GATEJUMPING: TWITTER, TV NEWS AND DELIVERY OF BREAKING NEWS

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Dale C. Blasingame, B.A.

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ABSTRACT

GATEJUMPING: TWITTER, TV NEWS AND DELIVERY OF BREAKING NEWS

by

Dale Charles Blasingame, B.A.

Texas State University-San Marcos

May 2011

SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: CINDY ROYAL

The diffusion of Twitter has changed the gatekeeping process and flow of information in television news. Because of Twitter, the power of news delivery is now in the hands of many different newsroom employees who, in the past, were not employed in roles of storytellers. This study qualitatively examines how Twitter has altered the "gates" and the flow of information in television newsrooms in San Antonio, Texas, the country's 37th largest television market, and quantitatively analyzes how television stations and employees there are using Twitter. The data show Twitter is currently being used primarily for another function, not as a tool to deliver breaking news and that some stations are trying as hard as possible to hold on to as much gatekeeping power in a digital world.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The increasingly familiar phrase "Web first" is a rallying cry for newspapers still trying to adapt to the digital world. It means stories are published first to the Web before they are published in the newspaper itself. It is a reminder of the massive changes in the industry and a signifier of the differences in routines for journalists. While that particular saying may not be uttered much in television newsrooms, the mindset is still there. All journalists, no matter which medium, are reminded that news happens in real time and cannot wait until the 5, 6 or 10 p.m. newscasts or morning paper to be released to the public. For instance, when a gunman walked into the Discovery Channel headquarters in Washington, D.C. in September of 2010, the news did not wait to break on NBC, CBS, ABC, MSNBC, CNN or Fox News. It broke on Twitter – through a stream of real-time tweets from inside the Discovery building. Twitter users even captured the first picture of the gunman and the SWAT team arriving at the scene (Farhi, 2010).

Journalists are taking note of the resources citizens are using to pass along information to the public. Such examples show that the mindset of "Web first" needs to be updated with a specific destination. Indeed, Twitter has emerged as the go-to tool for journalists to provide instant dissemination of information from several different sources, both official and unofficial (Hermida, 2010).

The majority of television newsrooms across the United States are currently using Twitter with high frequency. According to a recent study by the Radio Television Digital

News Association (2010), or RTDNA, and Hofstra University, 77% of television newsrooms have a Twitter account, with more than 70% saying they either use the micro-blogging service constantly or, at the very least, daily.

Many consider gatekeeping theory to be the core theory of guidance in the news business. Some, Berkowitz (1990) for instance, used gatekeeping as a predictive measure; this study, however, will use gatekeeping as a descriptive framework to explain how Twitter is affecting the news business. Previous research, Hermida (2010) for example, has alluded to the changes in gatekeeping brought about by social media. This study explains how Twitter is changing the typical flow of information, how television newsrooms are delivering the news and, in addition, which newsroom employees are delivering the news. It does so through an examination of breaking news coverage. Based on the author's decade of experience in television news, the typical flow of a breaking news story (often interchangeably called a spot news story) is as follows: an assignment editor hears about the event over a police scanner and dispatches a photographer to the scene to get initial information and shoot video and interviews; the photographer is sometimes accompanied by a reporter – if not, and the spot news event warrants it, a reporter will be sent to the scene; information is then relayed to a producer, who then writes a script for the anchorman or anchorwoman to deliver to the audience. The flow of information is illustrated in Figure 1.

Brogan and Smith (2010) coined the phrase "gatejumping" to describe marketing talents on the Web. According to Brogan and Smith (2010, p.41), gatejumping is finding "a better way to do things while everyone else is too busy to notice." For instance, whereas traditional radio is a gatekeeper industry, podcasts are gatejumpers. People

Magazine is a gatekeeper, while gossip blogger Perez Hilton is a gatejumper (Brogan & Smith, 2010).
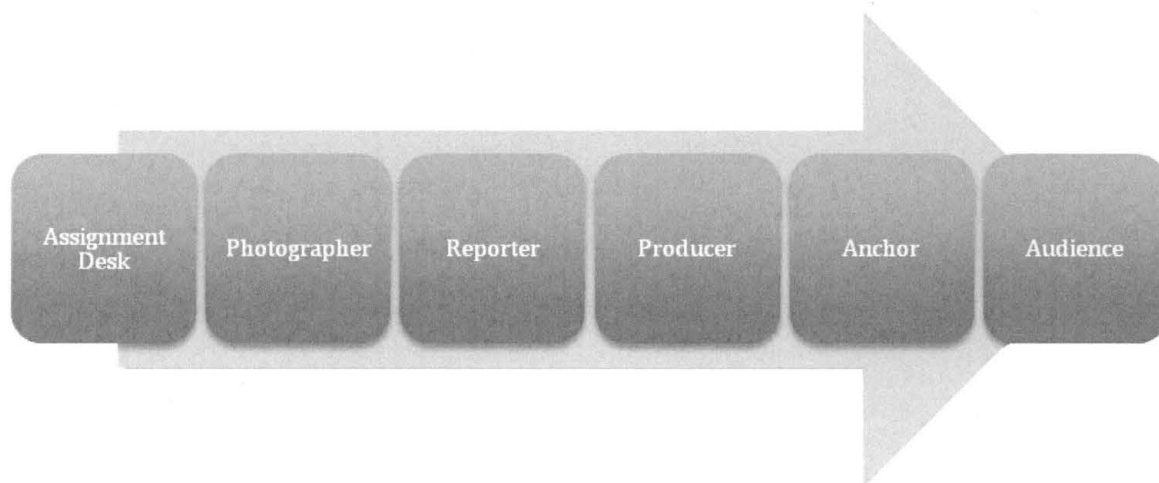
Figure 1: Flow of Information - The standard flow of information during a spot news or breaking news story in a traditional newsroom setting.

This study uses the term gatejumping in a different, more literal way. Twitter allows for news to jump the traditional flow of gates and reach the audience. When Twitter is used in its most efficient and effective manner, it is possible for a newsroom employee who is traditionally only involved in the earliest of gatekeeping decisions to now have a direct relationship with the audience.

In addition, this study quantitatively examines how television stations are using Twitter as a tool to deliver breaking news and concludes with a qualitative look at efforts by members of management to maintain as much gatekeeping control as possible.

A three-pronged method to answer the research questions was chosen with a specific purpose in mind. The first method shows the gatejumping model in action. The

second method finds out whether this is really happening with any regularity in newsrooms. Finally, and most importantly, the third method finds out why this is not happening. The why, in this case, is the true takeaway and should be the basis for future research.

It is important to keep in mind this study documents a phenomenon that currently does not have a conclusion. Studies like this take a snapshot of current-day communication for the basis of communication history - whether Twitter remains a key role in television news or not.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Gatekeeping theory is one of the oldest theories in mass communication research (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, & Wrigley, 2001). Gatekeeping is the decision process that determines why one story makes air or print and another does not. Shoemaker et al. (2001, p. 233) defined gatekeeping as "the process by which the vast array of potential news messages are winnowed, shaped and prodded into those few that are actually transmitted by the news media." Shoemaker et al. (2001) also noted that gatekeeping involves more than simple story selection. It includes how messages are told to the public, how much time or space each story receives and the tone of each story (Shoemaker, et al., 2001). Shoemaker et al. (2001, p. 233) also defined gatekeepers as "either the individuals or the sets of routine procedures that determine whether items pass through the gates."

Gatekeeping theory's initial purpose was food related. German psychologist Kurt Lewin (1947) developed gatekeeping theory in 1947 while studying different factors that would entice women in Iowa to buy more meat products for their households. Lewin's (1947) original work found women are in charge of the "gates" in the home through which decisions pass. These decisions ultimately determine which food will be grown or purchased and served. Lewin (1947, p. 145) noted his theory of gates "holds not only for food channels but also for the traveling of a news item through certain communication channels in a group." That idea sparked decades of research that continues today.

David Manning White took Lewin's theory of gates and applied it to newspapers. White (1964) studied the decisions of a wire editor to determine why certain stories made the next day's paper and why other stories did not. White (1964, p. 163) found the process might involve several gatekeeping steps taken by several people, from "reporter to rewrite man, through bureau chief to 'state' file editors at various press association offices" – however the final say came from the last gatekeeper, the editor. White (1964) found the editor's decision-making process to be highly subjective and based on the editor's own personal experiences and attitudes.

Berkowitz (1990) suggested a refining of gatekeeping theory as it applies to television news. He found that television gatekeeping differs from that of a "lone wire editor sitting next to a pile of stories and making decisions based on either newsworthiness or personal preferences" (Berkowitz, 1990, p. 66). Instead, Berkowitz (1990) learned television gatekeepers base decisions on gut instincts about what makes a good television newscast and gatekeeping in television is much more of a group process when compared to newspaper gatekeeping. Berkowitz (1990) found television news stories face several gates before making air. He also suggested certain types of stories could prevent other types of stories from making air. For instance, "spot news closed the gate on planned event stories" (Berkowitz, 1990, p. 66).

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) called gatekeeping one of the non-foolproof routines that helps journalists comprehend the world on which they are reporting and defend the product that is produced. They studied the influences on media content and determined there is no such thing as objectivity when it comes to this topic. Shoemaker and Reese (1996, p. 17) found media messages are influenced by several different factors

that can come from both inside and outside of media organizations, saying journalism

cannot be "understood apart from the culture that produces and supports it." Shoemaker

and Reese (1996) outlined five influences on media content:

- Influences from individual media workers – Here, Shoemaker and Reese (1996)

  examined the personal make-up of individual media workers and broke down

  three aspects that can potentially lead to influences on media content:

  personal/professional background (i.e. demographical information like gender,

  ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, age and education), personal

  attitudes/values/beliefs (i.e. religious and political leanings and beliefs that

  researchers quoted by Shoemaker and Reese (1996) believe to be common among

  journalists, like ethnocentrism and individualism) and professional conceptions

  (the norms, values and ethics of journalism as a job). In the end, Shoemaker and

  Reese (1996) determined there is no evidence that background has any direct

  influence on content, but that background could affect content through the

  shaping of attitudes and beliefs. They found professional roles and ethics have

  more influence on content than attitudes and beliefs.

- Influences of media routines – Shoemaker and Reese (1996, p. 105) defined

  routines as "those patterned, routinized, repeated practices and forms that media

  workers use to do their jobs." They determined these routines (the structure of the

  newsroom, editorial policy of a newsroom, knowing how to ask a question, how

  to handle a story, how to write in a particular style, etc.) that are instilled in

  journalists have a tremendous impact on the gatekeeping function, for instance,

  but also have an impact on the content produced. Shoemaker and Reese (1996)

cited research by Bantz that found these standardized routines allow for plug and play, if you will. Because roles are clearly established in newsrooms, when one worker leaves (as happens frequently in news), a new worker is easily plugged into that position without much effect on the newsroom. Shoemaker and Reese also listed three routines that help gatekeepers deal with the audience: news values (factors that should predict whether an audience will be or should be interested in a story), objectivity (a defensive routine that journalists believe helps against accusations of bias and prevents stories from scrutiny) and audience appeal (presenting stories in a way that will attract readers or viewers). Finally, Shoemaker and Reese (1996, p. 120) found routines help explain what is thought of as news in the first place, saying, "Before it even gets to the first gate, newsworkers 'see' some things as news and not others." They concluded these routines help journalists construct what is reality.

- Organizational influences – Shoemaker and Reese (1996) noted the structure of a news organization has an impact on content and decision-making. From the boss (general manager and/or news director) down to a reporter, photographer or editor, the structure defines roles and establishes a hierarchy of responsibility. Organizational structure also includes aspects like budgets, corporate ownership and profit.

- Influences from outside of media organizations – As they continued to expand the scope of influences from a micro to a macro level, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) discussed several outside-media bodies that affect content. These include sources, interest groups, public relations agencies, advertisers and government. They also

noted the emerging (at the time) influence of the Internet, and cited the primary

moves companies were making to handle mutli-media at time of publication in

1996. For instance, America Online had already reached a deal to make electronic

versions of certain newspapers available to the public.

- The influence of ideology – The final level of influence as noted by Shoemaker

  and Reese (1996) is ideology, which encompasses all previously discussed levels

  of influence. Shoemaker and Reese (1996, p. 222) noted that the media function

  of ideology works by "drawing on familiar cultural themes that resonate with

  audiences." Those themes include capitalism and democracy.

More recently, researchers began examining the effects of new media on

gatekeeping. Singer (2001) looked at the differences in story selection between the print

and online versions of newspapers. Singer (2001) found, at least in 1998 (the time of her

data collection), that newspapers' online editions were much more focused on local

content than the print editions. More pertinent to this study, Singer stated that online

editions cause newspapers to surrender some of their traditional gatekeeping functions.

According to Singer (2001, p. 66), "providing a link to 'wire.ap.org,' the online version

of the Associated Press, is quite a different thing from selecting which wire stories are of

such significance or interest that they merit inclusion in the day's paper." Singer (2001, p.

66) went on to note that if newspapers continue this trend online, "Mr. Gates may find

himself out of a job." In other words, Singer hinted that online journalism could

eventually kill the need for gatekeeping. In her 2001 work, Singer touched on two other

topics important for the purposes of this study. First, she used the term 'shovelware' to

describe content that appeared in the print edition of a newspaper and was simply shoveled onto the Web with no changes except for the mark-up language needed to become a part of the Web. Second, Singer (2001, p. 78) noted each Internet user "can, and does, create in essence a 'Daily Me' consisting of items important to him or her." Singer (2001, p. 78) said this "personalized world view is right at the user's fingertips, in the same medium in which the online newspaper also exists."

Bruns (2003, p. 2) expanded on this idea of news consumers going online to bypass traditional news outlets and, instead, turning "directly to first hand information providers." Bruns (2003) suggested the World Wide Web has put gatekeeping decisions in the hands of anyone with information, not just journalists. In addition, these responsibilities are also passed down to the user, who acts as a gatekeeper while surfing the World Wide Web (Bruns, 2003). Because of the immense amount of information available online and the lack of concern over space (which is prevalent in print and television newsrooms), Bruns (2003) suggested a new approach for online news: "gatewatching." According to Bruns, gatewatchers are not reporters. Instead, a gatewatcher is a combination of a traditional gatekeeper and a news/information aggregator. Bruns (2003, p. 8) stated, "Gatewatchers fundamentally publicize news (by pointing to sources) rather than publish it (by compiling an apparently complete report from the available sources)." Bruns (2003) found this gatewatching method corrected several issues with the traditional gatekeeping model:

- "Stories have the potential to be more deeply informative, since readers are able to explore the source materials directly, and in full" (Bruns, 2003, p. 5).

- "The speed of news reporting increases since new stories can be posted as soon as source information is found anywhere on the Net, without a need to wait for journalists to file their stories or gatekeepers to complete their evaluation" (Bruns, 2003, p. 5).

- "The newsgathering process becomes more transparent, and readers are not prevented from checking a reporter's sources for themselves, but instead encouraged to do so" (Bruns, 2003, p. 5).

- "The news gatherer's personal bias may still affect their own report, but since readers are more likely to consult original sources this bias will have a reduced effect" (Bruns, 2003, p. 5).

- "Gatewatchers do not require significant journalistic skills, but instead need to have more general online research skills" (Bruns, 2003, p. 5).

Bruns (2003) noted some potential downsides of this gatewatching approach. Gatewatchers may evaluate and publicize news, but do not create their own reports (Bruns, 2003). Gatewatching also requires more work by the readers, who now take on the more active role of information gatherer. Finally, in the end, gatewatching "continues to rely on the gatewatchers' intuition of what news topics might interest their users" (Bruns, 2003, p. 6).

In their study of bloggers, Hayes, Singer and Ceppos (2007) said this trend toward news aggregation on the Web is a benefit, but also has a downside. According to the study (Hayes, Singer & Ceppos, 2007, p. 270), aggregation "excludes as well as includes, and much of what is excluded may be valuable to civic knowledge." They acknowledged

that the same is true of journalists, saying, "Aggregation is, in essence, a gatekeeping role" (Hayes et al., 2007, p. 270).

As for the ethics of online journalism, Singer (2003) noted the current lack of a rulebook. She found many journalists believe the Web needs its own guidelines, while others think traditional rules can and should be enforced upon the online world. Singer (2003) mentioned two particular issues as the biggest ethical dilemmas of online journalism, one of which is particularly relevant to Twitter: the capacity for speed. Singer (2003, p. 152) noted critics of online journalism believe it to be "untrustworthy because of its emphasis on getting information fast rather than getting it right." Without gatekeepers for quality control, Singer (2003, p. 153) said some believe "the quantity of the news product increases, but its quality is likely to be diluted." On the other hand, "the potential for speed makes professional judgment regarding the news more vital than ever" (Singer, 2003, p. 153). Singer found the new journalist helps the audience make sense of the news that exists while not deciding what they should or should not know.

DEFINITION OF TWITTER

Twitter is on an astonishing five-year ride. Evan Williams and Biz Stone launched the free service in August 2006 (Farhi, 2009). However, it was not until its exposure at the South By Southwest Interactive Festival in March 2007 in Austin, Texas when Twitter skyrocketed onto the national (and international) scene.

Twitter is classified as a micro-blog, as well as a "new media technology that enables and extends our ability to communicate, sharing some similarities with broadcast" (Hermida, 2010, p. 298). Users are able to send messages, called tweets, with

a maximum of 140 characters to the people who choose to follow them. Many tweets contain links to articles, videos or other media. Twitter also allows users to reply to others (in public and, if the other user is following you, in private via a direct message, or DM) and search for real-time information. By September 2010, Twitter surpassed 145 million registered users (Van Grove, 2010). The service unofficially hit the 20-billion tweet mark in July 2010 (Ostrow, 2010) and a recent Pew Center poll found 85% of Americans knew of Twitter ("Political Knowledge," 2010).

Recent numbers show Twitter tends to skew toward an older audience. More than 40% of its users are 35-49 years old (Farhi, 2009). Those users are prime viewers of news and information. In fact, analysts say Twitter users are "two to three times more likely to visit a leading news Web site than the average person" (Farhi, 2009, p. 30).

Media personalities use Twitter as a source of delivering news and opinion, sharing links and interacting with viewers. And there is quite the audience available. Rachel Maddow (@Maddow), host of MSNBC's "The Rachel Maddow Show," currently has 1.7 million followers on Twitter. More than 149,000 people subscribe to tweets from "CBS Evening News" host Katie Couric (@KatieCouric). Even local news anchors and reporters develop decent-sized followings. Kim Fischer (@TxNewsGirl), a reporter at KXAS in Dallas, has 3,900 followers. However, one of the most prolific journalist-tweeters works behind the camera. Jim Long (@NewMediaJim) is a photographer for NBC News. On average, he delivers 40 tweets a day to his 41,000+ followers. Most of his tweets are replies to people who follow him.

In its brief history, Twitter has already contributed in breaking several huge stories. Reports of Michael Jackson's death comprised 30% of tweets in the hours

following on June 25, 2009 (Cashmore, 2009). When a US Airways jet crashed into the Hudson River, news reached the public through a tweet and a picture from a Twitter user 15 minutes before mainstream media were on the airwaves (Beaumont, 2009). Iranian citizens protesting 2009 election results used Twitter as a voice that reached millions around the world (Morozov, 2009).

Technologies such as Twitter have created new means for news organizations to communicate with viewers or readers. Picard (2010), however, believed this could eventually have a disastrous effect on moneymaking efforts of the news organization. Picard (2010, para. 15) said "the content that news organizations produce (at a cost) is distributed by others, thus removing the need or desire for many people to seek out the original sources of the information." Picard (2010) also noted that, as of now, social media tools like Twitter appear to be more valuable to news organizations in large, metropolitan areas than small-town news outlets.

While examining press coverage of Twitter, Arceneaux and Schmitz Weiss (2010, p. 2) noted Twitter is still at a stage where it could turn out to be the "app de jour that will fade from the limelight, or it could become a staple of daily life." Their study found speed of delivery to be one of the repeated messages of Twitter press coverage (Arceneaux & Schmitz Weiss, 2010). As quoted by Arceneaux and Schmitz Weiss (2010, p. 7), Associated Press writer Sam Dolnick said the "lightning-quick updates" available via Twitter provide "further evidence of a sea change in how people gather their information in an increasingly Internet-savvy world."

In addition, Hermida (2010, p. 300) found "indications that journalism norms are bending as professional practices adapt to social media tools such as micro-blogging."

Using the Iranian elections mentioned above as an example, Hermida (2010) noted that news organizations were promoting minute-by-minute blogs that contained a mixture of Twitter messages, unverified information and traditional news accounts of what was happening in Iran. Hermida (2010, p. 300) also noted that a few months before the Iranian elections, the BBC included "unverified tweets filtered by journalists" as part of its breaking news coverage of the Mumbai terror attacks. The network said it was merely monitoring and passing along information as quickly as it could. Hermida (2010) concluded this process of filtration only maintains and enforces the traditional gatekeeping role of journalists, even when applied to new media like Twitter.

Twitter and many news organizations that use the service were recently criticized over coverage of the shooting of Arizona Rep. Gabrielle Giffords in January 2011. In the minutes after the shooting, Reuters, NPR and the BBC all reported on Twitter that Giffords died (Krueger, 2011). Those reports turned out to be false. Despite news conferences saying Giffords was alive and had a good chance of surviving, some of the news organizations chose to not delete previous incorrect tweets (Safran, 2011). Therefore, followers of those news organizations who did not see the updates in Giffords' condition continued to unknowingly spread incorrect information. In a critique of the social media coverage of this breaking news event, Goodykoontz (2011) acknowledged that breaking news could be messy at times. However, Goodykoontz (2011) noted, "There used to be a window available for, if not reflection, at least sorting out the facts before going forward with information, be it by newspaper, television, radio or any other medium. That's changed" (Tragedy on Twitter section, para. 8 & 9). Krueger (2011) suggested that many news organizations would take a hard look at their Twitter, breaking

news and ethics policies because of this event – everything from reporting sourced information or scanner traffic on Twitter to deleting incorrect tweets to the handling of photos and video on Twitter.

DEFINITION OF SPOT NEWS

Berkowitz (1990, p. 58) referred to spot news or breaking news in his study as "unexpected events." This classification included stories such as crime (shootings, stabbings, robberies, drug busts, murder, etc.) and accidents and disasters. He concluded these types of stories have a much greater chance of making air than other types, like education stories or stories about health and welfare, for instance (Berkowitz, 1990). Part of Berkowitz' (1990, p. 63) explanation for that is these types of crime or spot news stories "required less research effort and less expertise to develop into an airable story." Berkowitz also said the resources needed to get crime or spot news on the air are considerably less taxing on the station. It "was basically a one-shot proposition: the reporter gathered basic facts, the photographer shot representative video of the scene, and the story was ready for assembly" (Berkowitz, 1990, p. 65). Finally, Berkowitz (1990) determined that planned events, i.e. stories that are born from press releases or news conferences, have the greatest chance of being dropped from a newscast as unexpected events develop. According to Berkowitz (1990, p. 66), "spot news closed the gate on planned event stories."

The literature also details the path crime/spot news travels before becoming a story in a newscast. Cameron-Dow (2009) outlined a nine-point process from the time a crime is committed to the time someone hears about the crime via media:

1. The crime occurs.

2. The victim recognizes the crime.

3. The victim reports the crime.

4. Police officially know of the crime.

5. A police source or public information officer alerts a crime reporter.

6. The story enters the pool of potential crime stories.

7. A news producer or editor edits the story.

8. The story is printed or broadcast.

9. The audience learns of the crime.

Based on previous research and the author's personal experiences in the television news industry, this study proposes the following research questions:

- RQ1: How has Twitter changed the levels of gates and allowed non-anchor and non-reporter newsroom employees to become *de facto* reporters, particularly during breaking or spot news situations?

- RQ2: What are the main functions of Twitter accounts in television newsrooms?

- RQ3: How have typical newsroom gatekeeping roles and standards changed when it comes to delivering breaking or spot news via Twitter?

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

To answer the first research question, a qualitative case study approach was used. A day with major breaking news in San Antonio, Texas, the 37th largest television market in the country, was selected to examine the effectiveness of Twitter in a breaking situation. San Antonio was selected for two significant reasons. First, it is the market where the author worked for a decade, thus an intricate knowledge of the market is already in place. Second, personal and professional connections were already established, therefore granting the author access to insight not accessible in another market.

To answer the second research question, data were collected from one market (San Antonio) and quantitatively analyzed, much like Berkowitz' (1990) study. Accounts of all known working journalists in the newsroom (anchors, management, producers, reporters, photographers, assignment editors), weather (meteorologists, producers), traffic and Web editors and official station accounts were selected for this study. Accounts were found via a combination of personal knowledge, lists on station websites, Twitter lists established by Twitter users and conversations with newsroom employees. As a last resort, a simple scroll-through of the "following" lists of each user turned up a few accounts. A cut-off date of September 23, 2010 was established to finalize the list. A total of 60 accounts were followed. A breakdown is illustrated in Figure 2.

In addition, some journalists had their accounts set to private and did not respond to requests to follow them. They were not included in this study.

Figure 2: Twitter Accounts by Station - The number of known Twitter accounts of working journalists in San Antonio, broken down by station.

Next, Twitter lists for each of the four stations were created and each journalist's Twitter account was attached to its respective station list. Though not an essential step, this helped eliminate confusion and speeded up the coding process.

Ten days worth of tweets were selected for coding. A website called "random.org" was used for date selection. September 1, 2010 and October 15, 2010 were chosen as the start and end dates for possible selection. Random.org generated the following dates for coding: September 2, September 9, September 15, September 17, September 21, September 23, September 28, October 8, October 11 and October 13. In all, 2,293 tweets were collected for analysis.

The data were coded using a variation of guidelines developed by University of Texas professor Dominic Lasorsa ("Social Media," 2010). Lasorsa (2010) outlined five categories he and his students use to code tweets for classroom exercises:

- Breaking news (alerts or updates as news happens)

- Self-promotion (publicizing a story on that particular station)

- Lifecasting (daily chitchat about personal issues)

- Seeking information (a request for story tips or updates)

- Retweet (someone else's message that is forwarded to others)

After an email conversation with Lasorsa, his guidelines were modified for the purpose of this paper. First, every tweet was broken down into one of three classifications:

- Tweet (an original tweet coming from the user)

- Reply (a reply to a fellow user)

- Retweet (someone else's message that is forwarded to others)

From there, each tweet was coded into one of five categories. These categories are similar to the ones Lasorsa uses, with two exceptions. New names were applied to some of the categories:

- Breaking News (alerts or updates as news happens)

- Promotion (publicizing a story on that particular station or the website)

- Daily Chatter (chitchat about personal issues)

- Viewer Participation (a request for story tips, photos or updates)

- Non-breaking news (news items that are pertinent to the moment, but not breaking)

A total of 2,293 tweets were collected for analysis. Two graduate students performed a coding sample of 230 tweets, or 10 percent, with 98 percent reliability using Holsti's intercoder reliability formula. One of the graduate students then solely coded the remaining 2,063 tweets.

To answer the third research question, management at each of the four stations were contacted for interviews using the author's personal and professional contacts in the San Antonio market. Interviews were conducted individually with the executive producers at KSAT and KABB. The news director and Web director at WOAI were jointly interviewed. Phone calls and emails to the news director at the fourth station in this study, KENS, were not returned; therefore KENS will not be included in the discussion of the third research question. Interviews consisted of the same questions asked to each participating station. Interviews were videotaped, mainly for reasons of transcription. Data were analyzed before the interviews were conducted and results of the quantitative aspects of this research were briefly discussed beforehand with members of different newsroom management to gain the most truthful answers and information possible for the purposes of this study.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

As stated above, a case study approach was used for the purposes of this paper. A date with significant breaking news was selected to highlight the effectiveness of Twitter in terms of real-time news delivery from a variety of sources.

On the July 28, 2010, the San Antonio Police Department responded to a triple-murder suicide. The shooting happened around 8:30 pm, an hour and a half before the late-evening newscasts. However, the city of San Antonio, or at least those following the accounts of pertinent journalists, learned of the story on Twitter.

At 8:32 pm, KABB's assignment desk (@KABBDesk) sent the first tweet with a mention of it, citing police scanner chatter of a shooting.

"SAPD scanners say officers are heading out to the 17000 block of Fawn Crossing for a multiple shooting scene." - @KABBDesk

This information was delivered 28 minutes before KABB was on the air with its 9 pm newscast. At 9:04 pm, four minutes after the newscast started, KABB reporter Grace White (@Grace__White) announced on Twitter that she just arrived and provided the first picture of the crime scene. At 9:20 pm and KSAT photographer Johnny Garcia (@DoublePunching) arrived. Forty minutes before KSAT's newscast was to go on the air, Garcia provided two more pictures and a link to a map of the crime scene.

"On scene at shooting in The Woods of Deerfield subdivision

http://twitpic.com/29l9h6" - @Grace__White

"BREAKING: Shooting at Woods of Deerfield neighborhood. Location:

http://j.mp/9QGaxD http://twitpic.com/29ldij" - @doublepunching

One minute later, the KSAT station account (@KSATNews) sent Garcia's pictures to its followers, but did not use the retweet function. At 9:23 pm, KENS anchorwoman Sarah Lucero (@SarahLuceroKENS) asked her followers if anyone knew what was going on at the Woods of Deerfield, the neighborhood where the crime scene was located. Lucero said there was word four people were shot – the first details to emerge via Twitter. Another two minutes later, at 9:25 pm, KENS anchorman Jeff Vaughn (@JeffVaughn) cited "early reports" (i.e., chatter on the police scanner or unconfirmed information from the scene) that four people were shot in the home.

"What's going on in the Woods of Deerfield neighborhood off Bitters &

Huebner…4 pple (SIC) said to be shot" - @SarahLuceroKENS

"Breaking: Shooting in North #SA, near Bitters & Huebner. Early reporters are 4

victims inside Deerfield home. Latest on @KENS5 @ 10." - @JeffVaughn

KSAT's station account then tweeted a link to a Web story at 9:26 pm, saying four people had been shot and promising full coverage on the 10 pm newscast. All of this happened more than a half hour before the 10 pm newscasts went on the air.

The journalists' Twitter accounts went silent until 10:17 pm, when KABB's White began tweeting information from a police news conference held at the scene. A few minutes later at 10:26 pm, WOAI reporter Leila Walsh (@Leila_Walsh) submitted the first tweets from a WOAI employee about the shooting. Walsh tweeted details that emerged from the news conference until 10:34 pm.

"Police: children of one of the victims were playing outside when they heard gunshots. Kids went indoors and saw shooter with gun." - @LeilaWalsh

Finally, between 10:43 – 11:04 pm, the KABB, KENS and WOAI station accounts tweeted links to Web stories with more information about the event. By this point, police were clearing the scene and reporters went home. The story was considered over for the night, until follow-up angles were pursued the next day.

Data for the second research question were collected from the 60 accounts of journalists (including the four station accounts) for quantitative analysis. A total of 2,293 tweets were selected for coding over a random sample of ten days. Coding results are illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Coded Tweets of Newsroom Employees - Results of data coding of tweets from San Antonio journalists over a ten-day period, broken down by five categories.

Station	Breaking	Promotional	Chit-Chat	Participation	Non-Breaking
KABB	70 (27%)	134 (52%)	20 (8%)	2 (1%)	32 (12%)
KENS	24 (8%)	122 (38%)	164 (52%)	2 (1%)	5 (1%)
WOAI	11 (3%)	308 (72%)	83 (19%)	2 (1%)	23 (5%)
KSAT	219 (17%)	297 (23%)	728 (56%)	11 (1%)	36 (3%)
Overall	324 (14%)	861 (38%)	995 (43%)	17 (1%)	96 (4%)

Tweets from the four official station accounts were isolated and analyzed for comparison as part of the second research question. A total of 851 tweets from these four accounts (@KABBFOX29, @KENS5, @NEWS4WOAI and @KSATNews) were coded

for purposes of this study. All numbers in Table 2 below represent just the four accounts that are the official representations of the individual stations.

Table 2: Coded Tweets of Official Station Accounts - Results of data coding of tweets from the official station accounts of the four San Antonio television stations over a ten-day period, broken down by five categories.

Station	Breaking	Promotional	Chit-Chat	Participation	Non-Breaking
KABB	26 (17%)	122 (81%)	1 (1%)	0	1 (1%)
KENS	1 (1%)	104 (99%)	0	0	0
WOAI	0	296 (100%)	0	0	0
KSAT	36 (12%)	257 (86%)	4 (1%)	2 (1%)	1 (0%)
Overall	63 (7%)	779 (92%)	5 (1%)	2 (0%)	2 (0%)

After data from Table 2 were run through a chi-square test, a χ^2 (12, $N = 851$) = 73.297, $p = .00$, found a significant difference between the numbers of tweets in the five coding categories (as shown in Table 3). Because the numbers are so heavily weighted to one category, it is obvious there is a difference between the promotional category and the

other four categories. In other words, all four San Antonio television stations use Twitter primarily for the same reason: promotion.

Table 3: Statistical Analysis - Results of the statistical analysis test with chi-square results.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	73.297a	12	.000
Likelihood ratio	94.483	12	.000
N of valid cases	851		

a. 12 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .25.

Data for the third research question were obtained from interviews with three of the four stations analyzed as part of this study. Questions were asked to members of management to gain insight into whether Twitter has affected the traditional gatekeeping roles of the newsroom or station as a whole. Questions are listed below, followed by the answers provided by the stations.

Q1: Does your station have a Twitter policy? If so, how does breaking news fit into it?

Bernice Kearney, KSAT executive producer: "There is not anything written and we probably need to. Fairly early on, there was a station meeting that basically

said, 'Do not be stupid or you are going to get in trouble or lose your job.' When

you are on Facebook or Twitter, you have to be professional and we try to do that.

I have no idea whether the station's upper management monitors individual

accounts. I know that our KSAT News account, I monitor what people are saying

about KSAT and what our reporters and photographers and producers say. But if

it is not about work, I am not going to get that pissy about it. We have not had a

situation because I think everyone is professional enough to know to not be

stupid."

Bob Gambert, WOAI Web director: "If you are going to tweet, there has to be a

second set of eyes that hit it before it goes out."

Tom Bell, WOAI news director: "It attempts to apply the same standards to

Twitter as it does to the broadcast side. In my mind, it is just another way to

communicate and why should the standards be less there?"

Keith McMahan, KABB executive producer: "Corporate sets up the official

station accounts. The reporters and desk set up their own. We really only have

two, overarching guidelines: One, when you are tweeting, we are not flip. We try

not to do too many abbreviations like 'LOL' because it is just not professional and

we are still a news organization. The other rule is reporters can have their own

accounts, but not get too much into their own personal lives. It is a double-edged

sword. But it is just keeping an eye on what you do personally so it does not come

back to bite us professionally. If a reporter has pictures on Twitter of them drunk

and with a shirt off, that is not going to reflect well on us. They can talk about personal stuff, but just watch it. Do not put anything on Twitter that you will regret or would not want viewers to know."

Q2: Have your newsroom employees been trained on proper Twitter etiquette or things like which pictures are acceptable?

Bernice Kearney, KSAT executive producer: "Do not put anything on Twitter that you would not put on air. No F-bombs, no nudity, no shooting the finger. We have actually had instances where a reporter or photographer will call in and say they have sound with a guy throwing the F-bomb as he is being led away in handcuffs and I will tell them to not tweet it out. Now, we have a really robust Facebook community as well and it is really interesting to see how the Facebook community monitors itself on our page."

Bob Gambert, WOAI Web director: "There was a memo that went out that made that very clear."

Keith McMahan, KABB executive producer: "If you have got a question about it, let's not do it. The thing that our reporters have embraced is adding photos when they can and we have gone a good job with that. Videos, we have not really figured out as much because all our reporters have been assigned Droids and they can shoot videos, but it is still not… It is another double-edged sword. We do not

want them uploading video and together forever to do that when they should be looking for information for their TV story."

Q3: What is your station policy regarding scanner traffic on a broadcast newscast?

Bernice Kearney, KSAT executive producer: "We do not go with scanner traffic on air until it has been confirmed with someone on the scene of whatever it is or with police or fire or whatever organization would be responding to that."

Tom Bell, WOAI news director: "Never. It has to be confirmed."

Keith McMahan, KABB executive producer: "We do not. It is the policy professionally throughout my career. Unless there is someone on scene who has confirmed it, we do not go with it."

Q4: What is your station policy regarding scanner traffic on Twitter?

Bernice Kearney, KSAT executive producer: "On Twitter, 99% of the time we also do not go with scanner traffic. I cannot even think of a situation where we have gone with scanner traffic, I am just giving myself an out. I do not go with scanner traffic on Twitter or Facebook and I know other organizations, not necessarily in San Antonio, do. Now when we retweet, that is the complicating factor. The world of Twitter is so immediate and if you have got a relationship

where you trust other news organizations, you know they do not just throw things out against the wind."

Tom Bell, WOAI news director: "There is not a policy, but again, I think you would be accurate to say everything that applies to the broadcast side applies to Twitter. I do not get that because it is 140 characters and you can get it in your pocket that it deserves to be more loosey-goosey than anything else we do. For anyone who is employed here or for the station account, we are being represented. It is us. Whether you get it over TV or in your pocket, the standards need to be the same."

Keith McMahan, KABB executive producer: "We do not really have a guideline. I monitor all of our reporters and what we do. If there is a, 'Hey, police are responding to a scene and we do not know anything yet,' that might be effective if you did not alarm anybody and did not kill anybody. It is almost like a peek behind the curtain. Your Twitter followers get a look at the process of news."

Q5: Are followers on Twitter more forgiving of constantly changing information?

Bernice Kearney, KSAT executive producer: "I think so because people who use Twitter or follow Twitter understand that it is immediate and instantaneous and a fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants situation, especially when you say, 'I have a correction to make. We have new information that changes the story.' If you do

those things and give you mea culpa when you make a mistake, people make mistakes all the time. I cannot recall a time when someone has said, 'You have made such a huge mistake that you can no longer be trusted.' That has never happened to me personally or professionally. People get real made that we did not cover the Aggies or one thing or another. That is a different thing. But getting information wrong and then going back and correcting it and explaining the mistake, I think people are extremely forgiving on Twitter."

Tom Bell, WOAI news director: "I do not think you get cut any slack on TV. If any place were to be more forgiving, provided you do not kill a congresswoman, I think there is more potential to be forgiven on Twitter simply because the whole model prizes instantaneous information in short bursts. Therefore, I believe you are more likely to be forgiven on Twitter. It is about what each delivery system represents. In the minds of a television viewer, when someone selects WOAI to be their television station, it is because they trust us. They expect a polished product. If you do not know it, tell them you do not know it and do not tell me somebody is dead when they are not because I need to believe you. Twitter, to me, is more about speed, instantaneous and right now. It is a little faster and a little looser and while, as a news organization, I would never use that as an excuse to be fast and loose with information, I sure as hell think that in the Twitter world there would be more forgiveness."

Keith McMahan, KABB executive producer: "I do not know that I have gotten enough feedback from followers to figure that out. I would assume they are a little bit more forgiving in an evolving situation. If you have got a shooting and said two people were shot and it turns out to only be one person shot, yeah, I think people on Twitter are a little more forgiving in situations like that."

Q6: Which is more important when delivering breaking news on Twitter: speed or accuracy? Are the two mutually exclusive?

Bernice Kearney, KSAT executive producer: I would say they both are so important. It is nice to get your tweet up first, but I try to make sure those tweets are correct before I hit the "send" button. Of course, mistakes happen, information changes, but we try to be accurate first when sending out breaking news tweets. As a general rule, I do not tweet anything from scanners, and typically wait for our assignments desk to talk with someone on the scene or at dispatch or whatever before sending something out. Of course, when I am watching our chopper, or see from our City Cam or Transguide cameras that there is a big plume of smoke in the sky, I tweet that there is a big fire.

Tom Bell, WOAI news director: "I do not think you need to be completely accurate. You need to be accurate. It is one thing if I tweet that I just saw Bob Gambert walking down the street. 'Whoops. Sorry. My bad. It was not Bob. It was his brother Bill.' That is one thing. But saying the mayor has been shot and,

'Whoops. My bad. It was not the mayor" – again, looking at news organizations, fast and accurate is what we strive for on television. That would also be what we strive for here. If there is a unique beauty to Twitter, if we sat down and really played it out and decided to take a Twitter initiative and do it, I would say the beauty of Twitter is I can give you little, bite-sized pieces of accurate information faster than I could on television. I may just find out that two more fire companies are responding to that burning building. That is fine for a tweet. It is worthless on television - who cares? So I would not say they are mutually exclusive for a news organization. The same rules have to apply."

Bob Gambert, WOAI Web director: "Even though it might be different outlets, it is still News 4 WOAI. It is just another delivery method. So people feel like they are communicating with us or getting information from us, whether it is Facebook, Twitter, over the air or streaming video on the website."

Tom Bell, WOAI news director: "The concept of quick bursts of information, assuming accuracy, the idea of quick bursts of information to communicate with the community is something I love. It is why, when I got here, we looked into Cover It Live (*Author's Note: Cover It Live is a Twitter-like live stream application that WOAI uses on its website, WOAI.com*) and putting it on the front page so there would be an ongoing dialogue from the assignment desk – the mouthpiece of the station, the heartbeat of the station – with our viewers. And then, hopefully, 'Hey, if you heard about this thing, let me know,' or, 'We are hearing about that and have somebody on the way,' – that sense of behind the scenes and many of the things that drive Twitter. But our choice of our delivery

system of how to do that we decided to place on our Web component, which we

know how to monetize and is a revenue source for the station. Twitter just

happens to be one vehicle. We do have an initiative to do the same thing and,

frankly, I can tell you that while they are doing it (Cover It Live), they are not

doing it the way I would like. I am getting a half-ass effort at it."

Keith McMahan, KABB executive producer: "I do not think the two are mutually

exclusive. I think they are both equally important. If I had to give a nose, it is to

accuracy. You want to get the news out there in an understandable way that is not

going to come back to bite you. I am always a stickler for getting something right.

I do not like speculation. Twitter, however, affords you to not have the debate we

commonly have in TV of when to break into programming. You do not have to

worry about that with Twitter. You just go. The people expect to get information

when it is happening. I just want it to be right, as well."

Q7: How would your station have handled the situation regarding the shooting of the

Arizona congresswoman and the misinformation floating around, especially on Twitter?

Bernice Kearney, KSAT executive producer: "That is really hard. I will be honest

with you – I was not down here and I did not even know about that shooting until

6pm – so we were not tweeting about it. Presuming that someone would have told

me something similar happened here, we would have all hands on deck and

tweeting vigorously. I do not want to take the high road and say we would never

tweet out incorrect information like what happened with the Arizona shooting.

The assumption was she was dead when she hit the ground. It is really hard to not

say someone on the scene told us so and so had been killed. I cannot say that we

would not have put out information like there was a 9-year-old girl then it was a

9-month-old girl and then it was back to a 9-year-old girl. You know, those details

tend to get lost in the chaos. I do not want to pretend that we would have had a

higher, more stringent reaction."

Tom Bell, WOAI news director: "We would handle it exactly the same way we

would handle on television. It is just the delivery method. It is the same thing. Let

us say we had somebody there who heard from their cousin that somebody like

that was shot, so we are pretty sure, but that is not going to make it on television.

If I knew that a congressman was speaking and I also knew that three ambulances

were called to the scene and I confirmed or the desk confirmed that the sheriff's

department told us that gunfire had been heard, then that is what you tell them.

When in doubt, tell the truth. Just tell them what you know. You do not have to

connect any dots. I just told you what I know and we can all reach the same

conclusion. I have not told you he was shot because I do not know. But I do know

something is going on, ambulances are going there and the cops say shots have

been fired. That is enough to get you on the air and that is enough to get you on

Twitter. Then you keep going from there. Now, someone else would say, 'We are

hearing reports that a congressman has been shot.' I think that is just as

irresponsible on Twitter as it would be on television. The trick is to not screw up

in the first place. The test of any good news organization is how you handle

yourself in these situations."

Keith McMahan, KABB executive producer: "You try to get as close to someone

that is official to the investigation as you can. Let us say we got a tip that there

was a shooting involving a congressperson but we were only able to confirm the

shooting part, not that it involved a congressperson. I think we would go with,

'There has been a shooting, the investigation is ongoing,' something like that. I do

not think you can go there yet with the congressperson because the magnitude is

too big. As the story evolves, say you have got a law enforcement official on the

phone on your air and you have got someone retweeting what that official is

saying and it is attributable, then I feel comfortable with that. But again, you have

to reserve the right for that source to be wrong. I do not think you can, for sure,

say that this is exactly what is happening without proper citing of sources. As for

trusted sources on Twitter, like the retweeting of a CNN or Huffington Post, there

is no overarching policy for us. I just always want to make sure and cite that

organization, whether it is CNN or the Associated Press."

Q8: How credible is user-submitted breaking news, especially photos and video? What

are the expectations or rules of using it on Twitter?

Bernice Kearney, KSAT executive producer: "If people send us pictures from

breaking news situations or breaking weather situations, I always ask before we

use it on TV. I also ask where it came from, is it theirs, what is their name – I try to verify as much information as possible. A lot of times we do not use that type of stuff on TV for no other reason than the quality may not be good enough. If we do use it, we always ask if we can. We do not get a lot of video, but we do get a lot of pictures. On Twitter, it kind of depends. If somebody sent us a tweet saying, 'Congressman Charlie Gonzalez just got killed at Market Square,' I would not retweet that. But with a picture of rain, unless they are saying, 'Look, you can see a person drowning,' I do not worry about that."

Tom Bell, WOAI news director: "Truly, on Twitter we have not done a lot. In my mind, if someone sent us pictures of lightning, it is user-generated content. I have no idea whether they got them off of National Geographic and sent them in and said, 'Hey, I got some great pictures of lightning in Schertz.' But, on a scale of 1-10 for me, it is not high enough to really worry about whether that was true. Now if somebody was saying they just got exclusive video of a tornado in Alamo Heights – that is a different story. That starts going up the ladder of let us check it out and start to disseminate.

Bob Gambert, WOAI Web director: "That is actually a big difference between using something off Twitter, where I cannot really verify who the tweeter is, and our UGC stuff and our upcoming mobile app, where I can just call that person or email that person or get a hold of that person directly and verify whatever that is."

Keith McMahan, KABB executive producer: "I have not personally seen it come up very often. If it were to come up, in the context of a traffic accident, let us say, using it would be acceptable. If a viewer sent us a picture of a wreck on Highway 90 and told others to watch out, that is acceptable. We got a ton of phone calls or email from our core viewers, but not so much with Twitter photos. Maybe it is a matter of getting more interactive with our followers on Twitter."

Q9: Do you delete incorrect tweets?

Bernice Kearney, KSAT executive producer: "I have when the information was so wrong. For instance, I put out the wrong phone number for a phone bank. I corrected the information but I deleted the old tweet so no one would accidentally retweet the wrong number. I would have deleted a tweet in the case of the Arizona shooting saying the congresswoman was dead when she was not, but I would have also corrected first and ask followers if they retweeted the information to please correct it as well, because I was wrong. I feel that is part of the news organization's duty because it will be out there in some sort of fashion forever."

Tom Bell, WOAI news director: "That is the same thing as deleting incorrect information from the website or fixing it or making a correction on the air. It seems to be a Twitter mechanism for stopping the damage."

Keith McMahan, KABB executive producer: "I cannot think of a situation where that has happened with us. I will say, logic would suggest that you would hope

that if there is information that is different or incorrect, that somehow you can incorporate in a tweet later on that, 'Not three dead – instead two dead,' or whatever and correct the earlier tweet. Then you can feel comfortable deleting an earlier tweet that was incorrect, knowing that you have not covered your tracks or trying to hide something."

Q10: Has Twitter changed the competitive atmosphere in television newsrooms?

Bernice Kearney, KSAT executive producer: "To an extent, it has. I do not hesitate if I see MySA (*Author's note: the San Antonio Express-News newspaper*) has a kick-ass slideshow or something, I am all for retweeting it from the KSAT account. One, it is there and people should see it. People need to know what is going on in their community and I am not going to kid myself that I am the only place where they are going to find it. I have noticed that MySA reciprocates. If there is a breaking situation and we send out a tweet, they will retweet us. I think that is good news karma. There are precious few things that are truly that exclusive. The thing is, I see it that we, as a station, are still competitive and we want to win our newscast and we want to have a good newscast. We want our lead story to be the most complete lead story. But at the end of the day, I am pretty sure that out in the field, the crews are working together. If someone comes in late, another person is not going to say, 'I am sorry, I am not going to tell you what is going on.' It used to be like that. It absolutely used to be like that. Most people know the difference between being competitive and being a jerk. There are

times where you will not tell somebody what you are talking to the mayor about. But there are other times where you tell somebody what the mayor just said. I am a big believer in what goes around, comes around."

Tom Bell, WOAI news director: "I would say it has not changed."

Keith McMahan, KABB executive producer: "No. I think the atmosphere is still based on getting it on TV and doing the best stories on television. It is just given us another avenue. I do not think it has heightened anything – it is just another highway to get information out there. It certainly has not detracted from the competitiveness of the market."

Q11: Do you ever hesitate releasing information on Twitter about a spot news story or an exclusive story? How is doing that different from days past?

Bernice Kearney, KSAT executive producer: "If there is a story that we are doing that I know is an exclusive story and I do not want anyone else to know about it, I do not tweet it out. But Twitter and Facebook can be great promotional tools and they can get people talking and buzzing before a story runs. It can also get them thinking so that there may be a follow-up angle to a story possibly. Things move so quickly that you have to use them to your advantage when you can. I know a lot of people who say, 'Oh, I saw it on Twitter, but do not say anything because no one else is out there.' It is all over the scanners. They are going to hear it. They

are on their way. So why not just get it out there so maybe we can get some pictures in and maybe someone has some information. It can be an information-gathering tool as much as it can be a viewer generator for our broadcast."

Tom Bell, WOAI news director: "I do not feel nearly as much ownership of those kinds of things (spot stories). If we have a truly valuable lead story, a substantive story that is exclusive to us, I am still going to be cautious. Do we release it on Twitter or the Web? Sure. But it does not go out with enough time for somebody to get it confirmed and on the air and beat us. We got into a nice habit in Salt Lake City of breaking stories on the website and then crediting the website on the newscast. It was a nice way to show a little love to the website and get it out on the website a little early. But still, at the end of the day, we can get all lathered up about Twitter and all kinds of things – but at the end of the day – television pays the bills. And it is going to pay the bills for a long time."

Keith McMahan, KABB executive producer: "We have had several spot situations where we were the only one out there. There is a feeling of wanting to be the only ones who have it on TV, so it is a dicey situation. We have had situations where we have been at a shooting scene and we decided that we have to tweet it. We just have to do it. We do not know that every station is going to see it and show up, but to be the first to talk about the story, even on Twitter, still gives you some sense of satisfaction. In some ways, you know you are tipping your hand at what you have TV-wise."

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The above case study perfectly illustrates the potential of Twitter as a device to deliver information in a breaking news situation. It also shows how information on Twitter does not pass through the traditional flow of "gates" before reaching the audience. Under the traditional flow of information diagramed in Figure 1, newsroom employees like assignment editors, photographers and reporters are all early gatekeepers in standard newsroom operations. If the norm holds true, they collect information that is approved by other newsroom employees before it is delivered to the audience. The majority of the time, the information is also delivered to the public by a higher-level gatekeeper, i.e. an anchor. However in the triple-murder suicide case study, it was the traditionally early gatekeepers who were responsible for delivering the majority of information on Twitter to the public. An assignment editor broke the story, a reporter and photographer both provided the first pictures and maps from the scene, and reporters also tweeted details from the official police news conference. Conversely, the only time any late gatekeepers joined the process, when both anchors from KENS tweeted, it was to show they *did not* know what was going on by asking if the public had any information. It should also be noted that the most powerful gatekeepers in a traditional newsroom setting, management, did not issue one tweet during this breaking news situation. With Twitter, any newsroom employee involved in the process delivers news. Therefore, each

individual employee is just as important a gatekeeper as the next. The pecking order of traditional gatekeeping is irrelevant to a Twitter audience.

The case study shows that news is delivered to viewers in real time, if viewers want to receive it in that method. The thousands of people following Twitter accounts of the four San Antonio television stations (KSAT: 6,500, WOAI: 5,200, KENS: 1,950 and KABB: 1,300) are discovering the news in their city as it happens. One may argue that the news delivered via Twitter is oftentimes incomplete and disorganized, but critics have issued those same complaints about the television news product itself for years. On this particular night, for someone living in the Woods of Deerfield neighborhood, the scene of the triple murder-suicide mentioned in this study, Twitter was a quick and effective means of knowing what was going on down the street. Even if one does not live in that neighborhood, many news viewers want to know what is happening in their city. Twitter again delivered toward that goal. Hermida (2010) uses the term "awareness system" to describe the phenomenon of knowing what is going on everywhere, without being everywhere.

While the case study details an example of how Twitter can affect the flow of information, it would be foolish to suggest this is what happens on a daily basis in television newsrooms. In fact, data analyzed for this paper show the case study, while a shining example of Twitter's potential, is far from the norm.

On the ten days selected for coding, only 14 percent of the tweets of journalists in San Antonio were coded as breaking news. The greatest number of tweets, 43 percent, was coded as daily chit-chat, which is to be expected on a social medium like Twitter, where conversation is not only encouraged but expected. However, the large number of

promotional tweets needs to be examined closely. Those tweets, which accounted for 38

percent of the total number, were mainly from a service called "Twitterfeed," which

newsrooms use to automatically generate a link that is sent to their Twitter followers any

time a story is published on their station websites. In other words, these tweets are issued

without a station employee using Twitter or one of its platforms. Some newsrooms would

likely argue these Twitterfeed tweets are informational, since they do contain the

headline and first couple of words of the published story. Oftentimes the words are cut

off in mid-sentence though, which is a common complaint. Twitterfeed can also lead to

potential spamming, or a flooding of the Twitter feed with automated messages, if several

stories are published to the Web at the same time.

This issue is even more striking when only the tweets of the official station

accounts are analyzed (Table 2). The statistical analysis shows all four stations primarily

use Twitter for one reason: to promote an upcoming newscast or a story on a station

website. One station, WOAI, had 100 percent of its tweets coded as promotional. This

station does not have an employee who contributes to the official account or interacts

with viewers in any way. Every single tweet came from the Twitterfeed service. A second

station, KENS, had only one tweet from its station account not come from the

Twitterfeed service. However, even that one tweet contained a plug for a story on the

station's website. KSAT and KABB both utilized Twitter as a tool for breaking news

more than WOAI or KENS, but the percentages were not significantly different from

WOAI and KENS. This is a major area of improvement for a station looking to gain a

stranglehold on the Twitter market in San Antonio.

With regard to the data answering the third research question, it is clear that television stations are trying to cling to as much gatekeeping control as they possibly can in the digital world, some, however, more than others. It is interesting to note that KSAT and KABB, while still implementing some gatekeeping procedures on Twitter – like a lack of scanner traffic, for instance – seem to have more leeway and more of an open mind in regards to Twitter than WOAI. It is also no coincidence that KSAT and KABB use Twitter in breaking news situations while WOAI does not. KSAT and KABB also do not have formal station Twitter policies, where as WOAI has a stringent policy that requires a second set of eyeballs to see every tweet that is sent out. During the interview, WOAI management made it quite clear that every policy with regards to the television aspect of content delivery also applies to Twitter. However, that may not totally be realistic and it goes against Twitter's real-time nature. This is not to excuse sloppy journalism, but it may help explain, at least partly, why WOAI as a station has not embraced Twitter. To truly embrace Twitter, stations must relinquish, or at least relax, some gatekeeping responsibilities. There must be a trust that assignment editors, photographers and reporters, for example, are properly trained on what to say, what to report and how to report it. In a breaking news situation, reporters oftentimes will "ad-lib" from the scene of an event. This means they are going without script and simply describing the situation as it unfolds. How is that any different from a reporter tweeting from a scene without managerial approval of the words he or she is using? It is not. As WOAI management correctly pointed out, television and the Web still pay the bills. But that is also eerily similar to responses from newspaper management in the early days of

browsers, who are still to this day – nearly 20 years later – patting themselves on the back for putting stories online after failing to embrace the technology for years.

While this study focuses on Twitter as a content delivery platform, it is also important to note that Twitter is also a constantly updated source of news. There is the recognition that the public itself is now a gatejumper. When people see breaking news happen, they have the ability to deliver the news on Twitter just an employee at a news station would. Recall the 2009 plane crash in the Hudson River (Beaumont, 2009). A man on a ferry who took a picture delivered that breaking story first to the world. This notion that people no longer have to rely on news outlets to receive news is likely troubling for news organizations to hear.

Twitter also allows journalists to know what is going on in their own community. A producer at WBZ in Boston found what turned out to be her station's lead story in two newscasts by monitoring conversations from school district employees during a snow storm (Potter, 2011). Situations like this happen quite often in newsrooms across the country. So stations that choose to ignore Twitter are, essentially, ignoring potential story ideas. Imagine the reaction if employees hung up on a viewer who had a news tip or failed to reply or forward an e-mail with a story idea. Disciplinary consequences would likely follow. Yet those scenarios are no different than a station choosing to ignore Twitter.

Finally, it is important to note that television news viewership is on the decline. A recent Pew Research Center poll ("Americans Spending," 2010) found television news viewership dropped ten percent from 1991 to 2010. In comparison, the same poll found online news consumption has jumped 20 percent from 2002 to 2010, and is now more a

more popular source of news than radio newscasts or newspapers ("Americans Spending," 2010). If viewership is declining, television stations must go to where the consumers are and provide reasons for them to convert into viewers. An aggressive Twitter account is one tool that could facilitate that change. The notion of television news viewing being a passive event, as it was in the past, is quickly evaporating. It is up to television newsrooms to adapt to the changing conditions.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

The diffusion of Twitter has the potential to change the entire process of news delivery. It has put the power of news delivery in the hands of many different newsroom employees, thus altering the flow of information and gatekeeping procedures. The "Web first" mentality is no longer good enough. The hunger for real-time news delivery is out there, so stations must adapt to "Twitter first." However, this study also shows stations have much work to do in using Twitter as a tool to deliver breaking news and allowing their employees to become gatejumpers, instead of using it purely for promotional purposes.

After sharing these results with Mark Briggs, author of *Journalism 2.0* and *Journalism Next*, Briggs said (via Twitter, of course), "The key is to respect the relationship with users. I like the 80/20 rule, where 80% of time you add value, 20% you promote." This could be the standard stations use as they begin to truly embrace Twitter as a platform for content delivery.

This study also shows stations are struggling with the lack of gatekeeping power involved in maximizing Twitter as a tool for breaking news delivery. The seemingly common misconception that Twitter leads to sub-par journalism does not have to hold true. Employees can produce quality work on a social medium like Twitter, just as they would on television. For that to happen, though, stations have to offer the opportunity and

train employees to not only use the medium responsibly, but carry out the station brand there, as well.

At least two panels at the 2011 South By Southwest Interactive Festival declared that gatekeeping is dead. This study shows that is not true, but it is fair to say traditional gatekeeping is on life support. Newsrooms must learn to adapt old ways of doing things to new technologies. There is simply no other choice, other than to be left behind by the consumers of your product.

This analysis is not without limitations. The largest, perhaps, is the nature of the topic. There is a possibility Twitter will fall out of favor and journalists will move on to the next big thing in social media. This is listed as a limitation, but research like this will still be valuable since the "next big thing" will likely build on Twitter's momentum. Also, several of the days selected as part of the random sample were Fridays, where content typically focuses on weekend plans, movies, concerts, etc. Future research would limit random selection of days to Monday through Thursday to correct this.

It is my recommendation that future researchers on this topic focus on the gatekeeping power of social media, be it Twitter or other technologies. How are some television newsrooms successfully relinquishing some gatekeeping powers in order to be effective in the realms of social media? Will these social media help television news avoid the mistakes of newspapers, which fought and resisted the digital world until it was nearly too late? How can television newsrooms build brand loyalty through these social media? Will training be done to help all newsroom employees understand the power of gatekeeping? These are questions that will shape the future of television news.

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VITA

Dale Charles Blasingame was born in Harlingen, Texas, on January 2, 1977, the son of Janet Dorothy Blasingame and Elbert Glenn Blasingame. After completing his work at Harlingen High School, Harlingen, Texas, in 1995, he entered what was then known as Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University-San Marcos). He received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from Southwest Texas State in December 1999. During the following years, he was employed as a television producer with News 4 WOAI in San Antonio, Texas, where he won two Lone Star Emmy awards. In September 2009, he entered the Graduate College of Texas State University-San Marcos.

Permanent Address: 109 Craddock #109

San Marcos, Texas 78666

This thesis was typed by Dale C. Blasingame.