner had Horowitz's broadside against public television been published than Congress found itself in heated debate over authorizing $1.1 billion in federal money for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Liberals committed to educational programming and wary of attempts to circumvent the First Amendment squared off against conservatives who, like Horowitz, were convinced that the Public Broadcasting Service's supposed left-wing bias represented a threat to American values (Hartigan, 1992). Zoglin and Shannon (1992) suggest that the attacks against the Corporation for Public Broadcasting were somewhat misdirected. At the time of the debate, the agency accounted for only 17% of all public TV funding, with the rest coming from individual subscribers, corporate sponsors and other sources. Moreover, some observers were beginning to notice that corporate underwriting was leading to blander, not more provocative, programming (Zoglin and Shannon, 1992). Nevertheless, advocates of public television had only to look at the maelstrom developing over funding for the National Endowment for the Arts to remind themselves of the uphill battle they faced.

With Communism in full-scale retreat, conservatives had little patience for what they perceived as bloated bureaucracies. Laurence Jarvik of the Heritage Foundation, one of the country's most conservative think tanks, claimed that public television could only fulfill its educational mission by embracing entrepreneurial values. "[S]o long as public

broadcasting is accountable for federal tax dollars," wrote Jarvik, "it will rightfully be hamstrung by administrative procedures inimical to the creative spirit, designed for civil service priorities (Jarvik, 1992, lecture #383)." Jarvik returned to his soapbox in 1995 with a position paper about the role and reach of government and the Public Broadcasting Service's elitist culture determined to manipulate it for its own purposes. "No matter that the U.S. Constitution prohibits titles of nobility; public broadcasters see themselves like the Dons of 18th century Spain, with neither dust on their boots nor soil of commerce on their hands (Jarvik, 1995, 2)."

As if they didn't have their hands full fending off the conservative assault, defenders of public television have had to contend with criticisms from the Left about their association with commercial interests and lack of vision. Writing in The Nation—a liberal weekly whose first cause was the emancipation of slaves during the Civil War—Alexander Cockburn questioned PBS' objective and unfettered journalism in light of the $6 million it was accepting annually from Archer Daniels Midland to support *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* (Cockburn, 1996). Complaints were even filtering in from Lake Wobegon, where Garrison Keillor, host of the popular *A Prairie Home Companion* on National Public Radio, was bemoaning public television's failure to accept its journalistic responsibility. "I don't think there's any reason for public television to exist anymore," said Keillor in an interview with The Nation. "They've been completely rendered obsolete by cable television...What C-Span is now is what public television should have been and never had the wit to do (quoted in Barsamian, 1998, 10)."

The History of PBS

In The Vanishing Vision: The Inside Story of Public Television (1995), James Day provides a comprehensive survey of public television's troubled history, beginning in 1946 when the first TV sets flickered to life across America and concluding with the ideological battles of mid-1990s, when public television was under siege from both ends of the political spectrum. Day, who enjoys a reputation as "one of the system's genuine intellectuals and most gifted writers" (Avery, 1998, 131), earned his spurs as a pioneer at San Francisco's KQED, whose ramshackle offices in San Francisco's South-of-the-Market industrial district served as a metaphor for the improvisational, make-do nature of what was to become America's public television system. The picture he painted is of a broadcast medium that has been purposely marginalized by public policy, whose mission has been clouded in ambiguity, and whose effectiveness has been compromised by balkanized leadership. Throughout his book, Day evidences deep concern for the future of America's public sphere and the participatory democracy upon which it depends. "What is needed," concluded Day, "is both a comprehensive study of the entire spectrum of interrelated electronic mass media and a public-policy debate on its future (Day, 1995, 352)."

William Hoynes' Public Television for Sale: Media, the Market, and the Public Sphere (1994) provides an insightful analysis of public television's struggle to survive in an era of privatization. His overriding concern is with the medium's role in strengthening the public sphere and contributing to a participatory democracy that remains an elusive American ideal. Hoynes covers familiar ground in his observation that American television has been organized from the outset along free market principles. By contrast,

other industrialized nations have tended to regard the public airwaves as a scarce public utility that needs to be sheltered from market forces. Over the years, goal ambiguity, exacerbated by external pressures and funding crises, have led inexorably to privatization, leaving citizens as a passive audience with little or no relationship to television programming. Clearly, concerns over government control, rooted in eighteenth century liberalism and never far from the center of public policy debates (McChesney, 1999), have outweighed fears of commercialization.

For Hoynes, big questions remain to be answered. What is the relationship between public television, the market, and the state? What does it mean to be public in era of privatization? Is there an alternative media structure, a middle path, between the Scylla and Charibdis of state domination and market orientation? Hoynes asserts that civil society, with its recognition that democracy can only thrive when citizens have access to autonomous spaces beyond the reach of the state and marketplace, might hold the key to a more emancipatory democracy. Within such a framework, public television could serve as a forum for discussion and debate.

Like Hoynes, Ralph Engelman does not intend to give a comprehensive history of public television. Published only a year after Day's book, Public Radio and Television in America: A Political History (1996) "provides an interpretive overview of the development of noncommercial radio and television in the United States since World War II" (Engelman, 1996, 3). Engelman's approach is deeply informed by the school of communication studies that examines media in a broad social context encompassing politics, economics and ideology. His underlying assumption is that the social relations of communication are inseparable from the social relations of power. Armed with this

insight, Engelman explores the historic tension between utopian visions for public broadcasting and the disposition of communication technology to become instruments of domination and exploitation. The author acknowledges his debt to Jurgen Habermas whose seminal book, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (1989), chronicles the emergence of forums for public debate during the European Enlightenment and their near disappearance today. For Habermas, the public sphere that once transcended class interests has largely evaporated, replaced by a mass culture whose citizens are manipulated for political and commercial purposes (Habermas, 1989). Moreover, Engelman rejects the conventional wisdom that casts a pall of inevitability over the commercial orientation of American broadcasting. "An examination of the interwar period," wrote the author, "dispels the myth that a consensus existed from the outset about the desirability of a predominantly commercial system of broadcasting (Engelman, 1996, 11)." Rather, America's advertising-saturated airwaves are the outgrowth of bitter disputes and political maneuvering between educators, proponents of a public sphere, and the ultimately victorious apostles of free market capitalism. Engelman embraces the contemporary movement to reform the public airwaves. "It is essential," concluded Engelman, "that the utopian tradition be reaffirmed to counter corporate and state control of mass media and to animate the renewal of public radio and television in the United States (Engelman, 1996, 307)."

On a lighter and decidedly more entertaining note, David Stewart's The PBS Companion: A History of Public Television (1999) gives an informal and anecdotal look at public television's landmark programs and the visionaries who made them happen. From *Shakespeare on TV*, *Age of Kings*, and *Masterpiece Theater* to *Sesame Street*, *The*

French Chef, *NOVA*, and *Wall Street Week*, Stewart's book reveals the inside scoop on programs that are part and parcel of American television folklore. Stewart's account of KQED's foray into news and public affairs programming shows the direct link between educational television's tenuous beginnings in the 1950s and the format that has become familiar to viewers of *The McLaughlin Group*, *Washington Week in Review*, and, most important for present purposes, *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*.

Network News: Background, Theory, and Criticism

In many respects, the improvisational nature of news and public affairs programming on noncommercial television finds its counterpart in network news, a genre whose origins date back the immediate post-World War II period. Sig Mickelson, an early vice president of CBS Inc. and the first president of CBS News, divides the history of television news into three distinct eras: a tentative and experimental phase that lasted from mid-1946 through the end of 1960; a phase of consolidation and refinement from 1961 through 1980; and the current phase characterized by declining ratings and waning influence (Mickelson, 1998). Mickelson attributes the explosive growth of television news, and especially its astonishing influence on politics and government affairs, to the 1948 political conventions. "Television," wrote Mickelson, "had then its first real opportunity to prove to masses of Americans that it could deliver a service unlike anything that had ever been available (Mickelson, 1998, 10)." Coast-to-coast, televised coverage of the political convention of 1952 and the ensuing election left little doubt that television news was here to stay.

But what, exactly, was the news that television was supposed to deliver? McQuail (2000) traces the sociology of news to Walter Lippmann and Robert Park. For Lippmann, the process of newsgathering is the search for objective and clear signals that signify an event. News, therefore, "is not a mirror of social conditions, but the report of an aspect that has obtruded itself" (quoted in McQuail, 2000, 338). Park, whose focus was on the essential properties of a news report, believed that news should be timely, unsystematic and perishable, and should be perceived by its consumers as unexpected or at least unusual. Moreover, the purpose of news is not to instill knowledge, but rather to provide people with orientation and a sense of direction. Finally, Park claimed that news should be predictable—that is, news should contain reports of accidents and incidents that the public expects to see in day-to-day reporting (McQuail, 2000).

Moy and Pfau (2000) elaborate on the normative functions of the news media in democratic societies. In their seminal book, With Malice toward All? The Media and Public Confidence in Democratic Institutions, they charge the media with maintaining surveillance of the sociopolitical environment, identifying key issues, providing platforms for diverse groups and encouraging dialog across those groups, and motivating citizens to learn and become involved in the political process (Moy and Pfau, 2000).

As is evident in the large body of literature that has developed on television news, the media's success in functioning as a genuine fourth estate is subject to debate. A substantial body of literature addresses allegations that the moneymen have taken over the airwaves and thereby widened the gap between the news media's ideal role in democratic society and reality. "While television is supposed to be 'free'," wrote Walter Lippmann in 1959, "it has in fact become the creature, the servant and indeed the

prostitute of merchandising (quoted in Friendly, 1968, 267)." With vast experience in both commercial and public broadcasting, Fred Friendly laid the blame for public television's plight on the doorstep of the FCC, whose vague regulations enabled commercialism to dominate the airwaves (Friendly, 1968). Writing in 1971 for Journalism Quarterly, Eversole addressed the dangers that concentration of media ownership posed for the culture at large. "Mass media concentration and control of communications networks by electronic conglomerates intimately linked to military activities," concluded Eversole, "pose a potential threat to a free flow of creative ideas so necessary in society...The inability of government to maintain that free climate puts the future of communications and cultural values into serious jeopardy (Eversole, 1971, 268)."

Pride and Clark (1973) were alarmed by allegations that television news coverage of racial issues was biased. According to their research, people in authority—most notably then Vice President Spiro T. Agnew—were reviling reporters for their bias against the political establishment. At the same time, black leaders were leveling an opposite accusation that the networks, as "instruments of the white power structure" (quoted in Pride and Clark, 1973, 319), were inherently biased against the black community. Pride and Clark's comparative analysis of ABC, CBS, and NBC was based on an elaborate coding scheme that determined: (1) the emphasis that each network placed on the race issue; (2) the influence of language structure in news broadcasts; and (3) the manner in which networks portrayed prominent symbols such as the police, the President, blacks, and so forth. They concluded that dissimilarities between the networks belied charges of

uniformity in coverage and that there was no evidence of systematic bias against either political authority or the black community (Pride and Clark, 1973).

Another study involved a cross-media comparison of the 1972 presidential campaign. In this study, Meadow (1973) used content analytic techniques to compare television and newspaper coverage of the race between Richard Nixon and George McGovern. Both media were coded along five equivalent dimensions, including the number of items covered, the type of report, the item's placement in the newspaper or during the broadcast, the column inches or length of time given to presidential spokesmen, and the total length of the article or newscast. Meadow's most striking finding was the uniformity of coverage across media sources. He also found that the incumbent had an advantage with respect to news coverage. Perhaps predictably, Meadow surmised that candidates who "make more news receive more coverage" (Meadow, 1973, 488).

Lemert (1974) noted that the standardization and duplication of newspaper content had attracted scholarly attention since the 1940s. Yet at the time of his study, there remained "a striking lack of work directed at whether there is duplication among competing network television newscasts" (Lemert, 1974, 238). Like Pride and Clark, Lemert had only three networks to compare: ABC, NBC, and CBS. In his study, coders were instructed to view network newscasts during a specific time period and record information, including: (1) the story topic; (2) the starting time of each item on the newscast; (3) visuals in the story, including details and duration of any remotes; and (4) story characteristics that were clearly elucidated. During weekdays, Lemert discovered significant duplication of newscast content; the amount of duplication dropped

significantly on weekends when "hard news" tended to give way to "soft news" and diverse content. "The optimist," concluded Lemert,

> might say that this shows that, given the opportunity, the networks still can dig up 'hard' news in an innovative way. The pessimist might say that it all shows that most government offices are closed on Saturdays and Sundays (Lemert, 1974, 244).

In 1975, Dominick, Wurtzel and Lometti tackled the phenomenon of "happy talk," otherwise known as the Eyewitness News format, at New York's three flagship stations: ABC, NBC, and CBS. This method of delivering the news is familiar today to anyone who watches a local newscast, where personable news people interject their opinions of the day's happenings and engage in pleasant banter with their colleagues. In an effort to determine whether or not the Eyewitness format differs not only in form but also in content from other formats, the authors of this study developed a coding technique to record the amount of time spent on each item and brief story descriptions. They concluded that "many of the criticisms directed at the Eyewitness format were not substantiated" (Dominick, Wurtzel and Lometti, 1975, 217). They did, however, come to a consensus that the Eyewitness format lends itself to violent stories, human-interest material and comedy. "While there are many ways of presenting a newscast," summarized the authors, "a systematic effort to alter news program content so that entertaining material is given priority rates serious questions about the nature of television journalism (Dominick, Wurtzel and Lometti, 1975, 218)."

To determine how day-to-day decisions are made in a typical newsroom, Gant and Dimmick (2000) conducted an holistic field study in a Midwestern TV station to analyze the sources, topics, and selection criteria that frame the perceptions that viewers glean

from the 6:00 p.m. weekday newscast. Crime ranked as the number-one topic for news story ideas, followed by business and the economy, education, and environment and ecology, with government and politics trailing in last place. Topics were less diverse than they might appear at first glance; nearly forty percent of the newscast involved some sort of aberration (crime, disasters and accidents). The researchers also found that TV decision-makers serve a vital function as gatekeepers of newscast content.

Coulson, Riffe, Lacy and St. Cyr (2001) conducted a survey of 283 television journalists in the 214 U.S. TV markets to determine station commitment to local government news. Their conclusions would come as no surprise to researchers who have examined the proliferation of "happy talk," the increasing prominence of aberration stories, and the decline of political discourse. Although small markets were shown to be more committed to city hall than large ones, the consensus was that news about local government issues has lost its luster. Moreover, the city hall beat no longer enjoys special stature or status, even within the newsroom.

As television insinuated itself into the fabric of American life, polls simply confirmed what everybody supposedly knew—that most people learn about the world through mass media and especially television. Robinson and Levy, skeptical that television was indeed the main source of news for most people, set out to study information flow. Their research question was twofold: (1) how much information from television news is actually acquired and understood; and (2) how does it affect subsequent behavior and decision-making? What they deemed the "main source myth" has "significantly hindered our ability to understand the complex ways in which the mass media diffuse public awareness and understanding of news events" (Robinson and Levy,

1986, 8). In the researchers' analytic framework, audience awareness and comprehension of the news product were posited as the main dependent variables. Working closely with other researchers, Robinson and Levy assembled focus groups and developed surveys that were informed by review and synthesis of theory as well as empirical research on news comprehension and an examination of news content and cultural factors. They came up with five primary conclusions: (1) television news should not be considered as the public's main source of news; (2) heavier exposure to print media is generally associated with higher levels of comprehension; (3) interpersonal discussion of news may be at least as powerful a predictor of comprehension as exposure to news media; (4) no single news medium should be viewed as "most" predominant; and (5) the news media can do a more effective job of informing the public (Robinson and Levy, 1986).

Robinson and Levy's research seems to bear out Michael Schudson's observation that key incidents have become canonized in a "telemythology" of widely circulated stories about the dangerous powers of television. In a series of essays about mass media, Schudson debunks three specific myths that reside in our collective consciousness: (1) Kennedy defeated Nixon in the 1960 presidential campaign because he looked better on TV; (2) popular opposition to the Viet Nam War was a direct result of the carnage depicted on the evening news; and (3) Reagan's popularity as president can be attributed to his mastery of mass media (Schudson, 1995). Conventional wisdom notwithstanding, the complexity of information flow and comprehension defy simple explanations.

Research spearheaded by Cohen, Adoni and Bantz (1990) grew out of observations of the intractable hostilities in Israel, where conflict manifested in the real world seemed to be at odds with its portrayal on television. In light of scholarship indicating "that

television news does not portray things as they really are" (Cohen, Adoni and Bantz, 1990, 9), this group of researchers launched a protracted inquiry into televised portrayals of social conflict that supposed three realms of reality: the real world "out there"; the symbolic world of TV; and the subjective world residing, in all its complexity, in peoples' minds. Their cross-national study included content analysis of televised newscasts and surveys of young adults in the U.S., United Kingdom, Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), Israel, and South Africa. From their content analysis of newscasts, the researchers concluded, not surprisingly, that social conflicts abound throughout the world. Moreover, social conflicts, and particularly foreign ones far from the shores of the country under scrutiny, were portrayed as relatively complex and difficult to solve. Finally, parties portrayed on television tended to be opponents rather than arbitrators, victims, or other participants. Political parties were most prevalent, whereas dissidents had the lowest degree of representation. Surveys indicated that foreign conflicts were perceived as more severe than domestic disturbances and that conflicts in the "real world" were more severe than those portrayed on television (Cohen, Adoni and Bantz, 1990).

For Pines, the most serious failing of television news lies in its depiction of the economy. Pines points to content analysis of television newscasts conducted by the Free Enterprise and Media Institute in 1992—lauded as "the most sophisticated study ever conducted on the issue of free enterprise and the economy" (quoted in Pines, 1994, xiv)—to show that blame for Americans' well-documented economic illiteracy and lack of understanding of free enterprise can be laid squarely on the doorstep of network television news. Much of the data gleaned from the Institute's research is quantified.

"Defying quantification," wrote Pines, "was TV's treatment of what could be called the culture of free enterprise—those characteristics in a society that create the framework and incentives for healthy economic activity (Pines, 1994, 7)." According to Pines, television newscasts in 1992 taught four enduring lessons: (1) Consumers should have little faith in marketplace dynamics; (2) consumers are stupid; (3) new inventions and economic development generally cause problems; and (4) the best answers to economic problems come from the government. Blame for this unfortunate state of affairs seems to lie not in the machinations of TV executives, but rather in pervasive "unfamiliarity, ignorance, inattention, and even some sloppiness" (Pines, 1994, 292).

Moy and Pfau's study of television news led them to the gloomy conclusion that mass media is largely to blame for Americans' lack of confidence in democratic institutions. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, confidence in the institutions that make democracy work was at an all-time high. That was before evening newscasts of the war in Southeast Asia, coupled with the spectacle of Watergate, sent public confidence into a tailspin from which it has never quite recovered. To get at the roots of what has been called America's "crisis of confidence," Moy and Pfau examined causality on three levels: (1) substantive explanations for the failings of leaders and institutions; (2) citizens' sociodemographic factors; and (3) the negativity of mass media. Data collected from 1995 to 1997 on seven communication modalities—one of which was television news—included sociodemographic information, content analyses of media depictions of democratic institutions, and results of four public opinion surveys. Their theoretical perspective comes largely from George Gerbner, whose research in the 1960s and 1970s into the effects of violence on television led him to postulate a "cultivation paradigm"—

that is, the media, and especially television, cultivate behavior and shape peoples' beliefs (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1989).

Their conclusions do not bode well for the future of democracy. "The new journalism," they wrote, "fixates on the foibles, follies and failings of public figures and institutions. The more critical tone became a normative feature of news reporting, a trend that, if anything, has accelerated over the years (Moy and Pfau, 2000, 43)." Such depictions contribute to political apathy, declining voter turnout, and an overall decline in the "social capital" upon which democracy depends. Moreover, Moy and Pfau's research indicated that people who rely heavily on television news as an information resource are most at risk for tuning out of the political process. Reading newspapers and magazines, on the other hand, is associated with more favorable evaluations of democratic institutions.

In a related study, Moy and Scheufele (2000) examined data from the 1996 American National Election Study pre-election and post-election surveys to determine two levels of trust. The researchers identified political trust as faith in government institutions, and they accepted Francis Fukuyama's definition of social trust as a main component of "social capital," or "the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behavior, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of that community" (quoted in Moy and Scheufele, 2000, 3). Moy and Scheufele determined that watching television news undermines social trust. Political trust, as an outgrowth of education and ideology, could not be linked directly to watching television news. Nevertheless, because social trust is related to political efficacy, political

participation and political trust, media influences on social trust ultimately translate to influences on political attitudes and behavior.

Veteran journalist James Fallows confirms Moy and Pfau's conclusions in his assessment of the media's failure to fulfill its mission. In Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy, Fallows claims that superstar journalists and a fixation on "portraying public life in America as a race to the bottom, in which one group of conniving, insincere politicians ceaselessly tries to outmaneuver another" (Fallows, 1996, 7), have thoroughly discredited the media and account, in large measure, for the decline in participatory democracy.

Fallows is by no means alone. Other authors writing for the broader public share many of the concerns that are evident in scholarly literature, and many of them paint public television with the same broad brush that they use to depict the private airwaves. In his famous Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television (1978), advertising executive turned polemicist Jerry Mander argues that television, far from being a neutral technology, is inherently anti-democratic. Its staggering costs, the limitations on the kind of information it can use and disseminate, and its one-way transmission, combine to produce an insidious technology whose control inevitably gravitates into fewer and fewer hands. The result is a culture of passive and commercialized consumers who have relinquished control over their lives to corporate interests. Although high-tech gimmickry and out-and-out advertising are less pervasive on noncommercial airwaves, public television is still beholden to big business, competes for the same dollars, ratings and markets, and operates in the same medium that suffers from the same technical limitations (Mander, 1978).

Similarly, Neil Postman claims that television has produced a culture obsessed with trivialities and entertainment. For Postman, serious television is a contradiction in terms, and public television, with its lofty goals, is downright dangerous. "Therein is our problem," Postman wrote in Amusing Ourselves to Death, "for television is at its most trivial and, therefore, most dangerous when its aspirations are high, when it presents itself as a carrier of important cultural considerations (Postman, 1985, 16)." Even though Postman acknowledges that *The NewsHour* abjures visual stimulation, consists of in-depth interviews, limits the number of stories it broadcasts on any given program, and strives to provide background and coherence, it still suffers from the medium's inherent drawbacks.

Herman and Chomsky (1988) see more than inane trivialities on the airwaves. According to their "propaganda model," Americans' cherished faith in an independent press is sadly misplaced. In Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media, they argue that the media have a long tradition of mobilizing support for special interests that dominate mass media and the state as well as private activity (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). Similarly, in his seminal Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times, Robert McChesney describes the democratic crisis in the U.S., now spreading far beyond America's shores, in which the media serve the ends of Wall Street and Madison Avenue far more readily than they address the needs of ordinary citizens. His criticism of today's corporate media extends to public broadcasting, where two decades of conservative criticism and corporate inroads have left the public system within the same ideological confines as profit-driven, advertising-supported commercial broadcasting (McChesney, 1999). McChesney denies that

technological changes are to blame for the demise of public programming. "Indeed," wrote McChesney, "the collapse of public broadcasting in the 1990s has less to do with technological change than it does with the neoliberal adoption of the market and its commercial values as the superior regulator of the media—and of all else (McChesney, 1999, 227)."

Since the early 1980s, Ben Bagdikian has been keeping track of mergers and acquisitions in media and telecommunications. Now in its sixth edition, The Media Monopoly is an invaluable source of information on media consolidation. Bagdikian, who sees shades of an Orwellian Ministry of Information in the current climate of corporate-controlled news, praises public television for its tenacity in the face of "Congressional hostility and niggardly appropriations" (Bagdikian, 2000, xxxiv). He reminds us that other countries have shown that business health and social justice can coexist and castigates the U.S. Congress for regularly condemning "socialism" as some sort of heresy against the prevailing business ethic. "The airwaves," concluded Bagdikian, "do not belong to the broadcasters. They do not belong to the advertisers. The owners, by law, are the people of the United States (Bagdikian, 2000, 252)."

As this thesis nears completion, the media world is reeling from a scathing critique that will no doubt have repercussions for years to come. Firmly ensconced on the New York Times bestseller list, Bernard Goldberg's Bias (2002) describes television as a medium out of control, whose mission to provide objective and disinterested reporting has been subverted by a liberal agenda and a laser-like concentration on attracting viewers to drive up ratings and woo advertisers. For Goldberg, whose career at CBS News spans three decades as a reporter and producer, the dénouement of television news

dates back to the late 1970s. It was then that *60 Minutes*, a first-rate news magazine that eschewed profits in deference to quality programming, made money for the first time. Before long, *60 Minutes* and similar shows on rival networks were in the so-called "infotainment" business, doing whatever was necessary to fill corporate coffers. Homelessness, the AIDS epidemic, and a host of important issues have been distorted as reporters inject their liberal sentiments into their stories and, in the process, mesmerize viewers who have come to expect titillation rather than old-fashioned reporting from TV news. "The problem is that, over the years, news has morphed into entertainment," wrote Goldberg.

> *They're all shows!* [Goldberg's italics] They all have to get good ratings to survive. News isn't special, the way it was in the early days of television. News magazines aren't on the air to perform some public service. Maybe they were when *60 Minutes* got started, but not anymore. Prime-time news magazines are on TV to make money, just like everything else on television. So they have to play by entertainment's rules (Goldberg, 2002, 154).

Clearly, television news has much to answer for. Goldberg recalls that, in the 1950s, legendary journalist Ed Murrow described television as a medium that could go in one of two directions: it could teach, illuminate and inspire its viewers; or it could be nothing more than wires and lights in a box. As far as Goldberg is concerned —and, one suspects, other media commentators and scholars cited in the course of this inquiry—the jury is still out. Then again, most criticism of television news has been directed at the commercial networks. Perhaps the time has come to turn attention to noncommercial television's contribution to public enlightenment: *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*.

Scholarship on *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*

Not surprisingly, scholars have been loath to accept *The NewsHour*'s uniqueness at face value. Hoynes (1994) conducted a content analysis in which he compared *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* with ABC's *World New Tonight* and *Nightline*. His comparison focused on two dimensions: the range of stories covered by *MacNeil/Lehrer* and *World News Tonight*, the ABC program that covers multiple stories each night; and the range of perspectives represented by the guests featured on *MacNeil/Lehrer* and *Nightline*, ABC's program that provides discussions and debates, His conclusion was that the range of story topics was only slightly wider on *MacNeil/Lehrer* than on *World News Tonight*, and that *MacNeil/Lehrer*'s guest list, and hence that range of perspectives, was not substantially different from *Nightline*.

Similarly, Baym (2000) conducted a textual critical analysis of *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. His method was to examine *NewsHour* on a single night (January 23, 1998) and compare its contents to ABC's *World News Tonight* and NBC's *Nightly News* of the same evening. His tripartite analysis considered the text on three levels: semiotic, ideological and contextual. He found that, although *NewsHour* does indeed live up to much of the Carnegie Commission's agenda for news by painting events on a larger canvas, its version of the public sphere remains "deeply interconnected with dominant economic interests, sociopolitical forces, and the broadcasting industry, both public and private" (Baym, 2000, 328). In essence, *The NewsHour* has rejected the ideal of freedom in the interests of excellence, "an excellence that implicitly supports the assumptions of broadcasting's corporate, liberal heritage" (Baym, 2000, 312).

Researchers who have studied news frames have concluded that PBS offers little that can't be found on the networks. In an analysis of ten story frames appearing in PBS and ABC evening news coverage of the 1996 presidential election, Kerbel, Apee and Ross (2000) found that public and commercial broadcasts alike were dominated by horse-race analogies and strategy frames at the expense of frames focusing on candidates' actions and proposals. They go so far as to accuse PBS of covering the election in such a way as to disempower democratic processes.

Moy and Pfau (2000) note two striking voids in current research on television news depictions. First, there are no studies that examine depictions of democratic institutions offered by *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, *CNN Prime News*, local television news, and other non-network sources. Second, there is little hard data about media news depictions of democratic institutions other than the presidency and Congress. There appears to be ample opportunity for communication scholars to divert their attention from the networks and shed light on the effects of news emanating from non-traditional sources.

Scholarship and the Public Airwaves: A Call for Further Research

For reasons uniquely American, public television has always existed on the periphery of our vision. It is appreciated during its finest hours, and many viewers maintain a warm place in their hearts for the chefs, thespians and rugged outdoorsmen who parade across the screen on those rare occasions when they actually remember to tune into PBS. But in terms of news and public affairs programming, noncommercial television has never quite lived up to the utopian visions of its founders and latter day caretakers, with one possible exception: *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*.

In the absence of a clearly articulated mission and a reliable source of long-term funding, public television in America has always led a precarious existence. Its mandate to satisfy the FCC's ill-defined public service requirement has often clashed with a libertarian ethos that recoils at any hint of government interference in private enterprise. The American dilemma stands in sharp contrast to most other industrialized nations that have viewed television as a scarce public utility, far too important to abandon to the vicissitudes of the marketplace (Hoynes, 1994; McChesney, 1999). Most notable in this regard is Great Britain and its famed BBC. Closer to home is the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), a publicly subsidized service that invites all Canadians to participate in noncommercial programming as equal shareholders. "A public broadcaster," wrote Anthony Wilson-Smith in MacLean's, "provides a sense of conscience in journalism, unadulterated by bottom-line concerns (Wilson-Smith, 1999, 9)."

Fully aware of the uphill battle they faced, and committed to the Carnegie Commission's mandate that public television become a mouthpiece for the "free communication of ideas in a free society" (Carnegie Commission, 1967, 8), Robert MacNeil and Jim Lehrer made it their mission to bring news and public affairs programming to the noncommercial airwaves. As MacNeil and Lehrer developed their brand of journalism on public television, their counterparts on the networks were finding themselves in the glare of mounting criticism from communication scholars and media commentators. A perusal of the rich body of scholarship on network television news reveals a number of striking and, in some cases, surprising conclusions.

- Concentration of ownership and media conglomeration threaten the ability of television news to function as a genuine "fourth estate."

- Television news tends toward uniformity across media sources.
- There is a striking amount of duplication among television newscasts.
- The so-called "happy talk" format of television newscasts, and a preference for aberration stories (crime, disasters, and accidents), seem to place a higher value on entertainment than serious journalism.
- There is little diversity in news topics at a "typical" television station.
- Television stations in large markets, and to a lesser extent in smaller markets, have abandoned their commitment to providing in-depth coverage of local government issues.
- Contrary to the conventional wisdom, it is simplistic to assume that television is the main source of news for most people. Rather, television is merely one component in the complex web of information flow.
- Television fails to provide accurate and balanced depictions of social conflict.
- Television news is largely to blame for economic illiteracy and undermines America's entrepreneurial spirit.
- Television news contributes to erosion of faith in America's democratic institutions and diminishes citizens' trust not only in their institutions, but also in one another.

Criticism is by no means confined to the halls of academia. Writing for a broad readership, media commentators and even journalists have blamed the media, and especially television, for everything from fostering a culture of consumerism and non-stop entertainment to serving corporate interests at the expense of ordinary citizens. The common thread running throughout the literature is that television news has become part

and parcel of the dominant economic and political paradigm, panders to popular tastes, and spells trouble for the future of participatory democracy.

Against this unsettling landscape stands *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, clearly valued by its eight million weekly viewers as well as scores of opinion makers for its daily offering of commercial-free, fair, and balanced reporting (see Appendixes D, E, F and G for information on viewership, local market strength, and opinion leadership). Yet researchers have paid it relatively little heed. Given the alleged shortcomings of network news and their dire consequences for the world's lone superpower, perhaps the time has come to turn attention to PBS's flagship news and public affairs program. Is it possible to differentiate *The NewsHour* from its commercial competitors, or has the gap so narrowed between public and network news programming as to render this particular program obsolete and no longer worthy of taxpayer support? These are the questions that will be addressed throughout the rest of this inquiry.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

> With such a short supply of recent research on public television, and with a growing debate about the utility of noncommercial television, research on a wide range of issues, making use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, is needed in the coming years.
>
> *Excerpt from William Hoynes' Public Television for Sale: Media, Market and the Public Sphere, 1994*

Background

In Public Television for Sale: Media, Market and the Public Sphere (1994), Hoynes suggests several avenues for research into public television. At the time his book was published, public television and other quasi-governmental institutions were under assault from legislators bent on privatization. Though couched in terms of fiscal responsibility, conservative opposition to public television has always had less to do with economics than politics; the amount of money flowing to the CPB from congressional appropriations has never been overly significant in the grand scheme of things. Moreover, the political posturing that has raged on and off for decades has never been informed by a substantial body of research on public television. As Hoynes points out, researchers employing both quantitative and qualitative methods have an opportunity to contribute to the ongoing debate about news programming on noncommercial television and its value to a culture that has consigned itself to the inexorable logic of capitalism.

In response to Hoynes' call for research on public television, this thesis is a qualitative study of *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. It is framed in the context of public

television's troubled and controversial history and literature pointing to serious shortcomings on the commercial airwaves with respect to news and public affairs programming. An exploration of these issues is crucial to developing informed opinions about *The NewsHour*'s journalistic integrity and the extent to which it has lived up to the mandate handed down in the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television's landmark report, Public Television: A Program for Action (1967).

Hoynes' study is informed by a series of interviews that he conducted at WGBH TV, Boston's public television station. His interviews focused on seven issues: his informants' personal background; the similarities and differences between commercial and public television; funding; organization; the role of public television and its relationship to the public; the mission of public television; and the future of public television. Hoynes complemented his interviews with comparative analyses of *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour*, as the program was known prior to Mr. MacNeil's retirement in 1995, and ABC's *World News Tonight* and *Nightline*.

Methodology

Rationale

Media scholars are the first to admit that qualitative research defies simple explanation. Potter (1996) uses the garden, with its incredible variety of plants, as a metaphor to describe qualitative research. If qualitative research is akin to a garden, then researchers are like gardeners, "each working to bring their favorite forms of vegetation to life" (Potter, 1996, 3). Dey (1993) claims that asking a researcher to provide a single definition of qualitative research is much like asking an Eskimo to comment on the

whiteness of snow. "Just as Eskimos distinguish varieties of 'white'," wrote Dey, "so researchers distinguish varieties of qualitative analysis (Dey, 1993, 1)."

For Boyatzis (1998), qualitative research supported by thematic analysis depends heavily on the researcher's skill in sensing themes in his or her unit of study. Thematic analysis consists of a number of overlapping or alternate purposes. It facilitates new perspectives of raw data, provides a way of making sense of seemingly unrelated material and analyzing qualitative information, suggests systematic ways to observe a unit of study, and enables the researcher to convert qualitative information into quantitative data (Boyatzis, 1998). For the purposes of this study, *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* was chosen as the unit of analysis. Rather than generate themes deductively from theory or prior research, an inductive approach was taken, which synthesized raw information from two primary sources: an hour-long interview with Jim Lehrer; and a review of *NewsHour* broadcasts videotaped between 1995 and 2001. Information gleaned from this synthesis is considered in the context of scholarly critiques of network television news. The themes that emerged from this synthesis are presented categorically in Chapter IV and elucidated in Chapter V.

Interview with Jim Lehrer

On December 18, 2001, I mailed a letter to Mr. Lehrer outlining my project and requesting an interview at his office at WETA TV, 3620 South 27th Street, Arlington, VA. I followed up with a phone call in early January and spoke with Ms. Roma Hare, Mr. Lehrer's administrative assistant. We agreed that the interview would take place at 11:00 a.m., Tuesday, January 22.

I arrived at Mr. Lehrer's office at approximately 10:30 a.m. on the appointed day. In light of public television's chronic funding problems, I wasn't terribly surprised to find that WETA TV is housed in a modest and somewhat outdated building. Ms. Hare greeted me in the lobby and ushered me to Mr. Lehrer's office. Mr. Lehrer gave me a warm greeting, and we spent a few minutes reminiscing about mutual acquaintances in Oklahoma and admiring the fraction of his famous collection of passenger bus memorabilia that he keeps in his office; most of the collection, including a genuine 1946 Flxible Clipper, remains at his home. Mr. Lehrer's uncommon fascination with buses dates back to his childhood. His father ran a small bus line in Kansas, where Mr. Lehrer was born, and moved to Beaumont, TX, to manage a bus depot when his son was twelve years old. (Incidentally, and as Mr. Lehrer is only too happy to explain, anyone who thinks that "Flxible" is misspelled simply doesn't know much about buses.)

The conversation moved quickly from buses to the business at hand. We sat down, and I placed a small tape recorder on a table between us, close to a replica of—what else?—a bus depot. I handed Mr. Lehrer a list of questions that I wanted to cover, turned on the tape recorder, and opened my notebook to take notes. With a minimum of interruptions on my part, and over the din of a busy newsroom just outside his office door, Mr. Lehrer spent the next 45 minutes or so answering my questions and occasionally digressing into subjects that were clearly of special importance to him.

Interview questions were as follows:

1. What have been the effects of media consolidation and concentration of ownership on
    - commercial news and public affairs broadcasting?

- public broadcasting of news and public affairs?
- *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*?

2. To what extent has the hypercommercialization of American culture affected public broadcasting in general and *The NewsHour* in particular?
3. What are the main similarities, and differences, between commercial news and public affairs programming and *The NewsHour*?
4. Please describe the current state of funding for noncommercial broadcasting in general and *The NewsHour* in particular. Specific issues include
    - the distinction between paid advertising on commercial broadcasts and corporate sponsorships for public programming,
    - the future of federal funding,
    - private contributions.
5. What is the primary mission of public television in the U.S.? Has public television fulfilled its mission, and is there a rationale for maintaining publicly supported programming?
6. What is the primary mission of *The NewsHour*? Is the program fulfilling its mission? Is there a rationale for preserving the kind of programming that is available on *The NewsHour*?
7. What are public television's primary challenges, and opportunities, in the years ahead?
8. What are *The NewsHour*'s primary challenges, and opportunities, in the years ahead?

At the conclusion of the interview, Mr. Lehrer was ready to get back to business. He offered me any further assistance that I might need and handed me off to Ms. Hare, who was kind enough to provide me with some published materials and arranged for me to hold a brief phone conversation with a woman in *The NewsHour* Communications Office. She then led me downstairs to *The NewsHour* studio and gave me a tour of the production facilities. We then said our goodbyes, and I was back on the road by noon.

A transcript of my interview with Jim Lehrer is provided in Appendix A.

Review of Videotaped Broadcasts

The NewsHour contracts with Strictly Business in Leawood, Kansas, to maintain its videotape archives. A more or less complete collection dates back to 1995. Tapes are available for sale at a basic price of $69.95 each. If an archive search is warranted, the price goes to $89.95. Tapes can be ordered over the phone with a credit card and are usually shipped within a few days of receiving an order.

For the analytic component of this study, *NewsHour* broadcasts were selected at random, beginning in 1995 and concluding in 2001. Expense considerations, together with concerns over redundancy, suggested limiting the analysis to one broadcast per year, for a total of seven broadcasts.

To ensure random selection of dates, I cut a 4x6-note card into 12 equal size pieces and wrote the name of a month on each one. I cut another 4x6-note card into 32 equal size pieces; one was discarded, and I assigned the remaining pieces a number from 1 to 31 to represent days of the month. I placed pieces representing calendar months in one container and the pieces representing days of the month in another container. Through a

process of random selection, I produced a date for each year. I consulted calendars from past years to ensure that none of the chosen dates fell on a weekend.

The dates are as follows:

1. Thursday, July 27, 1995
2. Thursday, May 30, 1996
3. Tuesday, March 4, 1997
4. Wednesday, September 16, 1998
5. Tuesday, September 21, 1999
6. Thursday, August 24, 2000
7. Tuesday, October 30, 2001

I then ordered videotapes of *NewsHour* broadcasts. Because some *NewsHour* broadcasts have been misplaced, lost, or damaged, I gave the archivist at Strictly Business the latitude to choose alternate dates as long as they were close to the ones originally chosen at random. Consequently, the broadcast on Thursday, July 27, 1995 was replaced with the one on Thursday, September 28, 1995.

The analytic component of this thesis seeks to determine the extent to which *NewsHour* format and content have been altered since 1995 to reflect overall changes in news reporting. Changes in format and content, and particularly evidence of increasing commercialization, would lend credence to allegations that *The NewsHour* has deviated from its mission to serve the public by delivering straightforward and unbiased reporting, free from commercial pressures.

The NewsHour's format is very consistent. Typically, the anchor begins the broadcast with some introductory remarks about the content of the evening's program.

This lasts no longer than 30 to 45 seconds. Following the introduction, the program's primary sponsors present their promotional material. Credit is then given to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and viewers are thanked for their support. Next, the anchor presents a summary of the day's news, a process that typically takes three or four minutes and, at the outside, six to seven minutes. Following the news summary is a series of extended reports that constitute the "Focus" segment of the program. After the "Focus" reports, the anchor presents a brief recap of the day's news, and sponsors are given a final opportunity to air their promotional material. The show closes with another acknowledgment of support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the audience.

For the purposes of this analysis, two elements of *The NewsHour* format receive particular scrutiny: sponsorship acknowledgments at the beginning and end of the broadcast; and the "Focus" reports. Any changes in the duration and content of sponsorship acknowledgments from 1995 to 2001 would indicate an alteration in the relationship between *The NewsHour* and its corporate supporters. Enhanced special effects, familiar to anyone who has marveled at advertising on commercial television, might also indicate that sponsors want to go beyond a simple presentation of their logos and slogans and extract as much value as possible from their sponsorship dollars. The "Focus" reports, commercial-free and comprehensive, are *The NewsHour*'s distinguishing feature. Through a close examination of their format and content, informed conclusions about *The NewsHour*'s claims to uniqueness vis a vis its commercial competitors can be reached.

Synopses of *NewsHour* broadcasts, one for each year from 1995 to 2001, are provided in Appendix B. Program segments are delineated in boldface. Airtime of each segment was determined by using the built-in VCR counter.

Limitations of the Study

Arguably, seven videotaped broadcasts constitute a very small sample for an academic study. Three primary factors influenced the decision to use only seven videotapes. First, it appeared that the only comprehensive source of *NewsHour* videotapes is located in Leawood, Kansas, at the offices of Strictly Business, *The NewsHour*'s archival service. According to Ms. Julie Vanags, the archivist at Strictly Business, there are no university collections maintained for scholarly use, and her business does not have a viewing facility. It became clear during our telephone conversations that Strictly Business relies on videotape sales for revenue. She acknowledged that universities and other research institutions occasionally purchase videotapes of particular broadcasts, and she was fairly sure that some segments of the program are available online. Yet this study required a random sample of videotapes dating back to 1995, the year that Robert MacNeil retired from public television and left his colleague, Jim Lehrer, as sole anchor of *The NewsHour*. In the absence of a viable alternative, the decision was made to rely on Strictly Business to obtain videotape samples.

Second, the nature of this study did not appear to warrant a larger sample. If this study were a formal content analysis rather than a comparison of *NewsHour* episodes with Mr. Lehrer's comments, perhaps the inclusion of more videotapes would be

necessary. Yet for present purposes, one videotape for each year from 1995 through 2001 was deemed adequate to monitor changes in *NewsHour* format and content over time and to elucidate themes.

This leads to the final factor—expense. As mentioned earlier, each videotape costs $69.95. Given Strictly Business' apparent monopoly on *NewsHour* videotapes and the nature of the study, further spending did not appear to be justified.

An Holistic Assessment of *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*

Clearly, neither component of this study could stand on its own. An interview with Mr. Lehrer, though informative and certainly enlightening, could be construed as biased and self-serving on the part of *The NewsHour* anchor. Likewise, a review of videotaped broadcasts that relies in part on qualitative judgments might be so subjective as to render meaningless any observations or conclusions. Taken together, however, the interview with Mr. Lehrer and review of *NewsHour* broadcasts complement one another and facilitate reaching informed opinions about noncommercial television's flagship news and public affairs program.

The study is strengthened by framing it in the overall context of television news reporting in the United States. As we have seen, scholars, journalists and media critics have identified a wide range of shortcomings in network newscasts. Normative theories of the press notwithstanding, network news has failed to measure up to expectations that the media serve as a "fourth estate" through balanced reporting and attention to the issues upon which participatory democracy depends.

Meanwhile, public television has remained at the center of controversy. Defenders of the public sphere have advocated noncommercial airwaves as an essential building block of the democratic system. For them, public broadcasting is useful only to the extent that it is sheltered from the demands of commerce and, like the famed *agora* of ancient Athens, serves as a haven for the free flow of ideas. Their efforts have gone against the grain of a society committed to the principles of free market capitalism and suspicious of anyone who appears too eager to dip into taxpayers' pockets. For opponents of public programming, the law of supply and demand is sacrosanct, and television programs should live or die according to the size of the audience they attract and the amount of advertising they sell. Given these opposing views about the proper ordering of society, it comes as no surprise that *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* and its corporate sponsors have never been far from the eye of the storm.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

> The mission, as set out in the '67 law, was to chart new ground for television, and to push the envelope, and to move television into an instrument of public information and public service as well as just one of entertainment, etc. I think that, the way I see our mission—not the big mission of public broadcasting or television, but our mission on *The NewsHour*—is to present the news in a way that is complete enough for people to be able to get up from the television set and have an informed view or informed opinion about the things that matter. It's that simple. I think that was what the people who set up public television intended, and we're making our little contribution to it.
>
> *Excerpt from the author's interview with Jim Lehrer, January 22, 2002*

General

The interview questions posed to Mr. Lehrer were developed with two broad objectives in mind: (1) to determine the extent to which *The NewsHour* fulfills its public service mission as envisioned by advocates of public programming in general and members of the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television in particular; and (2) to identify key characteristics that differentiate *The NewsHour* from commercial news programs. Mr. Lehrer's answers were examined in the context of videotaped broadcasts to see whether or not the evidence supports his opinions and perceptions. Finally, a review of the literature highlighted salient features of public television in general and *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* in particular and revealed serious shortcomings in the content, processes and effects of network news.

Taken as a whole, the three elements of this study—an interview with Jim Lehrer, an analysis of *NewsHour* videotapes, and a review of the literature—enable identification of the main themes that lie at the heart of this inquiry. Those themes are presented below. References to the literature on commercial news provide a context for considering Mr. Lehrer's answers to the interview questions (provided as direct quotations in the left-hand column) and relevant segments from the videotapes (provided in the right-hand column). A full transcript of the interview with Jim Lehrer is provided in Appendix A, and synopses of videotaped broadcasts are provided in Appendix B. Remaining appendixes, obtained via email from MacNeil/Lehrer Productions' Office of Communications, are as follows: Appendix C—Guidelines for Practicing Journalism; Appendix D—Viewership of *The NewsHour*; Appendix E—Profile of *The NewsHour* Viewer; Appendix F—*The NewsHour*: Local Market Strength; and Appendix G—*The NewsHour* and Opinion Leaders. A synthesis and discussion of themes is presented in Chapter V.

Theme #1: Time Allocated to Stories, Commitment to Foreign Affairs, Avoidance of Sensationalism, Issue Orientation, Lack of Personality Orientation

Asked to describe the main similarities and differences between commercial news and public affairs programming and *The NewsHour*, Mr. Lehrer cited five characteristics that differentiate his program from its commercial competitors: (1) the amount of time allocated to stories; (2) a commitment to foreign affairs; (3) a commitment to "not covering the O.J. Simpson-type stories of the world" (Lehrer interview, 2002); (4) an orientation toward the issues; and (5) an aversion to covering personalities.

These characteristics stand in sharp contrast to network news, where the so-called "happy talk" format (Dominick, Wurtzel and Lometti, 1975) and a preference for crime

and other aberration stories (Gant and Dimmick 2000) tend to crowd out serious news coverage. Coulson, Riffe, Lacy and St. Cyr (2001) found that television coverage of local government issues has lost its luster in large markets and, to a lesser extent, in smaller markets as well. In their cross-national study of social conflict, Cohen, Adoni and Bantz (1990) found that television news coverage fails to "portray things as they really are" (Cohen, Adoni and Bantz, 1990, 9). Moy and Pfau (2000) discovered that television journalism erodes viewers' faith in democratic institutions. Similarly, Moy and Scheufele (2000) discovered a link between watching television news and a decline in peoples' trust in one another. Finally, Fallows (1996), Mander (1978) and Postman (1985) stand in the vanguard of popular writers who decry the pervasive and detrimental influence of television culture.

Interview

"Well, we spend more time on stories. We have a huge commitment to covering foreign affairs, we have a huge commitment to not covering the O.J. Simpson-type stories of the world."

"I don't feel like I'm in competition with other news organizations. I know that sounds weird. As Robert MacNeil used to say, 'We're not in the business of saying that our news is better than their news, because it's all the same news.' We don't own the news. We're just there to report the news. So, the differences between what we do and what they do is pretty obvious. Anybody can watch us. We're more issue-oriented, less personality-oriented, but that's always been the case."

Videotapes

Time allocated to stories and attention devoted to foreign affairs is illustrated by the four longest segments in the videotape sample, all of which address foreign affairs:

- *The Israeli-PLO Accord*, September 28, 1995—39 minutes, 40 seconds.
- *Terror Alert*, October 30, 2001—24 minutes, 35 seconds.
- *Divided Nation*, May 30, 1996—19 minutes, 25 seconds.
- *School of the Americas*, September 21, 1999—17 minutes, 38 seconds.

Avoidance of sensationalism, issue orientation, refusal to focus on personalities:

- *Fielding Questions*, September 16, 1998—President Clinton's response to publication of the Starr Report.
- *Newsmaker: Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin*, September 16, 1998—

Focus on issues of governance in wake of Monica Lewinsky scandal.

- *Newsmaker: Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle*, September 16, 1998—Focus on issues of governance in wake of Monica Lewinsky scandal.

Theme #2: Television as an Instrument of Public Information and Public Service

In his assessment of the primary mission of public television, Mr. Lehrer made reference to the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 and its summons for television to become "an instrument of public information and public service" (Lehrer interview, 2002).

Three studies in particular reveal the failure of network news to fulfill this role. Pines (1994) found that network television is largely responsible for America's pervasive economic illiteracy and has had a detrimental effect on the nation's culture of entrepreneurship. Moy and Pfau's assertion (2000) that television news has a corrosive influence on faith in democratic institutions, together with Moy and Scheufele's research into the decline of social trust as a function of watching television news (2000), leave little doubt that the commercial airwaves are an unlikely source of public information and public service.

Interview

"The mission, as set out in the '67 law, was to chart new ground for television, and to push the envelope, and to move television into an instrument of public information and public service as well as just one of entertainment, etc."

Videotapes

- *Breast Implants*, May 30, 1996—Provides women who have suffered complications from silicone breast implants with legal options available to them.
  Flooding in the Midwest, March 4, 1997—Includes specific safety

guidelines for people in flooded areas.

- *Taiwan Trembler*, September 21, 1999—Interviewee from Taiwan asked what his country needed most to recover from a devastating earthquake.
- *Taking Back the Neighborhood*, September 21, 1999—Describes a grassroots campaign in Kansas City to reclaim a low-income neighborhood from criminals and drug dealers.

Theme #3: Television as an Instrument to Foster Informed Opinions about the Things that Matter

As far as Mr. Lehrer is concerned, television has no higher calling than to help viewers reach "an informed view or informed opinion about the things that matter" (Lehrer interview, 2002).

Lemert (1974) found that newscast content varies little from one station to the next and that "soft news" tends to edge out "hard news" on weekends. Dominick, Wurtzel and Lometti (1975) raised questions about the effectiveness of television journalism in an age when newsroom anchors engage in "happy talk" and emphasize entertainment at the expense of news. Gant and Dimmick (2000) found that crime and other aberration stories are primary topics for story ideas in a "typical" Midwestern newsroom. Coulson, Riffe, Lacy and St. Cyr (2001) confirmed the decline in coverage of city hall and attention to local government issues. In their study of information flow, Robinson and Levy (1986) debunked the notion that television is the main source of news for most people and linked television viewing with low levels of comprehension. For Schudson (1995), television news has fostered a shared consciousness, or "telemythology," that distorts our

understanding of history. Moy and Pfau (2000) blame the media's fixation "on the foibles, follies and failings of public figures and institutions" (Moy and Pfau, 2000, 43) for eroding the public's faith in democratic institutions. Popular criticisms of the media's fascination with trivia and seeming inability to focus on "the things that matter" can be found in Fallows (1996), Mander (1978), and Postman (1985).

Interview

"I think that, the way I see our mission—not the big mission of public broadcasting on television, but our mission on *The NewsHour*—is to present the news in a way that is complete enough for people to be able to get up and have an informed view or informed opinion about the things that matter. It's that simple. I think that was what the people who set up public television intended, and we're making our little contribution to it."

Videotapes

- *Israeli-PLO Accord*, September 28, 1995—Presents all sides of a new agreement to curtail bloodshed in Israel.
- *Campaign Finance*, March 4, 1997—Includes discussion with historians and journalists who weigh in on recommendations for campaign finance reform.
- *School of the Americas*, September 21, 1999—Review of American foreign policy in Latin America and, specifically, the U.S. training facility for foreign police and military forces at Ft. Benning, GA.
- *Building a Defense*, August 24, 2000—Dissects the political and especially technical issues pertaining to building a national missile defense shield.

Theme #4: Television News as a Venue for Even-Handed and Straightforward Journalism

Mr. Lehrer expressed dismay that the networks, which once presented the news in ways that would be familiar to *NewsHour* viewers, have drifted away from "straightforward, even-handed" (Lehrer interview, 2002) journalism. "I've always taken a position," he explained in the interview,

> and MacNeil did before me, and we did together—in terms of whether or not the rationale is there—if somebody came along and started doing what we were doing, then we would probably move on and do something else. But nobody is. Quite the contrary: programs now on commercial broadcasting—even cable, which has a tremendous amount of airtime—I've been stunned—have not taken the opportunity to take our approach a little bit more. They don't think it will work, I guess, because they feel they're competing in, as I say, a hyperactive world of television news. At least the belief is, if you're not hyperactive, you're not going to survive. Now, these are all good people; I'm not knocking any of them. They all have their burdens to bear. These are good folks and they're all trying their best, but they have a different environment in which to operate (Lehrer interview, 2002).

In their study of journalistic bias, Pride and Clark (1973) were unable to find conclusive evidence of racial bias on ABC, CBS and NBC. Meadow (1973), however, examined the presidential campaign of 1972 and found that the candidate who made more news received more media attention. Cohen, Adoni and Bantz (1990) revealed the failure of television news to provide balanced coverage of social conflict. They found that some participants in conflict tend to receive more attention than others and that reporting on the airwaves falls short of accurately depicting the reality on the ground. For Pines (1994), even-handed and straightforward journalism is hard to find when it comes to business and the economy. Moy and Pfau (2000) accuse television journalists of weakening public confidence in democratic institutions, while Moy and Scheufele (2000) castigate the media for diminishing "social capital"—that is, the values upon which communal life depends. General critiques of the media's abandonment of even-handed

and straightforward journalism can be found in Fallows (1996), Mander (1978), and Postman (1985), while Goldberg (2002) focuses on the pernicious effects of the media's consistent and pervasive liberal bias. Herman and Chomsky (1988) describe the media's role in mobilizing support for state and corporate interests to the detriment of straightforward journalism. For McChesney (1999) and Bagdikian (2000), news content is increasingly driven by corporate interests that value profit more than even-handed and straightforward reporting.

Interview

"But *The NewsHour*, which began as *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report* (actually *The Robert MacNeil Report*, then *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report*) has been on the air for 26 or 27 years now. When we began, a lot of people were doing the news the same way we did. Now we're just about the only ones still doing it. Everybody has their own perspective on what that is. For some people, it's very straightforward, even-handed and wonderful, and for other people it's all very straightforward, even-handed and boring, depending on your perspective. But whatever it is, we're about the only ones still doing it. It has helped us in that respect. In other words, we are not doing anything differently because of this consolidation and panic in the commercial world."

Videotapes

- *Israeli-PLO Accord*, September 28, 1995—Includes a point-by-point explanation of a new accord and interviews with the U.S. State Department's special Middle East Coordinator, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin, and a prominent Palestinian spokesman.
- *Where They Stand*, May 30, 1996—Presented weekly, this report presents major policy speeches, unedited and devoid of commentary, by 1996 presidential candidates Clinton and Dole. This segment features one of Clinton's speeches.
- *Doctors Joining Labor Unions*, March 4, 1997—Presents multiple perspectives of physician labor unions.
- *Update: Stem Cell Research*, August 24, 2000—Features a discussion between two non-medical participants in the debate over embryonic stem cell research.

Theme #5: Influence from Corporate Underwriters and the Federal Government

For the most part, *NewsHour* critics have focused on the twin scourges of the public sphere: federal funding and politics. In the interview, Mr. Lehrer insisted that *The NewsHour* is, at least for the time being, on sound financial footing. Moreover, he seemed relieved that the conservative assault on public television has abated, and he dismissed the assumption held by many liberals that corporate sponsors and government policy makers have exerted undue influence on *NewsHour* programming. Asked about the effects of commercial culture on *The NewsHour*, Mr. Lehrer mentioned that correspondent Terence Smith has been hired to cover stories pertaining to business and the media. Other than that, *The NewsHour* remains unaffected by rampant commercialization.

As early as the 1950s, mass media pioneer Walter Lippmann was expressing concern about the influence of money on the nascent medium of television (Friendly, 1968). The legendary Fred Friendly (1968) blamed the FCC for failing to use its regulatory powers to mitigate commercialization of the airwaves. Eversole, alarmed by the emergence of media conglomerates and their association with military interests, wrote that media concentration poses "a threat to the free flow of creative ideas so necessary in society" (Eversole, 1971, 268). For Mander (1978), the overwhelming costs of television broadcasting and the medium's one-way transmission have fostered a culture of passive consumerism. Postman (1985) believes that television, obsessed with trivialities and entertainment, has fostered a culture whose highest value is mindless entertainment. Herman and Chomsky (1988) allege that the problems associated with media conglomeration go far deeper than cultural critics have suggested. According to their

propaganda model, the media provide a base of support for corporate and state activity that threatens participatory democracy. McChesney (1999) and Bagdikian (2000) provide ample evidence that television, driven by corporate interests, has shed all vestiges of concern for the public welfare. According to Goldberg (2002), the morphing of news and entertainment can be traced back to the day that CBS executives came to the shocking realization that *60 Minutes* was operating in the black. "If news could actually make money," wrote Goldberg, "the suits who ran the network would expect just that. Sure they would want quality, in theory. But they wanted ratings and money, in fact (Goldberg, 2002, 92-93)."

Interview

"The federal funding thing—here again, I'm not an expert on this—but I've been told that it's in pretty good shape. I mean, there's nobody out to get us. Always in the past, there's been somebody out to get us...And not one time has any funder, any underwriter, ever attempted to influence anything we've done on the air. Fortunately or unfortunately, we are what we are, and if anyone wants to know what we're doing, all they have to do is turn on the television set. We have absolute transparency. My point is, none of these companies has ever attempted to influence us on a story that in any way touched on them or in any other way, and nobody in the federal government has done so either. In other words, no member of Congress has ever said, "You guys ought to be covering such-and-such a story, and if you don't, we're going to try to get your funding killed."

Videotapes

- *David Gergen Dialogue*, September 28, 1995—Features an interview with economist Edward Wolff, who explains that the U.S. has become the most unequal nation in the world in terms of wealth and income. He foresees political and social catastrophe if current policies continue.
- *Change of Command*, May 30, 1996—Probes oversights and mistakes leading to a plane crash killed Commerce Secretary Ron Brown and 34 others. Three top-ranking Air Force commanders lost their jobs.
- *Terror Alert*, October 30, 2001—Law enforcement officials describe communication channels linking them with federal authorities in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11. Reports might be perceived as threatening to corporate and government interests.

Theme #6: Television as an Arena for Public Debate

Not surprisingly, Mr. Lehrer made reference to the terrorist attacks on September 11. He expressed hope that the tragedy would kindle an interest in debating issues ranging from America's use of military power and the proper disposition of economic strength to the development of a national service program. Mr. Lehrer felt strongly that journalists are uniquely suited to generating interest in issues that lie at the core of nationhood.

A review of the literature raises serious doubts about the effectiveness of television journalism as a forum for public debate. Eversole came to the conclusion that the government's inability to curb the activities of media conglomerates "puts the future of communications and cultural values into serious jeopardy" (Eversole, 1971, 268). Duplication of content among network television newscasts (Lemert, 1974), the lack of diversity in story topics (Gant and Dimmick, 2000), and the inattention to city hall (Coulson, Riffe, Lacy and St. Cyr, 2001), testify to a paucity of ideas and decline of political discourse. Contrary to conventional wisdom, Robinson and Levy (1986) found that television is not necessarily the main source of news for most people and that interpersonal discussion of news may be at least as powerful a predictor of comprehension as exposure to print media. For Pines (1994), a medium that consistently misrepresents economic and business issues could never serve as a forum for meaningful discussion. As a primary culprit in the erosion of faith in democratic institutions (Moy and Pfau, 2000) and a force that undermines people's trust in one another (Moy and Scheufele, 2000), television news has little to offer the cause of participatory democracy. Fallows (1996), Mander (1978), Postman (1985), Herman and Chomsky (1988),

McChesney (1999), and Bagdikian (2000) would agree that television is an unlikely *agora* for the modern world.

Interview

"My hope is that one of the good things that can come out of this awful tragedy is a refocusing of journalism, across the board, on things that matter. There are all kinds of issues that all of us, as Americans, should be debating among ourselves. We're the only superpower. How should we be exercising our power? What is it that we want to do with our military, with our economic strength? We have not had a public debate. Our elections don't get that far. We are debating the small issues and not the big ones. My feeling is it's the obligation of people like me to bring these things up and continually talk about them in a way that the public gets interested."

Videotapes

- *David Gergen Dialogue*, September 28, 1995—Economist Edward Wolff describes America as the most unequal country in the industrialized world in terms of wealth and income.
- *Teacher Shortage*, September 16, 1998—Educators and opinion leaders are interviewed about America's shortage of classroom teachers and its implications for the educational system.
- *Code of the Street*, September 21, 1999— Sociology Professor Elijah Anderson, author of a book on the underclass, discusses the demise of the inner city and potential solutions to seemingly intractable problems.
- *Surviving Survivor*, August 24, 2000— Media professionals use CBS's hit program, *Survivor*, as a springboard for a discussion about so-called "reality television" and its implications for American culture.

Theme #7: Television and Social Responsibility

In a clear appeal for social responsibility, Mr. Lehrer concluded the interview with some comments on journalists' responsibilities in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11 and the collapse of Houston-based Enron Corporation. Children, he said, need role models and access to opportunities that build character, not just fatten bank accounts. Mr. Lehrer was optimistic that strong leaders will emerge who can appeal to the best in people's souls and work to rectify society's frayed value system.

Dominick, Wurtzel and Lometti's study (1975) of the so-called "happy talk" format of television news, together with the preponderance of violence, human-interest stories and comedy, represent a clear preference for entertainment at the expense of serious journalism. As shown by Cohen, Adoni and Bantz (1990), television news fails to capture the complexities of social conflict and presents viewers with a dichotomy between televised images and the reality on the ground. According to Pines (1994), television coverage of economic issues is riddled with errors. Clearly, the cause of social responsibility is not well served by a medium that misrepresents entrepreneurial culture and contributes to economic illiteracy. Particularly alarming for advocates of social responsibility in journalism are the links between television news and declining faith in democratic institutions (Moy and Pfau, 2000) and the erosion of social capital (Moy and Scheufele, 2000). Popular books on television culture (Fallows, 1996; Mander, 1978; Postman, 1985) are highly critical of the media's failure to behave responsibly. According to Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model (1988), the media's ability to serve the public at large has been compromised by its support for state and corporate interests. For McChesney (1999) and Bagdikian (2000), bottom-line concerns have all but obliterated the media's sense of responsibility for the public welfare. Goldberg (2002) accuses the media of exaggerating, among other things, the extent of homelessness and the spread of AIDS among heterosexuals. Apologists might claim that drumming up support for worthy causes reflects a humanitarian impulse. Yet it would be difficult to argue that deliberate distortions of reality, perpetrated by media that are supposed to be objective and disinterested, serve the public interest.

Interview

"What is it we're teaching, to each other as well as to our children? What is it we stand for? What is it about this powerful country that we have, this perfect society that we've created? Maybe it's time we looked inward to see what we really do believe, and think in terms of ways that we can appeal to the best that's in us rather than the worst that's in us."

Videotapes

- *David Gergen Dialogue*, September 28, 1995—Economist Edward Wolff's description of America's inequalities in wealth and income reflects a commitment to exposing issues of universal importance.
- *Breast Implants*, May 30, 1996—Provides potentially life-saving information to women suffering from the ill effects of silicone breast implants.
- *Flooding in the Midwest*, March 4, 1997—Includes vital information and public safety advice for people in flooded areas.
- *Fighting Fear*, October 30, 2001—Serves the Muslim community in Northern Virginia by juxtaposing irrational acts of hatred and acts of kindness in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

> I question how much of television's nightly news effort is really absorbable and understandable. I think the technique fights coherence. I think it tends to make things ultimately boring and dismissable (unless they are accompanied by horrifying pictures) because almost anything is boring and dismissable if you know almost nothing about it.
>
> *Robert MacNeil, New York University Education Quarterly, 1983*

> I have the best job in journalism. We don't consult with anybody before we do anything. We are truly the masters of our own fate, professionally... We are completely free to be wrong. If you don't have the right to be wrong, you'll seldom be right, because you're so worried about being wrong all the time, or doing something wrong. We have the best environment for people doing news that you could possibly have.
>
> *Excerpt from the author's interview with Jim Lehrer, January 22, 2002*

"We Need to Use These Tools..."

Mr. Lehrer concluded the interview on January 22, 2002, with a digression into the role of television in contemporary society. The conversation had turned in the direction of Americans' desperate need for a forum to debate important issues, from the United States' position as the world's lone superpower and the possibility of creating a national service program to the defining stories of our time: Nine-Eleven and the Enron debacle. "The tragic thing here," he commented, "is that we're more equipped to do this kind of thing now than at any time in history because of television, because of the Internet. I

mean, the mechanics are in place for every citizen in this country to be involved, one way or another, in the debate about our future, as well as our present. We need to use these tools (Lehrer interview, 2002)."

It is difficult to come away from a review of the literature with any degree of optimism that network television news is the pathway to an enlightened and engaged citizenry. Some scholars (Eversole, 1971; McChesney, 1999; Bagdikian, 2000) have blamed the increasing commercialization of the airwaves and growth of entertainment conglomerates for undermining the media's effectiveness as a genuine "fourth estate." Meadow (1973) proved that the uniformity of network news coverage, a common complaint among today's viewers, was already an issue three decades ago. Similarly, Lemert (1974) provides evidence that there tends to be significant duplication in network newscasts and a preponderance of "soft news" during the weekends. Dominick, Wurtzel and Lometti (1975) cast a scholarly glare on the so-called "happy talk" format and determined that the priority accorded entertaining material "rates serious questions about the nature of television journalism" (Dominick, Wurtzel and Lometti, 1975, 218). Suspicions that aberration stories (crime, disasters and accidents) tend to edge out government and politics in the typical newsroom were confirmed by Gant and Dimmick (2000), while Coulson, Riffe, Lacy and St. Cyr (2001) showed that news from city hall has lost its appeal to viewers and reporters alike in large markets, and to a lesser but significant extent in small markets, across America. In their study of information flow, Robinson and Levy (1986) debunked the myth that television is the main source of news for most people. Furthermore, they found that a high level of news comprehension is associated with exposure to print media as opposed to television viewing. Schudson

(1995) asserts that television news has fostered a sort of collective consciousness, or "telemythology," that has distorted our understanding of historical events. Turning to domestic and international hostilities, Cohen, Adoni and Bantz (1990) found that television portrayals of conflict in the five countries under their scrutiny are often at odds with what's really happening on the ground and that participants are not equally represented. Especially disturbing is Pines' review of data collected by the Free Enterprise and Media Institute in 1992, which showed that television news is to a large degree responsible for widespread economic illiteracy and threatens America's culture of entrepreneurship (Pines, 1994). Moy and Pfau (2000) blamed the media for fostering America's so-called "crisis of confidence" in democratic institutions. Their study finds confirmation in a similar study by Moy and Scheufele (2000) that determined the extent to which watching television news undermines social trust. In books written for the general public, Fallows (1996), Mander (1978) and Postman (1985) call into question the entire culture of television. Conspiracy theorists might find common cause with Herman and Chomsky (1988), whose propaganda model posits an incestuous relationship between the media and special interests that dominate not only the halls of political power, but also the media itself. For Goldberg (2002), the media's liberal bias has undermined objective reporting and alienated the public. Unless corrective measures are undertaken to restore credibility, the survival of network television news as we know it is far from certain.

In their inquiry into America's "crisis of confidence," Moy and Pfau (2000) acknowledge the absence of studies that examine depictions of democratic institutions offered by alternative television news sources, including *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*.

As we have seen, scholars who have set their sites on *The NewsHour* (Hoynes, 1994; Baym, 2000; Kerbel, Apee and Ross, 2000) have been most interested in comparative studies and, accordingly, have conducted quantitative analyses of *The NewsHour* and its commercial competitors.

In the preceding chapter, themes emerging from *The NewsHour*'s unique and defining features were identified. Primary source material comes from an interview with *NewsHour* anchor Jim Lehrer and a close examination of *NewsHour* videotapes, selected at random, from 1995 through 2001. Framed in the context of public television's public service mission and the alleged shortcomings of commercial news, the study enables us to draw conclusions about the extent to which *The NewsHour* is fulfilling the mandate articulated by the Carnegie Commission in 1967 and emphasized by Jim Lehrer in early 2002: "[T]o present the news in a way that is complete enough for people to be able to get up from the television set and have an informed view or informed opinion about the things that matter (Lehrer interview, 2002)." At the same time, the themes that have been identified paint a picture of an industry that has lost its way and, perhaps optimistically, suggest a road map for reform.

Elucidation of Themes

Theme #1: Time Allocated to Stories, Commitment to Foreign Affairs, Avoidance of Sensationalism, Issue Orientation, Lack of Personality Orientation

Theme #3: Television as an Instrument to Foster Informed Opinions about the Things that Matter

Theme #4: Television News as a Venue for Even-Handed and Straightforward Journalism

"Postmodern culture," wrote McQuail, "is volatile, illogical, kaleidoscopic, and hedonistic (McQuail, 2000, 114)." At this stage of cultural development, society no longer depends on the kind of cohesive forces that once gave people a sense of purpose. History suggests that this is a recent phenomenon. Across time and culture, societies have been built on what we might call "grand narratives"—that is, mythologies that resonate in the collective consciousness. The medieval theocracy that shaped Europe for a millennium, the faith in technology that spawned an industrial revolution, and the yearning for freedom that gave rise to liberal democracies across the globe illustrate the power of grand narratives to shape human destiny. Determining which narratives have unfolded in the best interests of society is, of course, a subjective business. History is replete with examples of what can happen when shared assumptions about the proper ordering of society become calcified in orthodoxy. One has only to turn to the lessons of Nazi Germany and the recent horrors committed by Muslim fanatics to be reminded of the dangers that lurk in misguided ideology.

In today's postmodern culture, consumerism and entertainment have obscured the ties that connect us to our collective past and, not incidentally, to one another. This is particularly true in the United States, where citizens are routinely referred to as "consumers" and entertainment permeates every aspect of daily life. Television, envisioned in its infancy as a source of educational and culturally enriching programming, is both a cause and effect of the postmodern sensibility. True, with the advent of cable and satellite feeds, alternative programming is now available. But in terms of network television, postmodernism appears here to stay.

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Driven by the profit imperative, network news programming has clearly followed the postmodern path of least resistance. Events are rarely covered in the kind of depth that fosters understanding. Complex issues are presented in thirty-second sound bites. Programming focuses on entertainment at the expense of information. Reporters are valued more for their on-air presence than their command of difficult topics. In countless television newsrooms across America, even the most conscientious media professionals find themselves struggling to maintain high journalistic standards against the twin pillars of postmodern society—consumerism and entertainment—that have become the culture's guiding ethos.

Evidence gathered in the course of this inquiry indicates that *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* militates against the seductive lure of postmodernism. By allocating significant time to stories, focusing on foreign affairs, sticking with the issues, avoiding sensationalism, and refusing to pander to the popular obsession with personalities, Jim Lehrer and his associates are doing their part to lend coherence and substance to the news. Their commitment to fostering informed opinions about the things that matter fulfills television's promise as a source of public information and public service. It also furthers the cause of participatory democracy by giving viewers the information they need to take part in the political process. "I do believe that Thomas Jefferson was right," said Mr. Lehrer during the interview. "You don't have a democracy without an informed electorate. How the electorate gets this information is extremely important (Lehrer interview, 2002)."

Clearly, *The NewsHour*'s goal is not to superimpose an orthodoxy on the news of the day. *NewsHour* correspondents are very concerned, perhaps even obsessed, with

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presenting all sides of the issues they cover. What Mr. Lehrer calls "even-handedness," however, comes with its own set of potential problems. Nevertheless, *The NewsHour* staff seems to be interested in presenting the news in such a way that viewers can assimilate the facts, connect a multiplicity of perspectives, discard what is extraneous, and figure out what it all means (see Appendix C for Jim Lehrer's Guidelines for Practicing Journalism).

Theme #5: Influence from Corporate Underwriters and the Federal Government

Mr. Lehrer mentioned that, for the time being, the "federal funding thing" was "in pretty good shape" (Lehrer interview, 2002). He laughed when he said that, in contrast to past experiences with conservatives bent on privatizing the airwaves, there's "nobody out to get us" (Lehrer interview, 2002). A few minutes later, he was adamant that *The NewsHour* has always been allowed to function independently, free from outside influence. "And not one time," he stated in the interview, his voice practically trembling with conviction, "has any funder, any underwriter, ever attempted to influence anything we've done on the air...and nobody in the federal government has done so either (Lehrer interview, 2002)." Mr. Lehrer also discounted the suggestion that the increasing commercialization of American culture might affect *NewsHour* content, other than providing an impetus to assign correspondent Terence Smith to report on business and the media.

A review of the videotape samples fails to yield a single instance, either on the part of corporate underwriters or the government, of outside influence on *NewsHour* content. There has been, however, a discernible transformation in the format, content and length

of corporate sponsorship acknowledgments at the beginning and end of the broadcast. From 1995 through 1997, corporate sponsors used approximately ten seconds to deliver their messages. Content was simple and straightforward, and special effects were kept to a minimum. The same could be said for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, whose beginning and concluding plugs were restricted to a few lines of text and simple manipulation of its logo and other textual elements. Beginning in 1998, sponsorship messages stretched to approximately fifteen seconds and included more information about sponsors' products and services. At the same time, graphic elements and music were becoming more complex. By 2000, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting was getting into the act by introducing snappy guitar music and abstract imagery in its plug for public television and acknowledgment of viewer support.

It seems that *The NewsHour*'s corporate underwriters, and indeed, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting itself, have taken a cue from commercial advertisers and resorted to sophisticated techniques to deliver their messages. Yet program content remains unaffected, and efforts to manipulate messages for economic or political purposes are nowhere to be seen.

Theme #6: Television as an Arena for Public Debate

Toward the end of the interview, Mr. Lehrer was asked to reflect on the *NewsHour*'s challenges and opportunities in the years ahead. Perhaps inevitably, Mr. Lehrer brought up the watershed of Nine-Eleven. "My hope," he said, "is that one of the good things that can come out of this awful tragedy is a refocusing of journalism, across the board, on things that matter. There are all kinds of issues that all of us, as Americans, should be

debating among ourselves." He went on to list key issues that warrant a national forum: America's use of military power, the proper disposition of economic strength, and a national service program. "My feeling," he concluded, "is it's the obligation of people like me to bring these things up and continually talk about them in a way that the public gets interested (Lehrer interview, 2002)."

Much as been written about the decline of the public sphere. Habermas (1989) traces the development of public forums back to the French Enlightenment, when *salons* were scenes of spirited debate for the upper crust, and politicized commoners vented their frustrations in raucous saloons or wherever else they could command an audience. Such scenes are rare in modern America, where citizens have been transformed into consumers and public spaces have given way to the forces of privatization. Of course, there is no shortage of opportunities for discourse. Radio and television talk shows, Internet chat rooms, and "letters to the editor" sections of newspapers are just a few of the venues where people can address their favorite issues. Yet much of today's discourse takes place not in the context of a public forum, but rather in countless special interest groups, where people tend to focus with laser-like intensity on matters of concern to them and, in the process, ignore what we might call "the big picture." It is perhaps ironic that, in the postmodern age, our seemingly endless channels of communication have produced division instead of cohesion, cacophony instead of harmony, and, as Mr. Lehrer said, "shouting talk shows" that are "not about the news, they're about shouting (Lehrer interview, 2002)."

"There are all kinds of issues that all of us, as Americans, should be debating among ourselves," said Mr. Lehrer. "We have not had a public debate. Our elections don't get that far. We are debating the small issues and not the big ones (Lehrer interview, 2002)." Given the limitations inherent in one-way transmission, *The NewsHour* addresses the decline of civic discourse by reserving at least one small portion of the airwaves as an arena for reasoned debate. Contentious issues are regular fare. Opinion leaders representing multiple perspectives, many of which are diametrically opposed to government and corporate interests, are given ample time to present their views. Yet *NewsHour* interviewees and guests are almost invariably experts. Ordinary citizens, though represented by designated spokesmen, are rarely participants in the dialogue. It remains to be seen whether or not representative democracy on the public airwaves is an adequate substitute for the *agora* of ancient Athens or the beer halls and *salons* of eighteenth-century Paris.

Theme #2: Television as an Instrument of Public Information and Public Service

Theme #7: *The NewsHour* and Social Responsibility

As the interview drew to a close, Mr. Lehrer provided some perspective on journalists' responsibilities in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11 and the collapse of Houston-based Enron Corporation. "What is it we're teaching, to each other as well as to our children? What is it we stand for? What is it about this powerful country that we have, this perfect society that we've created? Maybe it's time we looked inward to see what we really do believe, and think in terms of ways that we can appeal to the best that's in us rather than the worst of what's in us (Lehrer interview, 2002)." He concluded

the interview by pointing out that children need role models and access to opportunities that "appeal to the best in their souls" (Lehrer interview, 2002). Finally, he expressed optimism that people with ideas will assume the mantle of leadership and work to rectify society's frayed value system.

In essence, Mr. Lehrer's philosophical digression was nothing less than a plea for social responsibility, a normative theory of the press that attempts to describe the media's rights, obligations, and role in protecting the public interest (McQuail, 2000). First articulated in a report issued by the Hutchins Commission in 1947, social responsibility theory posits that journalists have special obligations to society and that journalism, unlike other kinds of business, constitutes a public trust (Siebert et al, 1956). Specifically, the Hutchins Commission charged the media with the following five functions in society:

1. To provide a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context that gives them meaning.
2. To serve as a forum for exchange of comment and criticism.
3. To provide a representative picture of constituent groups in society.
4. To present and clarify the goals and values of society.
5. To provide citizens with full access to the day's intelligence (Patterson and Wilkins, 2002, 181).

Social responsibility theory was incorporated into journalism following World War II, when America's first fledgling television stations were held to an ambiguous public service requirement calling on them to act in the best interests of society (Day, 1995). Social responsibility theory eventually made its way to the Society of Professional Journalists' code of ethics, which requires journalists to serve the cause of public

enlightenment "by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues" (Black et al, 1999, 6).

Social responsibility theory *per se* never came up in the interview, but Mr. Lehrer's comments and perspectives were certainly in keeping with its guiding principles, particularly insofar as his references to Jeffersonian principles of democracy are concerned. (A statement of Mr. Lehrer's journalistic principles can be found in Appendix C—Guidelines for Practicing Journalism). Moreover, social responsibility is reflected in at least four segments from the videotape sample that illustrate public television's potential as an instrument of public information and service. The *David Gergen Dialogue* on September 28, 1995, about America's shocking inequalities in wealth and income, referenced in Chapter IV in relation to outside influences on *NewsHour* content and again as an example of television's role in facilitating public debate, reflects *The NewsHour*'s commitment to exposing issues of universal importance. *Breast Implants*, aired on May 30, 1996, provides potentially life-saving information to women suffering from the ill effects of silicone breast implants. Similarly, the segment broadcast on March 4, 1997, *Flooding in the Midwest*, includes vital information and public safety advice for people in the affected region. Finally, correspondent Ray Suarez's piece on October 30, 2001, *Fighting Fear*, serves the Muslim community in Northern Virginia by juxtaposing irrational acts of hatred and acts of kindness in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11. It would be difficult to come away from this report without sympathy for American Muslims and a resolve to participate in the healing process.

Conclusions

Reference has been made to three recent studies of *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*: (1) Hoynes' comparison of *The NewsHour* to ABC's *World News Tonight* and *Nightline* (Hoynes, 1994); (2) Baym's textual critical analysis of *The NewsHour*, ABC's *World News Tonight* and NBC's *Nightly News* (Baym, 2000); and (3) Kerbel, Apee and Ross' comparison of PBS and ABC news frames in the 1996 presidential election (Kerbel, Apee and Ross, 2000).

In the absence of comparative data from network news broadcasts, it is not possible to comment on Hoynes' observation that *The NewsHour*'s range of story topics differs little from commercial news offerings. And there is no evidence to support Kerbel, Apee and Ross' conclusion that PBS, like the networks, frames political contests with horse race analogies and analysis of strategy at the expense of candidates' actions and proposals (Kerbel, Apee and Ross, 2000). On the contrary, the *Where They Stand* segment on May 30, 1996, gives President Clinton 6 minutes and 20 seconds of uninterrupted airtime to present his views on street crime and inner city youth. Even though the interviewee is a foreign leader rather than an American political candidate, Margaret Warner's *Newsmaker* interview on August 24, 2000, provides Mexico's president-elect Vicente Fox with 12 minutes and 42 seconds to deliver his vision of building long-term partnerships with the U.S. and Canada.

Furthermore, neither the interview with Mr. Lehrer nor the review of videotaped broadcasts support claims that commercial and government interests have come to exert an influence on *NewsHour* content and format. Nor is there evidence to support Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model (1988) claiming that the press mobilizes support for

special interests that dominate mass media and the state as well as private interests. True, beginning in 1998, sponsorship acknowledgments at the beginning and conclusion of the broadcast are longer than they were in previous years. At the same time, graphic elements have become more complex, and message content is more substantive. Yet the changes in length, content and format of sponsorship acknowledgments have no discernible effect on the content and format of the program itself.

What, then, can we conclude from the primary and secondary sources assembled for this study? First, *The NewsHour* is fundamentally different from commercial news programs. Second, *The NewsHour* does indeed live up to the Carnegie Commission's mandate to transform public television into an arena for "the free communication of ideas in a free society" (Carnegie Commission, 1967, 8). Anchor Jim Lehrer certainly thinks that *The NewsHour* is fulfilling its mission. "I feel like we're fulfilling it," he said.

> But I also believe, as I said earlier, that we must continually take a look at what we're doing and be conscious of the fact that we must have an open mind for bringing new elements into our program and never, ever, lose our willingness to experiment, to try new things, because that's what public television was set up to do—to try new things and experiment in a noncompetitive environment (Lehrer interview, 2002).

In many ways, these conclusions pose more questions than they answer. As noted by Baym (2000), *The NewsHour* has risen to the Carnegie Commission's challenge by painting events on a larger canvas. Baym concludes, however, that the program remains deeply connected to dominant economic and sociopolitical paradigms and "supports the assumptions of broadcasting's corporate, liberal heritage" (Baym, 2000, 312). This

analysis confirms Baym's conclusions by revealing an overwhelming preference for opinion leaders, government officials and policy makers at the expense of "ordinary citizens." Perhaps the best example of this reliance on "the experts" is the September 16, 1998, segment, *Teacher Shortage*, about America's critical lack of qualified classroom teachers. Interviewees include two school superintendents, the president of the NEA, a Stanford University professor, an economist from Harvard, and a school administrator. The segment also features Secretary of Education Richard Riley's address to the National Press Club about the teacher shortage. Teachers appear in the segment almost as a backdrop; several are filmed in their classrooms as *The NewsHour* correspondent provides commentary. The only opportunity to hear the teachers' perspective comes in an interview with a disgruntled educator who has decided to abandon the classroom and flee to the private sector. One can't help but wonder what would happen if more teachers, and fewer administrators and academics, were called on to explain America's crisis in education. In this instance, allowing classroom teachers to voice their opinions would certainly satisfy the media's responsibility toward social and political groups with limited access to the bully pulpit.

Another observation that bears scrutiny is that *The NewsHour*'s emphasis on balance, combined with its reliance on expert opinions, runs the risk of leaving viewers to struggle with too many viable points of view. A case in point is the August 24, 2000, segment, *Building a Defense*, about the proposed national missile defense shield. One suspects that many viewers came away from this broadcast more bewildered than ever, struggling to formulate their own opinions in the face of brilliant and conflicting "expert" testimony. The same broadcast includes *Update: Stem Cell Research*, a 12 ½-minute

segment on embryonic stem cell research. Most of the segment features two erudite spokesmen, one representing the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the other representing the Patient's Coalition for Urgent Research, who present thoughtful, compelling and utterly irreconcilable arguments. What is the layman to make of a balanced report on an issue fraught with such ethical and medical complexities?

Recommendations

Answers to these and other questions will be forthcoming only when more communication researchers decide to include *The NewsHour* in their studies of the content, processes and effects of television news. In their effort to explain America's "crisis of confidence" in democratic institutions, Moy and Pfau (2000) discovered that researchers have omitted *The NewsHour* in studies of newscast depictions of democratic institutions. Likewise, *The NewsHour* is conspicuously absent from Pines' review of data on television coverage of economics and entrepreneurship. In fact, with the exception of three aforementioned studies (Hoynes, 1994; Baym, 2000; and Kerbel, Apee and Ross, 2000), *The NewsHour* has received scant attention from the academic community. Meanwhile, authors who address a non-academic market tend to mention *The NewsHour* only in passing. For reasons that have become clear during the course of this study, network news provides plenty of fodder for their critiques.

Clearly, much work remains to be done to understand *NewsHour* content and audience effects. Not only would research data be a valuable addition to the body of literature on television news; it would also support *NewsHour* staff in its ongoing innovation and experimentation. And in the best of all possible worlds, it might compel

beleaguered stations on the commercial airwaves to undertake some much needed experimenting and innovating of their own.

A final topic that warrants closer examination is the role of gatekeepers in maintaining journalistic standards. I came away from the interview convinced that *The NewsHour*'s longevity and success are due in no small measure to Mr. Lehrer's standards as a journalist and, not incidentally, his personal character. The program survived Robert MacNeil's retirement in 1995, but who will assume command when Mr. Lehrer is gone? Ultimately, if *The NewsHour* is to maintain its standing as public television's flagship news and public affairs program and continue to differentiate itself from the pack, then all parties will benefit from research into the content and development of programming, the internal processes that make it all work, and the effects on "viewers like you."

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW WITH JIM LEHRER

Tuesday, January 22, 2002, 11:00 a.m.
WETA TV, Arlington, VA

MJH: What have been the effects of media consolidation and concentration of ownership on

- commercial news and public affairs broadcasting?
- public broadcasting of news and public affairs?
- *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*?

JL: I think, frankly, that the jury is still out on all of this. These people—the television part of it, at least, and the newspapers too, to some degree—they're in a kind of desperation phase right now. Nobody really knows where all this is headed. They've created these cable news networks and there's a lot of flurry about them, and they get a lot of public attention, but they don't get a lot of audience, because at the time they were created, there were a lot of alternatives to them at the same time, such as the VCR and all that sort of stuff.

As the channels increase and the options increase—and of course with the Internet thing at about the same time, and the websites of various news organizations, including our own—everybody's kind of flailing out there, in a very competitive environment, but it's competitive for small groups of people. In other words, the amount of people who have their television sets on right now, watching the news in the United States of America, is not very many. Most people are working, most people are in school, most people are doing other things.

When you broadcast a television program, you can broadcast at 3:00 in the morning, you can broadcast at 3:00 in the afternoon, you can broadcast at 6:00 in the evening. It costs the same amount of money to produce, if it's a quality program. It's irrelevant, almost, when you broadcast it, except in terms of the cost of doing the program. But it's extremely relevant in terms of the audience you get, and that, of course, dictates the amount of advertising you get, and that dictates how much money you make or lose.

And so, the idea that people want news all the time, one way or another—either they want to turn on their televisions or turn on their computers or they have the radio on—they just cannot stand not knowing, one minute to the next, what's the most important thing that's going on...There are a lot of people investing a lot of money in that idea, and it hasn't quite worked yet. So we have to figure out some other way to do it. And that's what's given birth to a lot of these kinds of "shouting talk shows." They're not about the news, they're about shouting. They're about getting people to get on television and shout at one another about the news.

So, to get back to your question, these big media conglomerates—AOL Time Warner, Disney, ABC, and now the new one, *Vivende* with Barry Diller and all of that—they're all trying to figure out what the future is, and they know there's no way, and so they're trying to cover all their bases. They're thinking, "Well it may not be Internet, it may be cable, or it may not be cable either, it may be over the line, or maybe we'll go back to regular broadcasts." So everybody's trying to get a piece of everything. Anyhow, there is no answer to your question.

The effects have been panic in some cases. There has been some good experimentation and some lousy experimentation. Where it's all headed, nobody knows.

In terms of its effect on public broadcasting and public affairs, it hasn't had any negative effect on us. In fact, it's helped us in a way. When we began our particular program—that's all I can talk about. The other programs on public broadcasting, I'm not an expert on. But *The NewsHour*, which began as *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report* (actually *The Robert MacNeil Report*, then *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report*) has been on the air for 26 or 27 years now. When we began, a lot of people were doing the news the same way we did. Now we're just about the only ones still doing it. Everybody has their own perspective on what that is. For some people, it's very straightforward, even-handed and wonderful, and for other people it's all very straightforward, even-handed and boring, depending on your perspective. But whatever it is, we're about the only ones still doing it. It has helped us in that respect. In other words, we are not doing anything differently because of this consolidation and panic in the commercial world.

We're always experimenting, but within a basic philosophy and within a basic format. We fool with the details; we do it all the time, and hopefully always will. A program like ours without an open mind toward change and all of that isn't going to last very long. You always have to remember: The programs that don't last very long are those that have to reinvent what they're doing, and why they're doing something, every day. We know why we're doing it, but we have to keep and open mind on how we do things, and we do.

MJH: To what extent has the hypercommercialization of American culture affected public broadcasting in general and *The NewsHour* in particular?

JL: I honestly don't know. I am not conscious or aware of any effect it has had on us.

If something is happening that causes us to cover a story that we might not otherwise cover or not cover a story that we might otherwise cover—those are the things that I'm sensitive to. The whole premise of the question—the hypercommercialization of American culture—we cover that, as a story. We now have a media reporter, Terrence Smith, who deals with these issues on a regular basis.

I believe that this is the central effect that it's had on us. What I was talking about earlier—all the new ways that we get information—I think that's a helluva story. I do believe that Thomas Jefferson was right: You don't have a democracy without an informed electorate. How the electorate gets this information is extremely important.

MJH: When Disney came in and bought ABC, for example, there was a lot of concern that this might color the way they cover certain stories and give preferential treatment to some things and ignore other things.

JL: I don't know. You'd have to ask somebody else about that. I don't watch them. I'm on the air when these other people are on the air, and I'm not a student of that sort of thing.

MJH: What are the main similarities, and differences, between commercial news and public affairs programming and *The NewsHour*?

JL: Well, we spend more time on stories. We have a huge commitment to covering foreign affairs, we have a huge commitment to not covering the O.J. Simpson-type stories of the world.

I don't feel like I'm in competition with other news organizations. I know that sounds weird. As Robert MacNeil used to say, "We're not in the business of saying that our news is better than their news, because it's all the same news." We don't own the

news. We're just there to report the news. So, the differences between what we do and what they do is pretty obvious. Anybody can watch us. We're more issue-oriented, less personality-oriented, but that's always been the case.

MJH: Please describe the current state of funding for noncommercial broadcasting in general and *The NewsHour* in particular. Specific issues include

- the distinction between paid advertising on commercial broadcasts and corporate sponsorships for public programming,
- the future of federal funding,
- private contributions.

JL: Our program has basically three different sources of income. Corporate underwriting comes from corporations or foundations, and then the rest comes from public broadcasting through the stations. For instance, the Oklahoma public broadcasting service pays a certain amount of money for our program, and it goes through PBS and then it flows to us. In addition to that, there are grants from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which is an organization set up years ago to be a kind of heat shield between federal money and public broadcasting.

MJH: That dates back to the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967.

JL: Exactly right. We've had financial problems in the country. In other words, the recession—we've certainly felt the effects of that. One of our big underwriters, which was CitiGroup, bowed out, and we had to find another underwriter, which we did—SBC Communications—which was difficult, because so many companies were looking for ways to cut back, not for ways to add expenses. Then the Hewlitt Foundation gave us a bridge grant to get us from here to there, so we're fine now.

The federal funding thing—here again, I'm not an expert on this—but I've been told that it's in pretty good shape. I mean, there's nobody out to get us. Always in the past, there's been somebody out to get us.

MJH: Right, like in 1994 and 1995...

JL: Right. There's always been...

[At this point, the interview was interrupted briefly when Executive Producer Lester Crystal and another member of *The NewsHour* staff appeared at the door to Mr. Lehrer's office. According to Crystal, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was "getting hammered" at a news conference on the Cuban detainees' story. Presumably, he was referring to American treatment of the terrorists who had been captured in Afghanistan and sent to Cuba for incarceration and interrogation. Within the space of a few seconds, the decision was made to pull Correspondent Gwen Ifill from another assignment and send her to cover the detainees' story.]

JL: As far as private contributions are going, I have no idea, because that all comes to public television stations. It doesn't come to us directly.

I learned a long time ago about this funding issue...You can run scared all the time. I've taken the position that the money will be there for us to do this program. If the money's not there for us to do the program, we won't do the program. And it's not my job to raise the money. I don't want to get involved in that. So, I have not run scared on it, and we've been there, as I say, for a long time. We've gone through many underwriters, many different kinds of funders.

And not one time has any funder, any underwriter, ever attempted to influence anything we're done on the air. Now that's all very clearly set out to them before they

ever become an underwriter. Of course, you can always say, well that's great, but if they had a story or something...For instance, Exxon was one of our underwriters when Jimmy Carter was calling the oil companies war criminals or war profiteers, I think he called them, and we did all of that. AT&T was our underwriter when the Bell system was broken up.

Fortunately or unfortunately, we are what we are, and if anyone wants to know what we're doing, all they have to do is turn on the television set. We have absolute transparency. My point is, none of these companies has ever attempted to influence us on a story that in any way touched on them or in any other way, and nobody in the federal government has done so either. In other words, no member of Congress has ever said, "You guys ought to be covering such-and-such a story, and if you don't, we're going to try to get your funding killed."

MJH: I saw some of that in publishing. For example, the Gingrich autobiography: There were a lot of accusations there about preferential treatment. There was a big case about a biography of Deng Hsiao-ping some years ago that had Rupert Murdoch's fingerprints all over it...

JL: Yes, because he wanted the Chinese broadcast rights. But that's not happened here.

MJH: What is the primary mission of public television in the U.S.? Has public television fulfilled its mission, and is there a rationale for maintaining publicly supported programming?

JL: The mission, as set out in the '67 law, was to chart new ground for television, and to push the envelope, and to move television into an instrument of public information

and public service as well as just one of entertainment, etc. I think that, the way I see our mission—not the big mission of public broadcasting or television, but our mission on The NewsHour—is to present the news in a way that is complete enough for people to be able to get up from the television set and have an informed view or informed opinion about the things that matter. It's that simple. I think that was what the people who set up public television intended, and we're making our little contribution to it.

I've always taken a position, and MacNeil did before me, and we did together—in terms of whether or not the rationale is there—if somebody came along and started doing what we were doing, then we would probably move on and do something else. But nobody is. Quite the contrary: programs now on commercial broadcasting—even cable, which has a tremendous amount of airtime—I've been stunned—have not taken the opportunity to take our approach a little bit more. They don't think it will work, I guess, because they feel they're competing in, as I say, a hyperactive world of television news. At least the belief is, if you're not hyperactive, you're not going to survive. Now, these are all good people; I'm not knocking any of them. They all have their burdens to bear. These are good folks and they're all trying their best, but they have a different environment in which to operate.

I have the best environment there is.

MJH: Do you ever get the sense that there are a lot of folks who'd like to hire on over here?

JL: Sure, sure. I have the best...I was talking to a friend of mine over at The New York Times yesterday. I had already told him this, and we had agreed: I have the best job in journalism. We don't consult with anybody before we do anything. We are truly the

masters of our own fate, professionally. You know, journalism is hard enough to get right in an ideal environment, and any time you start bringing in what I call "Jesus factors," you start increasing the chances that you're going to screw it up. "Oh my God, we've got to please Sammy Sue"; "Oh my God, the CPB wants this"; or whatever. We never have to consider any of that. We are completely free to be wrong. If you don't have the right to be wrong, you'll seldom be right, because you're so worried about being wrong all the time, or doing something wrong.

We have the best environment for people doing news that you could possibly have.

MJH: What is the primary mission of *The NewsHour*? Is the program fulfilling its mission? Is there a rationale for preserving the kind of programming that is available on *The NewsHour*?

JL: I think I've answered this, about the mission of *The NewsHour*.

I feel like we're fulfilling it. But I also believe, as I said earlier, that we must continually take a look at what we're doing and be conscious of the fact that we must have an open mind for bringing new elements into our program and never, ever, lose our willingness to experiment, to try new things, because that's what public television was also set up to do—to try new things and experiment in a noncompetitive environment. If something works, fine, other people can do it, or we can continue to do it. Whatever. But if it doesn't work, just quit doing it. Heads don't have to roll in public broadcasting when something like that happens.

MJH: What are public television's primary challenges, and opportunities, in the years ahead?

JL: I think what lies ahead for us is just more of the same. I think we have to always be refreshing ourselves and our approaches, and be aware of what's going on around us and figure out where we fit into that, and continue to do just what we're doing, but do it better.

MJH: What are *The NewsHour*'s primary challenges, and opportunities, in the years ahead?

JL: And I feel the same way about *The NewsHour*. Everybody who's in the serious information business has to be concerned about the state of affairs pre-9/11. The newspaper readership was down, television news viewership was down, because there was no overriding story, and things were really good, and all that stuff. The economy started going south, and then 9/11...

My hope is, that one of the good things that can come out of this awful tragedy is a refocusing of journalism, across the board, on things that matter. There are all kinds of issues that all of us, as Americans, should be debating among ourselves. We're the only superpower. How should we be exercising our power? What is it that we want to do with our military, with our economic strength? We have not had a public debate. Our elections don't get that far. We are debating the small issues and tuning out the big ones. My feeling is, it's the obligation of people like me to bring these things up and continually talk about them in a way that the public gets interested. It's not enough to just say, "Oh, the public doesn't give a shit about the Middle East," or whatever it is, the exercise of power abroad...Well, that's what leadership's about.

National service. Why are we not debating a national service thing in the United States? It doesn't mean you're for it or against it, we ought to be debating it, and not just

JL: All that stuff is out there to be discussed. I see a glimmer of hope that the aftermath of 9/11 might refocus us on some of this.

MJH: To get into an historical perspective, do you think there was a time when there was more of a public sphere? We have an ideal of Athens, where people used to go down to the marketplace to discuss issues. Has that ideal been diminished?

JL: The tragic thing here is that we're more equipped to do this kind of thing now than at any time in history because of television, because of the Internet. I mean, the mechanics are in place for every citizen in this country to be involved, one way or another, in the debate about our future, as well as our present. We need to use these tools.

I'm very upbeat about all this.

MJH: Are you as optimistic about the broader culture, about the effects of our competition...

JL: I think this is where the Enron thing comes in. I think this will bring a lot of people down to reality. What is it we're teaching, to each other as well as to our children? What is it we stand for? What is it about this powerful country that we have, this perfect society that we've created? Maybe it's time we looked inward to see what we really do believe, and think in terms of ways that we can appeal to the best of what's in us rather than the worst of what's in us.

We all have bad aspects to us. There's not a bunch of good people out here and a bunch of bad people out here. We're all the same. If our system rewards those who appeal to our worst side, clearly, that's going to have an effect.

Let's say somebody says, "Hey, Hightower, I can make you rich and you don't have to do anything." Face it: It's hard for someone to say, "I don't want to get rich by not

doing anything." What if we had a culture that said, "No, no, I don't want to get rich that way, I want to do something to get rich. I want to earn it."?

This whole business with the dotcoms, and the way the market went way up. You didn't have to do anything except be 21 years old and get lucky. It became an entitlement. Kids were coming out of college and being offered huge amounts of money to work as consultants. That's not good. And I think that might change.

MJH: I agree. As I spend time on college campuses, I look at these kids, and I wonder what we're teaching them. One of mine is a fourth year at Virginia, and the other one is over in Africa. I look in kids' faces, and I wonder about some of these messages—Enron, and 9/11...Do they see this world as an inviting place? Do they see that there's room for them? Are they getting the tools they need to make sense out of it?

JL: They need role models, they need honesty, they need opportunities that appeal to the best in their souls—opportunities to go to Africa, or go to the slums of Tulsa, or whatever in the Hell it is, to do something that helps somebody else. We're depriving them of an opportunity to make themselves feel good about themselves. There's nothing more rewarding than doing something for somebody else. I know that sounds like church talk, but it's the truth. Sure, you can get satisfaction out of doing something with financial rewards, but there's truly nothing more rewarding than serving a cause or a need, doing it well, and feeling good about it.

But society must reward that. Society must honor that, and must say, "This is really what matters." We know it matters to individuals. It's like schoolteachers: We say education is so important, but if it's so important, then why are we paying schoolteachers

$8,000 a year and all the schoolbooks they can read? Society's value system is seen in the way it rewards people.

I see great opportunities for people with ideas. I'm talking about political leadership, other kinds of leadership, people with ideas who are willing to go out and say, "OK, here's what I think we should do." And not just around the edges, but major things.

So I'm very hopeful. I don't know if it's going to happen, but I'm very hopeful.

APPENDIX B

SYNOPSES OF VIDEOTAPED BROADCASTS

Thursday, September 28, 1995

Introduction (00:00—00:26)

First Opening Sponsorship Acknowledgment (00:26—00:37)

Text: "Major funding for the *MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* has been provided by the Archer Daniels Midland Company. ADM: Supermarket to the world."

Description: The announcement opens with a panoramic, aerial shot of harvesting machinery cutting a swath along a lush hillside. As the voice over announces "ADM: Supermarket to the world," the shot fades from the harvest scene to the Archer Daniels Midland logo above the text, "ADM: Supermarket to the world."

Second Opening Sponsorship Acknowledgment (00:37—00:46)

Text: "And by New York Life, yet another example of the wise investment philosophy New York Life has been following for the last 150 years."

Description: The New York Life logo is sandwiched between a caption at the top of the screen, "Celebrate," and a caption below the logo, "150 years." At the bottom of the screen is the caption, "The Company You Keep." There are no special effects.

PBS Acknowledgment (00:46—00:54)

Text: "And by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and by the annual financial support from viewers like you."

Description: Graphics are limited to manipulation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting logo and other textual elements. The caption at the bottom of the screen reads, "A private corporation funded by the American people."

News Summary (00:54—05:15)

Focus #1 (05:15—44:55)

Israeli-PLO accord: Elizabeth Farnsworth's brief summary of the accord was followed by (1) footage from the White House ceremony, including excerpts from speeches; (2) Jewish and Palestinian street protests; (3) a detailed explanation of the accord's provisions; (4) an interview with Dennis Ross, the State Department's special Middle East coordinator (11 minutes, 55 seconds); (5) an interview with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (10 minutes, 45 seconds); and (6) an interview with Bishara Bahbah, Associate Director of the Middle East Institute at Harvard's Kennedy School and a member of the Palestinian delegation to the multilateral talks (10 minutes).

Focus #2 (44:55—53:14)

David Gergen dialogue: David Gergen, Editor-At-Large for U.S. News and World Report, engages Edward Wolff, Professor of Economics at New York University and author of a 20th Century Fund Report, "Top Heavy: A Study of Increasing Inequality

of Wealth in America." Throughout their dialogue, Gergen and Wolff face each other against a dark background. Wolff contends that the U.S. is the most unequal country in the industrialized world in terms of wealth and income. The tendency for the rich to become richer as the poor and middle class fall further behind, an abysmal savings rate, and regressive tax policies have combined to produce "dangerous social divisions." Wolff claims to be "flabbergasted" by Congressional efforts to decrease benefits to the poor and foresees "political and social catastrophe" on the horizon if current policies continue. He concludes the dialog with the statement, "I see Washington now going in totally the wrong direction."

Recap (53:14—55:10)

First Concluding Sponsorship Acknowledgment (55:10—55:19)

Text: "Major funding for the *MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* has been provided by the Archer Daniels Midland Company. ADM: Supermarket to the world."

Description: The announcement opens with a panoramic, aerial shot of rows of crops. As the voice over announces, "ADM: Supermarket to the world," the shot fades from the crop scene to the Archer Daniels Midland logo above the text, "ADM: Supermarket to the world."

Second Concluding Sponsorship Acknowledgment (55:19—55:28)

Text: "And by New York Life, yet another example of the wise investment policy New York Life has been following for the last 150 years."

Description: The New York Life logo is sandwiched between a caption at the top of the screen, "Celebrate," and a caption below the logo, "150 years." At the bottom of the screen is the caption, "The Company You Keep." There are no special effects.

PBS Acknowledgment (55:28—55:35)

Text: "And by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and by the annual financial support from viewers like you."

Description: Graphics are limited to manipulation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting logo and other textual elements. The caption at the bottom of the screen reads, "A private corporation funded by the American people."

Credits

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Thursday, May 30, 1996

Introduction (00:00—00:34)

First Opening Sponsorship Acknowledgment (00:34—00:44)

Text: "Major funding for *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* has been provided by the Archer Daniels Midland Company. ADM: Supermarket to the world."

Description: The announcement opens with a panoramic, aerial shot of harvesting machinery cutting swaths along lush hillsides. As the voice over announces "ADM:

Supermarket to the world," the shot fades from the harvest scene to the Archer Daniels Midland logo above the text, "ADM: Supermarket to the world."

Second Opening Sponsorship Acknowledgment (00:44—00:54)

Text: "And by New York Life, yet another example of New York Life's wise investment philosophy."

Description: The New York Life logo is set against a dark background. The caption at the bottom of the screen reads, "The Company You Keep." There are no special effects.

PBS Acknowledgment (00:54—01:00)

Text: "And by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and by the annual financial support from viewers like you."

Description: Graphics are limited to manipulation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting logo and other textual elements. The caption at the bottom of the screen reads, "A private corporation funded by the American people."

News Summary (01:00—03:05)

Focus #1 (03:05—22:30)

Divided Nation: Votes are being tabulated from the previous day's elections for Israeli Prime Minister and Parliament. Interviews are conducted with Israeli supporters of both candidates: Benjamin Netanyahu and Shimon Peres. An extensive interview is held with Asher Arian, professor of Political Science at Haifa University. Following his

informed analysis of the elections, Jim Lehrer conducts a roundtable discussion with (1) Abraham Ben-Zvi of Tel Aviv University, (2) Yaakov Achimeir of Israeli Television, and (3) Amos Perlmutter of American University.

Focus #2 (23:30—30:39)

Change of Command: The Air Force relieves three commanders for a series of oversights and mistakes that led up to the plane crash that killed Commerce Secretary Ron Brown and 34 other people. For an informed analysis and interpretation of the events that allegedly led to the crash and the subsequent decision to relieve 3 commanders of their duties, *The NewsHour* interviews David Silverberg, Editor-at-Large of Armed Forces Journal International.

Focus #3 (30:39—40:20)

Breast Implants: This update on the class action suits against silicone breast manufacturers features footage from a laboratory, interviews with people who blame their illnesses on breast implants, a lawyer who represents plaintiffs, a plastic surgeon who claims that lawyers cause more problems than the implants themselves, and a physician from Harvard Medical School. Studies are cited that cast doubt on the health hazards of silicone breast implants. Women claiming to suffer from the harmful effects of breast implants are forced to choose between participation in class action suits and filing individual claims against manufacturers.

Focus #4 (40:20—46:40)

Where They Stand: This report is part of an ongoing series, aired weekly, of excerpts from major policy speeches delivered by presidential candidates Bill Clinton and Robert Dole. This segment features President Clinton's speech in New Orleans to the International Women's Convention of the Church of God in Christ. The speech is unedited, and there is no commentary.

Focus #5 (46:40—54:43)

Bring in da' Funk: This story features the hit Broadway musical, "Bring in da' Noise, Bring in da' Funk." Through dance and drumming, the creators of this theatrical sensation chronicle the broad sweep of African-American history. Artists and choreographers interviewed in this report explain that rhythm is the essence of black culture and traditions.

Recap (54:43—55:14)

First Concluding Sponsorship Acknowledgment (55:14—55:24)

Text: "Major funding for the *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* has been provided by the Archer Daniels Midland Company. ADM: Supermarket to the world."

Description: The announcement opens with a panoramic, aerial shot of harvesting machinery cutting swaths from lush hillsides. As the voice over announces, "ADM: Supermarket to the world," the shot fades from the harvesting scene to the Archer Daniels Midland logo above the text, "ADM: Supermarket to the world."

Second Concluding Sponsorship Acknowledgment (55:24—55:33)

Text: "And by New York Life, yet another example of New York Life's wise investment policy."

Description: The New York Life logo is set against a dark background. The caption at the bottom of the screen reads, "The Company You Keep." There are no special effects.

PBS Acknowledgment (55:33—55:40)

Text: "And by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and by the annual financial support from viewers like you."

Description: Graphics are limited to manipulation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting logo and other textual elements. The caption at the bottom of the screen reads, "A private corporation funded by the American people."

Credits

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Tuesday, March 4, 1997

Introduction (00:00—00:28)

First Opening Sponsorship Acknowledgment (00:28—00:38)

Text: "Major funding for *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* has been provided by the Archer Daniels Midland Company. ADM: Supermarket to the world."

Description: The announcement opens with a panoramic, aerial shot of rows of crops. As the voice over announces, "ADM: Supermarket to the world," the shot fades from the crop scene to the Archer Daniels Midland logo above the text, "ADM: Supermarket to the world."

Second Opening Sponsorship Acknowledgment (00:38—00:47)

Text: "And by New York Life, yet another example of New York Life's wise investment philosophy."

Description: The New York Life logo is presented against a dark background. At the bottom of the screen is the caption, "The Company You Keep." There are no special effects.

PBS Acknowledgment (00:47—00:53)

Text: "And by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and by the annual financial support from viewers like you."

Description: Graphics are limited to manipulation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting logo and other textual elements. The caption at the bottom of the screen reads, "A private corporation funded by the American people."

News Summary (00:53—05:40)

Focus #1 (05:40—16:10)

Flooding in the Midwest: Vicious weather in the South and Southwest left widespread death and destruction in its wake. President Clinton is shown touring his

ravaged home state of Arkansas. The focus is on the record flooding in Ohio and Kentucky. Extensive interviews are conducted with (1) Ken Haydu, a meteorologist from the National Weather Service and (2) James Williams, Chief of Staff of the Ohio Emergency Management Agency. The report includes advice to the public about how to remain safe during severe flooding.

Focus #2 (16:10—22:00)

Citizenship U.S.A.: The report focuses on the recent surge in requests for naturalization and contained footage of mass swearing-in ceremonies. A controversy emerged over the aggressive tactics employed to register new voters. Critics charged that Democrats were attempting to recruit voters and boost the prospects for Democratic candidates. Moreover, the frenzied pace of naturalization appeared to prevent adequate background checks and security screening. The report includes footage from a Congressional hearing in which naturalization officials were accused of placing a higher priority on recruiting voters than ensuring public safety through background checks of immigrants.

Focus #3 (22:00—36:00)

Campaign Finance: President Al Gore was harshly criticized for making campaign phone calls from the White House during the 1996 presidential campaign. The report begins with footage of a news conference with President Clinton during which the President defends Vice President Gore's fundraising tactics. To add depth and historical perspectives to the story, the report features a roundtable discussion with (1) historian

Doris Kearns Goodwin, (2) historian Michael Beschloss, (3) journalist and author Haynes Johnson, and (4) Bill Kristol, Editor and Publisher of The Weekly Standard and former Chief of Staff for Vice President Dan Quayle. The discussion ranges from 19th century scandals to Watergate, and there is some commentary on the problems inherent in financing modern campaigns and their impact on governance. The roundtable discussion concludes with participants' recommendations for campaign finance reform.

Focus #4 (36:00—44:32)

Doctors joining labor unions: The report begins with an in-depth report on managed care, the emerging role of corporations, and the decision on the part of some doctors to protect their interests through union membership. There is a fundamental conflict between corporate owners' financial interests and physicians' obligation to their patients. To provide as many perspectives as possible, interviews are conducted with business people, doctors who favor labor unions and those who oppose them, and patients.

Focus #5 (44:32—54:55)

Palestinian delegation's visit to Washington, DC: After some background on the recent Palestinian visit to Washington, DC, *The NewsHour* presents a lengthy interview with Hanan Ashrawi, Yassir Arafat's Minister of Higher Education and a participant in meetings the previous day at the White House. Ashrawi, extremely poised and eloquent throughout the interview, speaks at length about Israel's "supreme irresponsibility" and arrogance in continuing to build settlements around Jerusalem. She accuses Israeli leadership of derailing the peace process and alludes to Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu's grudging transformation from public relations spokesman to policy maker. Criticism of Israel notwithstanding, Ashrawi is upbeat about the U.S. commitment to the peace process.

Recap (54:55—55:30)

First Concluding Sponsorship Acknowledgment (55:38—55:46)

Text: "Major funding for *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* has been provided by the Archer Daniels Midland Company. ADM: Supermarket to the world."

Description: The announcement opens with a panoramic, aerial shot of lush farmland with the sun low on the horizon. As the voice over announces, "ADM: Supermarket to the world," the shot fades from the crop scene to the Archer Daniels Midland logo above the text, "ADM: Supermarket to the world."

Second Concluding Sponsorship Acknowledgment (55:46—55:55)

Text: "And by New York Life, yet another example of New York Life's wise investment philosophy."

Description: The New York Life logo is presented against a dark background. At the bottom of the screen is the caption, "The Company You Keep." There are no special effects.

PBS Acknowledgment (55:56—56:02)

Text: "And by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and by the annual financial

support from viewers like you."

Description: Graphics are limited to manipulation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting logo and other textual elements. The caption at the bottom of the screen reads, "A private corporation funded by the American people."

Credits

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Wednesday, September 16, 1998

Introduction (00:00—00:28)

First Opening Sponsorship Acknowledgment (00:28—00:43)

Text: "Brought to you in part by ADM. Feeding the world is the biggest challenge of the new century, because by the time this baby is old enough to vote, the world will have nearly two billion new mouths to feed. ADM: Supermarket to the world."

Description: The text, superimposed on a rotating globe, reads, "Feeding the world is the biggest challenge of the new century. ADM is leading the way." As the narrator makes reference to the new baby, an image of a newborn baby, cradled in a caregiver's hands, is superimposed on the screen and becomes the dominant image. Meanwhile, the globe continues to rotate in the background. The spot concludes with the slogan, "ADM: Supermarket to the world," laid out in an ellipse around the ADM logo. The piece is set to music and features fairly complex use of color, video and computerized images.

Second Opening Sponsorship Acknowledgment (00:43—00:58)

Text: "And by Travelers. Remember that dollar you put in your annuity? It was invested in the natural gas company in Chile. Their business is really growing, and so is your annuity."

Description: The piece opens with Travelers Group's logo, a red umbrella, superimposed on a black background. The next frame shows a woman reading a newspaper. The scene quickly shifts to a rural area, presumably in Chile, where construction on a pipeline appears to be in progress. Then we see a close-up of the woman's face. The next image is of Travelers Group's umbrella, and this time, the caption reads, "Travelers Insurance." The acknowledgment closes with the text, "How money works now," superimposed on the screen with the logo. The entire piece is accompanied by relaxing music.

PBS Acknowledgment (00:58—01:04)

Text: "And by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and by the annual financial support from viewers like you."

Description: Graphics are limited to manipulation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting logo and other textual elements. The caption at the bottom of the screen reads, "A private corporation funded by the American people."

News Summary (01:04—06:02)

Focus #1 (06:02—14:32)

Fielding Questions: The report features and extended excerpt from a joint news conference with President Bill Clinton and Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic. This is President Clinton's first opportunity to respond publicly to the recently released "Starr Report" about his relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinsky. The President's comments are interrupted only by reporters' questions, most of which are directed at Mr. Clinton.

Focus #2 (14:32—28:55)

Newsmaker: In this interview with Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, *NewsHour* anchor Jim Lehrer asks questions pertaining to President Clinton's ability to govern effectively in the wake of the Monica Lewinsky scandal. Lehrer is particularly concerned with the President's ability to participate in international efforts to alleviate the global financial crisis that was sweeping the globe. There are no references to salacious details of the scandal. Other topics include prospects for a cut in interest rates, global economic issues, recent activity on Wall Street, and the United States' alleged over reliance on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a panacea for economic problems around the world.

Focus #3 (28:55—42:34)

Newsmaker: The NewsHour's Margaret Warner conducts this interview with Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, Democrat of South Dakota. Their discussion, devoid of sensationalism, pertains to governance in the wake of President Clinton's

improper relationship with Monica Lewinsky. *NewsHour* Anchor Jim Lehrer closes this segment of the program with an announcement that Trent Lott, the Republican Senate Majority Leader, had been invited to join in the discussion but was unavailable. Lehrer promises to schedule an interview with him at the earliest possible convenience.

Focus #4 (42:34—54:40)

Teacher Shortage: Footage from a crowded elementary school classroom in Oakland, CA, is shown to set the stage for this segment on a nationwide shortage of teachers. During this segment, interviews are conducted with, Carole Quan, Superintendent, Oakland School District; Bob Chase, President, National Education Association; Linda Darling-Hammond, Stanford University; Richard Murname, an economist at Harvard University; Donna Uyemoto, an administrator at the New Haven (CA) School District; and Ruth McKenna, Superintendent, New Haven School District. Richard Riley, Secretary of Education, is shown as he addresses a National Press Club luncheon about the teacher shortage. Footage shows a number of teachers "in action" in the classroom, and one promising teacher who opted to go to work in the private sector is interviewed about her reasons for leaving the teaching profession.

Recap (54:40—55:20)

First Closing Sponsorship Acknowledgment (55:20—55:36)

Text: "Brought to you in part by ADM. Feeding the world is the biggest challenge of the new century. ADM is promoting soil conservation so history doesn't repeat itself. ADM: Supermarket to the world."

Description: The text, superimposed on a rotating globe, reads, "Feeding the world is the biggest challenge of the new century. ADM is leading the way." As the narrator cautions against letting history repeat itself, the next frame shows a windswept farmhouse engulfed in a dust storm. The spot concludes with the slogan, "ADM: Supermarket to the world," laid out in an ellipse around the ADM logo. The piece is set to music and features fairly complex use of color, video and computerized images.

Second Closing Sponsorship Acknowledgment (55:36—-55:50)

Text: "And by Salomon Smith Barney. Are micro fibers just a trend? One thing's for sure: Opportunities abound. Let's get to work. Salomon Smith Barney."

Description: The spot opens with the text, "Salomon Smith Barney," placed above a second line of text, "A member of Travelers Group," on a black background, with the Travelers Group umbrella logo trailing. Then we see a slow-motion sequence of images from a fashion show in which a beautiful model is sporting some sort of ultra-light fabric. As the narrator says, "One thing's for sure," we find ourselves peering over the shoulders of a businessman as he watches a kaleidoscope of business images. Then, attractive people in business attire appear on the screen. The text, "let's get to work," then appears on the screen. The final image shows the text, "Salomon Smith Barney," placed above another line of text, "success is earned." In small print we see "A member of Travelers Group" with the Travelers Group umbrella logo trailing. The entire piece is set to music.

PBS Acknowledgment (55:50—55:57)

Text: "And by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and by the annual financial support from viewers like you."

Description: Graphics are limited to manipulation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting logo and other textual elements. The caption at the bottom of the screen reads, "A private corporation funded by the American people." There is no music.

Credits

###

Tuesday, September 21, 1999

Introduction (00:00—00:39)

First Opening Sponsorship Acknowledgment (00:39—00:54)

Text: "It took millions of years to create the world's oil supply and 150 years to deplete it. Who is helping to cut the world's need for oil with renewable energy sources?"

Description: The text is read by David Brinkley, one of America's best-known news anchors and foremost opinion leaders. In the opening frame, the text, "brought to you in part by ADM," rolls across the screen against a background of a rotating Earth. The next frame features a land-based oilrig that fades into an offshore oilrig. Next we see a scene of rush hour traffic in a large metropolitan area. In a rather jarring juxtaposition, the next frame features a farmer admiring an ear of corn, followed by a pastoral and soothing shot of a cornfield. Then we see an enormous quantity of grain pouring into a grain bin. Then the ADM slogan, "Supermarket to the world," rolls onto the screen in an elliptical shape,

framing the Earth. The final frame shows the ADM slogan wrapped around the ADM logo. These rapidly changing images are accompanied by orchestral music.

Second Opening Sponsorship Acknowledgment (00:54-01:09)

With music playing in the background, the Travelers Group umbrella logo, all white, flows onto a bright red screen. Single words then begin to appear: "life," "home," "auto," "business," and "annuities." Stark red and white columns, clearly symbolic of the Travelers Group umbrella logo, then move across the screen, alternately emphasizing and obscuring the aforementioned words. After about nine seconds, a voice announces, "This program is made possible in part by a grant from Travelers Insurance." The last frame, built on a stark white background, features text on two lines. The first line reads, "Travelers Insurance," and the second line reads, "A member of citigroup." Travelers Group's red umbrella is the final image. Dramatic orchestral music, primarily horns and string instruments, accompanies the acknowledgment.

PBS Acknowledgment (01:09—01:15)

Text: "And by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and by the annual financial support from viewers like you."

Description: Graphics are limited to manipulation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting logo and other textual elements. The caption at the bottom of the screen reads, "A private corporation funded by the American people." There is no music.

News Summary (01:15—07:35)

Focus #1 (07:35—18:58)

Taiwan Trembler: After a comprehensive report of the damage caused by the earthquake and footage from Taiwan, Elizabeth Farnsworth interviews (1) Stephen Chen, Taiwan Representative to the U.S. (in the absence of formal diplomatic ties between the U.S. and Taiwan, Chen serves as a government liaison) and (2) Robert Wesson of the U.S. Geological Survey. In what sounds almost like a public service announcement, Farnsworth makes a point of asking Chen what Taiwan needed most in the aftermath of the earthquake. Wesson speaks at length of tectonic plate movements in the western Pacific.

Focus #2 (18:58—36:36)

School of the Americas: Based at Fort Benning, GA, the School of the Americas serves as a training facility for Central and South American military personnel. Supporters of the school claim that its graduates help to promote democracy in Latin America. Critics argue that the school props up repressive regimes and that the curriculum includes training in torture and assassination. Interviews are conducted with (1) Reverend Roy Bourgeois, an outspoken critic of the facility, (2) Glenn Weidner, Commandant of the School of the Americas, (3) Major Joe Blair, (Ret.), a former instructor at the facility who claims first-hand knowledge of classes in abusive interrogation techniques, and (4) Captain Carmen Estrella, an instructor who asserts that soldiers graduate from the school with a heightened appreciation for democracy and human rights. Following the report, Margaret Warner facilitates an open-ended discussion in the PBS studio with (1) Louis Caldera, Secretary of the Army and a staunch

defender of the School of the Americas, and (2) Representative Joe Moakley, (D) Massachusetts, who is leading a crusade in Congress to deny funding to the school.

Focus #3 (36:36—45:00)

Taking Back the Neighborhood: This report is part of a series on grassroots neighborhood campaigns to reclaim low-income neighborhoods from criminals and especially drug dealers. This particular report features a neighborhood in Kansas City where residents, church leaders and police officers built a coalition that proved effective in reducing crime and stimulating an increase in property values. Interviews are conducted with residents and community activists. The piece closes with a woman encouraging others to become active in their own communities and fight back against crime.

Focus #4 (45:00—54:20)

Code of the Street: This is a David Gergen dialogue with Dr. Elijah Anderson, Professor of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania and author of Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City. Gergen, Editor-At-Large for U.S. News and World Report, interviews Dr. Anderson face-to-face against a dark background. Anderson describes pockets of disenfranchised and alienated people in the inner city—in this case, Philadelphia—and provides historical perspectives and sociological analysis of contemporary street culture. Using anecdotes from his book, Anderson explains what it takes for someone who has grown up in this kind of bleak

environment to succeed in mainstream culture. His message of hope comes across like a public service message for people mired in poverty and hopelessness.

Recap (54:20—54:58)

First Closing Sponsorship Acknowledgment (54:58—55:13)

Text: "Imagine a system that produces and distributes food and helps improve nutrition and health here and abroad. Who is building such a global network?"

Description: The text is read once again by David Brinkley. The sponsorship opens with the text, "brought to you in part by ADM," rolling across the bottom of the screen against the background of a rotating Earth. The next few frames show barge traffic on a navigation canal, tractor-trailer trucks driving along highways, and a container ship plying the ocean. The subsequent frame is an animation of lines connecting locations throughout the globe. Finally, the ADM log appears in the middle of the slogan, rolled out in an elliptical shape against a dark background, "Supermarket to the world." Soft music plays throughout the sponsorship.

Second Closing Sponsorship Acknowledgment (55:14—55:29)

Text: "And by Salomon Smith Barney. Is an arthritis cure around the corner? One thing's for sure: Opportunities abound. Salomon Smith Barney: success is earned."

Description: In the opening frame, two lines of text appear against a dark background: "Salomon Smith Barney" constitutes the first line, and "A member of citigroup," with the Travelers Group umbrella logo trailing, constitutes the second line. The next frames feature senior citizens jumping into water from what appears to be a

cruise ship and then swimming, with a glass of water and some pills in the foreground. Next, we find ourselves looking at a woman's back as she gazes at a tractor in a field. This is followed by a rapid succession of images and high tech imagery showing smartly-dressed businesspeople juxtaposed with machinery. In the final frame are three lines of text: "Salomon Smith Barney," "success is earned" and, at the bottom right corner of the screen, "a member of citigroup," with the Travelers umbrella logo trailing. Ethereal music plays throughout the sponsorship.

PBS Acknowledgment (55:29—55:35)

Text: "And by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and by the annual financial support from viewers like you."

Description: Graphics are limited to manipulation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting logo and other textual elements. The caption at the bottom of the screen reads, "A private corporation funded by the American people." There is no music.

Credits

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Thursday, August 24, 2000

Introduction (00:00-00:45)

First Opening Sponsorship Acknowledgment (00:45-01:00)

Text: "It took millions of years to create the world's oil supply and 150 years to deplete it. Who is helping to cut the world's need for oil with renewable energy sources?"

Description: The text is read by David Brinkley, one of America's best-known news anchors and foremost opinion leaders. In the opening frame, the text, "brought to you in part by ADM," rolls across the screen against a background of a rotating Earth. The next frame features a land-based oilrig that fades into an offshore oilrig. Next we see a scene of rush hour traffic in a large metropolitan area. In a rather jarring juxtaposition, the next frame features a farmer admiring an ear of corn, followed by a pastoral and soothing shot of a cornfield. Then we see an enormous quantity of grain pouring into a grain bin. Then the ADM slogan, "Supermarket to the world," rolls onto the screen in an elliptical shape, framing the Earth. The final frame shows the ADM slogan wrapped around the ADM logo. These rapidly changing images are accompanied by orchestral music.

Second Opening Sponsorship Acknowledgment (01:00—01:15)

Text: There is no text.

Description: With relaxing music playing in the background, the opening frame shows a passenger plane in flight against a background of gray clouds. The next shot is taken from outside the plane and focuses on a young, attractive woman gazing out the window. At this point, text, accompanied by the Travelers Group umbrella logo, begins to appear on the screen: "She's thinking about," "the milky way," "her porch light," and "her first employee." There is a brief shot of the moon, followed by a scene of the woman's bare feet; clearly, she is relaxed, and her shoes have fallen to the floor. More

text then appears on the screen: "She's not thinking about business insurance." The camera then returns to the outside of the plane and focuses once again on the woman. The sky is darker now, and for an instant, the bright red Travelers Group umbrella logo is superimposed on the darkening sky and perched above the plane. The final frame shows three lines of text against a dark background: "Travelers Insurance," "A member of citigroup" with the Travelers Group umbrella logo trailing, and centered below, "www.travelers.com."

PBS Acknowledgment (01:15—01:26)

Text: "This program was also made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and by contributions to PBS stations from viewers like you. Thank you."

Description: With snappy guitar music playing in the background, the piece opens with the CPB logo in the middle of the screen with shadowy images of people in motion around the perimeter of the screen, dancing around a sphere. Text at the bottom of the screen reads, "A private corporation funded by the American people." Then, the CPB logo is replaced by large, italicized text," Viewers like you." Human images continue to dance around the margins. Finally, the text, "Thank you," appears in the middle of the screen. The color scheme, mostly white with rays piercing into a light blue background, conjures images of the sun's radiation.

News Summary (01:26—05:26)

Focus #1 (05:26—18:08)

Newsmaker: NewsHour correspondent Margaret Warner interviews Mexico's president-elect, Vicente Fox. The report begins with footage of Fox on the campaign trail, a biographical sketch, and a clear explanation of his agenda for Mexico. The interview itself takes place in Washington, DC, in a book-lined room with the Mexican flag prominently displayed. Fox's agenda is based on his interest in building a long-term partnership with the U.S. and Canada. Discussion centers on NAFTA and the need to narrow the economic gap between Mexicans and their neighbors to the north.

Focus #2 (18:08—32:30)

Building a Defense: This is part of a two-part series on building a national missile defense system to protect the U.S. from military attacks. To clarify the politics, the report features supporters and opponents of building a defense shield and includes the views of foreign leaders. Secretary of Defense William Cohen discusses the need to garner support from allies and the need to be sensitive to Russia. North Korea, Iraq and Iran are identified as credible threats to U.S. security. High-tech animation is used to demonstrate technical possibilities and problems. Interviewees include Jack Gansler, U.S Undersecretary of Defense; Sha Zukang, China's top arms negotiator; John Steinbrenner of the University of Maryland; John Holum of the Department of State; Igor Ivanov, Russia's Foreign Minister; John Pike of the Federation of American Scientists; Richard Perle, an advisor to George W. Bush. There is other footage from the historic ABM Treaty of 1972 and the 2000 Republican and Democratic National Conventions where

candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush explained their views on building a missile defense shield.

Focus #3 (32:30—45:00)

Update: Stem Cell Research: This report presents the medical and ethical issues pertaining to embryonic stem cell research. After providing some background information, *NewsHour* correspondent Gwen Ifill facilitates a discussion with Richard Doerflinger of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Daniel Perry of the Patient's Coalition for Urgent Research. Viewers are left to sort out contradictory points raised by these two acknowledged experts.

Focus #4 ((45:00—54:18)

Surviving Survivor: NewsHour media correspondent Terence Smith reports on CBS's hit show, "Survivor." Footage of the season *finale* is followed by a discussion about "Survivor" in particular, and so-called "reality television" in general, with Roger Rosenblatt, *NewsHour* essayist, and Brian Graden, MTV's President of Programming. Their discussion leads to informed speculation about the state of American culture, the economics of television programming, and sociological theories that help to explain the popularity of reality television.

Recap (54:18—55:04)

First Closing Sponsorship Acknowledgment (55:04—55:19)

Text: "Modern practices have made the American farmer the world's most productive. Who helps put the people who grow the food in touch with those who need it?"

Description: The piece opens with the text, "brought to you in part by ADM," rolling across the bottom of the screen with a rotating Earth in the background. The scene then moves to a barnyard where a farmer is apparently using a cell phone. Next we see a farmer holding a baby with a lush green crop in the background. Then, with the ADM logo in the center of a darkened Earth, an elliptical-shaped slogan, "Supermarket to the world," rolls onto the screen.

Second Closing Sponsorship Acknowledgment (55:19—55:34)

Text: "Helping serious investors relax, knowing their investments are truly diversified. See how we earn it. Salomon Smith Barney."

Description: The piece opens with two text lines of text: "Salomon Smith Barney" and, on a second line, "A member of citigroup," with Travelers Group's red umbrella logo trailing. The next scene features a woman in a beach chair near the ocean with a steward walking off screen. The woman's eyes close, her reading material drops from her hand, and she falls asleep. In the final frame we see several lines of text: "See How We Earn It," "Salomon Smith Barney," and "A member of citigroup," with Travelers Group's red umbrella logo trailing. At the bottom of the screen is the text, "salomonsmithbarney.com." The entire piece is accompanied by soothing music.

PBS Acknowledgment (55:34—55:45)

Text: "This program was also made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and by contributions to your PBS station from viewers like you. Thank you."

Description: With snappy guitar music playing in the background, the piece opens with the CPB logo in the middle of the screen with shadowy images of people in motion around the perimeter of the screen, dancing around a sphere. Text at the bottom of the screen reads, "A private corporation funded by the American people." Then, the CPB logo is replaced by large, italicized text," Viewers like you." Human images continue to dance around the margins. Finally, the text, "Thank you," appears in the middle of the screen. The color scheme, mostly white with rays piercing into a light blue background, conjures images of the sun's radiation.

Credits

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Tuesday, October 30, 2001

Introduction (00:00—00:38)

First Opening Sponsorship Acknowledgment (00:38—00:58)

Text: (male voice) "Major funding for *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* has been provided by…" (female voice) "Imagine a world where we're not diminishing resources,

we're growing them. Ethanol: A cleaner burning fuel, made from corn. ADM: The nature of what's to come."

Description: Music is played throughout the acknowledgment. The first image features animated cars driving across an abstract landscape that includes an image of corn. The next frame shows an abstract clock with hands moving to depict the passage of time. Suddenly, an abstract ear of corn begins to grow, and in a jarring juxtaposition, a fuel pump emerges from it. At the conclusion of rapidly changing and animated images of corn, the text, "ADM: The nature of what's to come," appears on the screen. At the bottom of screen is the text, "admworld.com."

Second Opening Sponsorship Acknowledgment (00:58—01:10)

Text: "And also by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, seeking solutions to education, population, energy, and environments challenges throughout the world."

Description: The text, "The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation," remains on the screen throughout the acknowledgment. Single words—"Education," "Population," "Energy," and "Environment"—appear and disappear with music playing in the background.

PBS Acknowledgment (01:10—01:20)

Text: "And by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. This program was also made possible by contributions to your PBS station from viewers like you. Thank you."

Description: The piece is set to music, and graphics include creative manipulation of the CPB logo, dots and circles. Text includes "A private corporation funded by the

American people," "cpb.org," and "Viewers Like You." The text, "Thank You," concludes the acknowledgment.

News Summary (01:20—07:33)

Focus #1 (07:33—32:08)

Terror Alert: Anchor Jim Lehrer offers a brief announcement of the most recent alert of a possible terrorist attack. Excerpts from a news conference with Tom Ridge, Director of the Office of Homeland Security, are followed by *NewsHour* correspondent Margaret Warner's interview with Neil Lewis of The New York Times. Their discussion revolves around the rationale behind official terror alerts. Then, correspondent Elizabeth Farnsworth talks about local responses to terror alerts with local officials, including (1) Bernard Parks, Los Angeles Police Chief; (2) William Finney, St. Paul Police Chief; (3) Stan Knee, Austin Police Chief; and (4) John Timoney, Philadelphia Police Commissioner. All are supportive of the communication channels linking them with federal authorities. At the same time, there is clearly a concern about the mounting financial burden that local communities are forced to bear in order to maintain extra vigilance. There is a consensus that the federal government, perhaps acting through the Defense Department, should help defray costs of terror alerts.

Focus #2 (32:08—41:28)

Anthrax Threat: Gwen Ifill reports on the anthrax attacks that came in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11. Interviewees include Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director, National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases and a postal worker in

Washington, DC. Footage is shown of New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, New York Health Commissioner Neal Cohen, and John Potter, U.S. Postmaster General. Back in *The NewsHour* studio, Ifill talks with Susan Dentzer of *The NewsHour*'s Health Unit about the anthrax attacks and related comments by government officials.

Focus #3 (41:28—45:50)

Military Campaign: This update on the military campaign in Afghanistan includes footage from the war front, news conferences with U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, British Defense Minister Geoff Hoon, and Northern Alliance Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah, and an address by British Prime Minister Tony Blair to the Welsh Parliament.

Focus #4 (45:50—54:00)

Fighting Fear: NewsHour correspondent Ray Suarez interviews Muslims in Northern Virginia about the hatred and occasional acts of violence directed toward their community in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11. In an effort to demonstrate that not all Americans associate Islam with Muslim extremism, Suarez also reports acts of kindness and reconciliation. Interviewees include business people, students and Islamic leaders. The primary interviewee is Imam Anwar Awlaki, a cleric at the Dar al Hijrah Islamic Center.

Recap (54:00—54:44)

First Closing Sponsorship Acknowledgment (54:44—55:04)

Text: (male voice) "Major funding for *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* has been provided by..." (female voice) "Imagine a world where no child begs for food. While some will look on that as a dream, others will look long and hard, and get to work. ADM: The nature of what's to come."

Description: The entire piece is set to music. The opening image features an abstract animation of a crowd. Within a few seconds, a young boy becomes the prominent image. Then, with a dramatic color shift from blue to green, images of animated plants fill the screen. In conclusion, the text, "ADM: The nature of what's to come," appears on the screen. At the bottom of screen is the text, "admworld.com."

Second Closing Sponsorship Acknowledgment (55:04—55:16)

Text: "And also by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, seeking solutions to education, population, energy, and environments challenges throughout the world."

Description: The text, "The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation," remains on the screen throughout the acknowledgment. Single words—"Education," "Population," "Energy," and "Environment"—appear and disappear with music playing in the background.

PBS Acknowledgment (55:16—55:28)

Text: "And by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. This program was also made possible by contributions to your PBS station from viewers like you. Thank you."

Description: The piece is set to music, and graphics include creative manipulation of the CPB logo, dots and circles. Text includes "A private corporation funded by the American people," "cpb.org," and "Viewers Like You." The text, "Thank You," concludes the acknowledgment.

Credits

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APPENDIX C

GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICING JOURNALISM

Excerpted, with permission, from *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*:

Program Overview & Sponsor Package

I practice journalism in accordance with the following guidelines:

- **Do nothing I cannot defend.**
- **Do not distort, lie, slant or hype.**
- **Do not falsify facts or make up quotes.**
- **Cover, write and present every story with the care I would want if the story were about me.**
- **Assume there is at least one other side or version to every story.**
- **Assume the viewer is as smart and caring and good a person as I am.**
- **Assume the same about all people on whom I report.**
- **Assume everyone is innocent until proven guilty.**
- **Assume personal lives are a private matter until a legitimate turn in the story mandates otherwise.**
- **Carefully separate opinion and analysis from straight news stories and clearly label it as such.**
- **Do not use anonymous sources or blind quotes except on rare and monumental occasions. No one should ever be allowed to attack another anonymously.**
- **Do not broadcast profanity or the end result of violence unless it is an integral and necessary part of the story and/or crucial to its understanding.**
- **Acknowledge that objectivity may be impossible but fairness never is.**
- **Journalists who are reckless with facts and reputations should be disciplined by their employers.**
- **My viewers have a right to know what principles guide my work and the process I use in their practice.**
- **I am not in the entertainment business.**

- Jim Lehrer

APPENDIX D

VIEWERSHIP OF *THE NEWSHOUR*

Excerpted, with permission, from *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*:

Program Overview & Sponsor Package

Viewership of *The NewsHour*

- *The Newshour with Jim Lehrer* airs five nights a week on more than 300 local PBS stations across the United States and is available to close to 98% of the approximately 102 million U.S. TV households.

- *The NewsHour* reaches an average audience of more than 1,120,000 households (1.2 HH rating) and a total unduplicated audience of approximately 7.5 million viewers each week (cume weekly household rating of 2.8).

  Specific demo ratings and estimated annual gross impressions are as follows:

	Average Rating	Gross Impressions
U.S. TV Households	1.2	587,600,000
$75,000+HH Income	1.3	145,600,000
Income $50K+/POM+	1.2	104,000,000
Income $50K+/1+College	1.5	228,800,000

- *The NewsHour's* 1.1 average HH rating is close to 50% greater than that of CNN (primetime 2000 average HH rating of .8), and close to double Fox News Channel (.7) and MSNBC (.5).

Competitive Television Landscape

***NewsHour* vs. Commercial Broadcast Network Television**

In the past seven days:

- 65% of PBS viewers did not watch network early evening news programs

NewsHour vs. Cable

In the past seven days:

- 83% of PBS viewers did not watch CNBC
- 60% of PBS viewers did not watch CNN
- 79% of PBS viewers did not watch Headline News
- 91% of PBS viewers did not watch MSNBC

***NewsHour* vs. Cable News Sources**

PBS is in 99% of US television households.

In comparison:

- CNN 77% US television households
- CNBC 71% US television households
- CNN/HLN 77% US television households
- Headline News 72% US television households
- MSNBC 53% US television households

(2000 Nielsen Ratings)

APPENDIX E

PROFILE OF *THE NEWSHOUR* VIEWER

Excerpted, with permission, from *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*:

Program Overview & Sponsor Package

***The NewsHour* Viewer: Affluent, Educated and Influential**

The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer reaches a weekly audience of over 7.5 million unduplicated viewers each week. These viewers are dedicated to the program, and are well-educated, affluent and influential opinion leaders and decision makers.

NewsHour viewers are:

- 100% more likely to be a head of a household with 4+ years of college
- 30% more likely to have an annual household income above $60,000

(when compared to the average television viewer. Nielsen Television Index and the PBS Pocketpiece, September '99 – July '00)

Additionally, according to the 2000 MRI Doublebase Study, **versus the average U.S. television viewer, PBS News and Public Affairs Viewers are:**

Well Educated

- *34% more likely to hold college degrees*
- *53% more likely to hold post-graduate degrees*

Influential and Involved in Their Communities:

- *43% more likely to vote*
- *112% more likely to write a letter to the editor*
- *126% more likely to write to a public official*
- *135% more likely to visit an elected official*
- *147% more likely to take part in a local civic issue*

Upscale:

- *18% more likely to be president of a company*
- *31% more likely to own investment real estate*
- *31% more likely to have a HH income of $150,000+*
- *38% more likely to maintain a personal line of credit*
- *53% more likely to have post-graduate degrees*
- *71% more likely to maintain a money market account*
- *75% more likely to use money management counsel*
- *108% more likely to own any stock*
- *169% more likely to own $50,000 to $74,999 in stock*
- *184% more likely to own $75,000+ in stock*

APPENDIX F

THE NEWSHOUR: LOCAL MARKET STRENGTH

Excerpted, with permission, from *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*:

Program Overview & Sponsor Package

***The NewsHour*: Local Market Strength**

The NewsHour exhibits ratings strength in major markets throughout the United States. Average daily Nielsen ratings (in measured *Overnights* markets) for the 2000-2001 season are as follows:

DMA Rank	Market	Average Daily Rating 2000-2001 TV Season
1	New York	1.8
2	Los Angeles	1.6
3	Chicago	2.2
4	Philadelphia	1.0
5	San Francisco (3:00pm)	1.5
	San Francisco (6:00pm)	1.5
6	Boston	1.6
7	Dallas	1.1
8	Washington, DC	1.6
9	Detroit	1.1
10	Atlanta	1.2
11	Houston	0.8
12	Seattle	1.9
13	Tampa/St. Petersburg	2.0
14	Minneapolis	1.4
15	Cleveland	0.9
16	Miami	1.3
17	Phoenix	2.0
18	Denver	1.2
19	Sacramento	1.3
20	Pittsburgh (WQED)	1.2
21	St. Louis	1.9
22	Orlando	0.8
23	Portland, OR	1.6
24	Baltimore	1.7
25	San Diego	1.8
26	Indianapolis	1.1
27	Hartford	1.9
28	Charlotte	1.3
29	Raleigh-Durham	1.1
30	Nashville	1.1
31	Kansas City	1.6
32	Cincinnati	1.0
33	Milwaukee	0.6
34	Columbus	1.0
35	Salt Lake City	1.0
38	Memphis	1.4
40	Norfolk	1.1
41	West Palm Beach	0.6

APPENDIX F
(Continued)

THE NEWSHOUR: LOCAL MARKET STRENGTH

43	Oklahoma City	0.8
44	Greensboro	1.0
45	Louisville	1.3
46	Albuquerque	0.8
48	Las Vegas	1.8

APPENDIX G

THE NEWSHOUR AND OPINION LEADERS

Excerpted, with permission, from *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*:

Program Overview & Sponsor Package

***The NewsHour* is the Leader with Opinion Leaders**

Among the best television programs in reaching national business, government, regulatory and public policy opinion leaders……...

- The 2000 - 2001 *Erdos & Morgan Opinion Leader Survey* (a bi-annual study of influential business, government and public policy leaders) ranked *The NewsHour* **first** among all electronic media as the **most credible** and **most objective** news program, and **third** as the **most influential** (behind *Meet The Press* and *Face The Nation*).

- *Erdos & Morgan* also revealed that *The NewsHour* is viewed by more than 44% of all "Opinion Leaders," outranked only by *ABC World News Tonight* at 46.9%.

- Among Opinion Leaders who influence specific issues, *Erdos & Morgan* cites that the following percentages of "Influencers" view *The NewsHour* :
  - *International Issues:* 54% (ranking 1st among all TV Programs)
  - *Agricultural Issues:* 53% (ranking 1st)
  - *Security Issues:* 53% (ranking 1st)
  - *Science & Technology Issues:* 51% (ranking 1st)
  - *Economic/Financial Issues:* 50% (ranking 2nd)
  - *Legislative/Gov't Policy Issues:* 49% (ranking 1st)
  - *Defense Issues:* 49% (ranking 2nd)
  - *Environmental Issues:* 48% (ranking 2nd)
  - *Cultural Issues:* 48% (ranking 3rd)
  - *Business Issues:* 46% (ranking 2nd)
  - *Health, Education & Human Services Issues:* 46% (ranking 2nd)

In addition, *The NewsHour* is appointment television for business and government leaders:

- **44% of business leaders tune in to *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer***
  (The top ranked television program is *ABC World News Tonight,* with 49% viewership by business leaders)

- **55% of Congress tunes in to *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer***
  (The top ranked program is *Meet the Press,* at 79%, followed by *This Week with Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts* at 65% and then *The NewsHour.)*

- **54% of the executive branch tunes in to *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer***
  (The NewsHour *ranks fourth overall, with Meet the Press at 75%, Nightline at 56%, and NBC Nightly News at 55%.)*

VITA 2

Michael J. Hightower

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: GLORIOUSLY BORING: A CASE STUDY OF *THE NEWSHOUR WITH JIM LEHRER*

Major Field: Mass Communication

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on July 23, 1955.

Education: Graduated in 1973 from Casady School in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Received Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia, 1977; participated in foreign study program, Kansai Gaidai University, Hirakata City, Japan, 1977. Received Master of Arts degree in History from the University of Denver, Denver, Colorado, 1982. Completed the requirements for the Master of Science degree with a major in Mass Communication at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, August 2002. Accepted as PhD candidate and teaching assistant in Department of Sociology at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, 2002.

Experience: Served on faculties of college preparatory schools in Englewood, Colorado, and Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1977-85. Co-founded and served as president of Council Oak Books, a trade book publishing company in Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1984-1997. Employed as Writer/Editor for the University of Oklahoma's National Resource Center for Youth Services, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1997-1998. Employed as Communications Director for the Tulsa Metro Chamber, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1999-2001. Partner in The Hightower Company and Sooner Nation Royalties, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Professional Memberships: Kappa Tau Alpha, National Honor Society in Journalism and Mass Communication.