BEYOND OBJECTIVITY AND RELATIVISM:  
A VIEW OF JOURNALISM FROM A RHETORICAL PERSPECTIVE  

A Dissertation  

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
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by  
Catherine Meienberg Gynn, B.A., M.A.  

* * * * *  
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Dissertation Committee:  
Josina M. Makau  
Susan L. Kline  
Paul V. Peterson  
Joseph M. Foley  

Approved by  
Susan L. Kline  
Adviser  
Department of Communication
DEDICATION

To my husband, Jack D. Gynn, and my son, Matthew M. Gynn.

With thanks to my parents,
Alyce W. Meienberg and the late John T. Meienberg.

This dissertation is in respectful memory of
Lauren Rudolph
Michael James Nole
Celina Shribbs
Riley Detwiler
young victims of the events described herein.
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And, to my husband, Jack, I express my fervent thanks for your love and support, for now and for always.

Above all, I thank God for bringing these people into my life.
**VITA**

23 April, 1953  
Born, New York City

1975  
B.A., School of Journalism  
The Ohio State University  
Columbus, Ohio

1975-1978  
Public relations account consultant  
Phillips Advertising Agency  
San Diego, California

1980-1988  
Administrative staff writer  
The Ohio State University

1986  
M.A., School of Journalism  
The Ohio State University

1986-1990  
Reporter  
Suburban News Publications  
Columbus, Ohio

1990-1995  
Graduate Teaching Associate  
Department of Communication  
The Ohio State University

**FIELDS OF STUDY**

**Major Field:** Communication

Studies in rhetoric, ethics, reasoning, argumentation and debate,  
Professor Josina Makau; persuasion theory, Professor Susan Kline;  
social movement theory, Professor James Darsey; rhetorical criticism,  
Professors James Darsey and Sonja Foss; foundations of rhetoric,  
Professors Mary Garrett and James Hikins; cultural studies, Professors  
Brenda Dervin and Joseph Pilotta; interpersonal theory and research,  
Professor Donald Cegala; telecommunication and mass media theory  
and research, Professors Thomas McCain and Joseph Foley.
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ABSTRACT

Objectivity as a regulative ideal within journalism is operationalized in ways that hide the presence of persuasive appeals that disrupt the goals of journalism, especially as those goals pertain to informing a democratic public of issues of social consequence. A rhetorical perspective, such as is offered in rhetoric of inquiry studies, may help establish an interdisciplinary dialogue that will direct attention to the role of rhetoric in producing knowledge, and illustrate potential benefit that developing a process to engage subjectivity may have for journalism practice. A "commitment to understanding the dynamics of words and other symbols in practical usage" (Lyne, 1985, p. 73) from a rhetorical perspective affirms the need to engage ethical implications of journalism practice beyond the level of objective technique. Rhetorical analysis of the 1993 news coverage of the *E. coli* 0157:H7 deaths in California and Washington is undertaken with particular emphasis on assessing rhetorical elements that have been used to operationalize objectivity within American print journalism.
CHAPTER I

An Introduction to the Project

Statement of the Questions

Journalism holds a privileged and protected place in our society largely because of its ability to include the citizen in important public issues. Its task is one of sorting through confusing and conflicting claims surrounding public issues. Whether or not the values, beliefs and practices of journalism—especially American print journalism—allow it to attain this goal with necessary sufficiency is a question raised both by its champions and its critics.

The beliefs and practices that serve as directions to American print journalism can be summed up in a concept called objectivity. As a guiding tenet of journalism practice, objectivity has been operationalized through certain procedures that act as regulative ideals in the pursuit of representational accuracy. The procedures are seen as pragmatic and functional for removing opinion from news stories and presenting information in an unbiased fashion in order to provide the American public with a rational and sufficient foundation for public
decision-making. The history of journalistic objectivity in this sense is part of a larger philosophical program in modern society to suppress subjectivity in order to achieve more accurate representations of discoverable truth. Objectivity as a regulative ideal in journalism relies heavily on positivist assumptions that regard knowledge as substantially discovered, rather than created, during social interaction.

On the other hand, social constructivism—which holds language to constitute reality in a socio-historic sense—connects rhetorical practices to knowledge production. From this view, procedures that are undertaken to ensure representational accuracy in journalism could be looked at as rhetorical elements that play a key role in the social construction of knowledge. From a social constructionist perspective, rationality—or the presentation of knowledge, claims, and evidence—is linked closely to its rhetorical expression. In fact, rhetoric and rationality are considered to be inseparable in this view, quite the opposite of a received view that emphasizes knowledge as existing separately from the knower and reason as existing separately from its expression.¹

The difference between the perspectives is often referred to as realism versus relativism, and questions are focused on how to provide an evaluative measure if individual, subjective opinion is seen as an
equal to Truth. In the last decade, however, applied and practical philosophers have all but given up this polarized debate, illustrating that rationality relies not so much on the discovery of general, timeless, universal principles, but rather on a relationship to specific, contextualized expressions of ever-changing beliefs. From this perspective, the debate need not dissolve into realism versus relativism, but rather can be cast as a relationship of connections: how is it that rhetoric works to enable or disable particular social action in particular situations. In this way, what is sought in investigating the relationship between rhetoric and reasoning is not relativism but assurance of adequate argument and contextual detail for all knowledge testing and knowledge production.

Understanding the differences between a received view of knowledge endorsed by positivism and a created view of knowledge endorsed by social constructivism is important to understanding the role of objectivity in journalism. When looked at as playing a constitutive role in the production of knowledge, language use has different ethical imperatives for the journalist than it has under a received view. Ethical obligations for the journalist under a received view are expressed in terms of being objective, which is accomplished
by presenting information accurately and impartially through established journalistic criteria. Ethical obligations in social constructionism direct the journalist to consider how language choices contribute to the creation of social meaning, a meaning that cannot be separated from its cultural setting. This reflective stance highlights the implications of a wide array of choices available to the journalist in telling the story, not to thwart representational accuracy, but to enhance it.

To speak of a "rhetoric of journalism" is meant, to borrow a phrase from Lyne (1990), "to call attention to the potential for borrowing rhetorical resources from one domain and using them in another." (p. 38) To cast journalism as a rhetoric is to view it as a system of beliefs and practices that have a characteristic structure and form. A rhetorical stance on journalism, then, would highlight beliefs and practices within journalism that contribute to the production of knowledge. Such an approach raises a shopping list of questions that are central to the goals of journalism practice: To what degree does objective news reporting create particular worldviews that open or close possibilities for social action? What is the impact of objective news reporting on assuring adequate argument and contextual detail for knowledge claims? In what way do the rhetorical elements of objectivity develop
public narratives in terms of making fitting connections for social understanding based on the goals of journalistic practices? To what degree do the rhetorical elements of objectivity develop and engage certain values of an event that are not directly observable? In what way and to what degree do rhetorical elements of objectivity create and support particular rhetorical environments that cultivate particular views? Conversely, what happens to the rhetorical environment when the journalist violates all the principles of operationalized objectivity?

Pertinent literature

Given the blended nature of the research questions, literature pertinent to this project stems from two distinct sources. First, an understanding of the current views on journalism objectivity is necessary, and second, an understanding of rhetorical approaches to questions of objectivity is necessary.

Current views on journalism objectivity

To provide an understanding of current views on journalism objectivity, Chapter Two discusses literature in journalism pedagogy, professional practice, and research, and critiques of these literature bases that have been offered in critical writings in journalism and other fields.
There is a general consensus of objectivity as a professional tenet that is especially strong in American journalism. Despite problems and different interpretations, objectivity is viewed as "the centerpiece of the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi Code of Ethics" (Christians, Ferre & Fackler, 1993, p. 118). Objectivity "has been exalted by leaders of the profession as an essential, if unattainable ideal" (Brooks, Kennedy, Moen & Ranly, 1986, p. 14). Problems associated with objectivity are recognized in journalism literature (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986) and have been explored by critical scholars (e.g., Tuchman, 1972; Tuchman, 1978; Schudson, 1978; Reese, 1990), but a review of scholarly journals reveals a surprising silence on the part of academic journalism literature regarding various critical assessments.³ Journalism literature tends to indicate that the quest for objectivity will "provide the best obtainable version of the truth" (Brooks et al., 1986, p. 20), a necessary ingredient to providing "a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context that gives them meaning" (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956; p. 87).

Historically, the move to objective journalism, with its emphasis on controlling subjectivity, was part of a move to scientific methods in a
number of different fields meant to provide some degree of control to a rapidly changing society in the early part of the 20th century. As within other fields that embraced scientific methods of investigation, journalism education and practice focused on procedures to follow in order to provide accurate, rational, professional knowledge to the audience. Providing empirically verifiable statements in a fair and balanced manner became a journalist's responsibility to the profession and to the audience.

Journalists endorse objectivity as a professional tenet of objectivity in an attempt to remain fair and unbiased in their reporting of events so strongly that many professional newspeople equate objectivity in reporting with journalism ethics (Merrill, 1985). Journalists are schooled in writing a particular type of informative discourse, based on observation of real events, that presents reality in an impartial, neutral manner. This neutral observation is distinctly different from that which is intentionally meant to persuade or serve the interests of a specific entity (Christians et al., 1993). As a regulative ideal, the neutral posture of operationalized objectivity is meant to avoid persuasive appeals and partisan interests.
Journalists see their professionalism—supported by their training and their objectivity—as elevating journalistic assertions beyond argumentation to an ontologically privileged position: journalists report facts, and do not participate in the argument. Others, however, disagree.

Condit & Selzer (1985), for example, argue the opposite, pointing out there is a rhetoric of objectivity at work in journalism which emphasizes material aspects of events at the expense of judgmental aspects, an especially harmful bias that seems to favor the prosecution's arguments in jury trial reporting. An ideological bias toward observable, material elements results in a systematic distortion of the events. Such distortion cannot help but further the arguments for one perspective over another in a public issue. In order to expand understanding of the implications of journalistic practice driven by positivism and objectivity, they call for further studies in this area, stating that if we are to "unravel alternatives to the present standards of journalistic practice (either to be taught to journalists, or to readers, or to both)...this will be accomplished by additional detailed studies of individual cases of reporting and the operation of biases in that
reporting" especially outside the area of court reporting in which Condit & Selzer worked.

But critiques by Condit, Selzer and others are difficult to assimilate into the professional climate of journalism, a climate that fosters an ontological belief in the ability to assert what is. Journalism's assumption of ontological privilege is shared by other disciplines that are deeply schooled in the principles of positivism. Similar questions of objectivity and persuasive appeal have been raised in what is termed "rhetoric of inquiry" literature that uses a rhetorical perspective to investigate consequences of the neutral posture of objectivity.

**Rhetorical approaches to questions of objectivity**

To provide an understanding of rhetorical approaches to questions of objectivity, literature affiliated in name or in spirit with the Project on Rhetoric of Inquiry is reviewed in Chapter Three. The Project on the Rhetoric of Inquiry is a project dedicated to the "critique of the relationship between scientistic epistemology and academic practice in particular fields of learning" (McGee & Lyne, 1987, p. 382). The Project attracts a number of scholars who share an interest in critiquing how it is that different disciplines warrant knowledge.
The Project on Rhetoric of Inquiry encourages practitioners to emphasize their own disciplines (Lyne, 1987). Rhetoric of inquiry brings together scholars with a common interest in understanding the "human controls over perceiving, knowing and assessing the world formally." (Gronbeck, 1987; p. 569). The Project is "part of the current interest in the more subjective, critical, humanistic aspects of knowledge-building and knowledge-testing" (Gronbeck, 1987, p. 569). The common element shared by the project authors is a concern with how particular systems of beliefs and practices serve as argumentation for specialized fields. Of particular interest to project authors is a desire to reveal the role played by the "powerful and entrenched...ideology of scientism" (McGee, 1985, p. 565) in argumentation. The bottom line in rhetoric of inquiry studies is that inquiry, no matter what the subject area nor how closely aligned it may be with objective precepts, is deeply and inherently rhetorical. Rhetoric of inquiry projects seek to comprehend the interests and reasons that influence practical action in particular settings. Studies offered in a variety of venues--such as history, law, economics, psychotherapy, criminology, biology, political science--have employed rhetorical criticism to these ends.
Focusing on the deep, inherently rhetorical nature of inquiry closely aligns project studies with issues of argumentation, and, by extension, with rhetorical invention in the classical sense. Of necessity, then, rhetoric is fastened to a definitional framework that emphasizes persuasive capabilities.

Justification

It may seem odd that a rhetoric of inquiry could be applicable to journalism since news reporting is a field in which argumentative strategy and persuasive appeal would seem out of place. Understandably, journalism has difficulty seeing persuasion where none was intended. Perhaps it will help to think of persuasive capabilities of rhetoric as that which can be revealed by approaching an artifact from a rhetorical perspective; in others words, the potential for persuasion can be observed by reading "with an eye to the moments of plausible truth in each position with a view to the array of choices each presents to purposeful human actors." (Farrell, 1990, p. 78)

Further, as McCloskey (1985) argues, much is to be gained from investigation of discipline-specific conversations about knowledge production from a rhetorical perspective. Connecting journalism to its logics and methods through rhetoric of inquiry approach appears to
offer hope of illuminating long-standing concerns of journalists. Journalists are concerned that they not be pawns of established power elite, but rather represent the wider interests of an American public (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986). "(T)he press has represented--in theory, if not always in fact--the voice of the democratic commoner against the surging currents of state hegemony" (Christians et al., 1993, p. 9). Despite this, journalism literature has greeted critical cultural critiques dealing with the issue with silence or scorn. This reaction may be understood if one considers that the critiques are delivered largely from a Marxist perspective, which--fairly or unfairly--is wholly alien to the culture of mainstream American print journalism's fierce belief in freedom of press. Additionally, the critiques assume an intention to deceive, either on the part of the journalist, the journalism organization, or the news sources. In these cases, many critical writings have been perceived by journalists as presenting journalists as unwitting dupes of deceitful news sources⁴. But for whatever reason, reactions of silence or scorn do not work toward productive engagement of the issue of how the American press can best represent the wider interests of an American public within the organizational demands of the American newspaper business.
A substantially different approach is suggested by the Project on the Rhetoric of Inquiry. Rhetorical practices within journalism have been undertaken with specific goals in mind: ensuring representational accuracy while avoiding partisan appeal. Concentrating on the practices of journalistic objectivity as rhetorical elements can engage journalism’s concerns on journalism’s terms. For example, do the rhetorical elements of objectivity work to create and support a particular rhetorical environment that serves to cultivate particular views? Answering this question problematicizes the practices of objectivity from the perspective of journalism’s own goals of nonpartisanship. A rhetoric of journalism that focuses on the goals of journalism may provide a necessary bridge to important rhetorical aspects of knowledge production which relate to moral and ethical components of communication and persuasion. The advantage of this approach for journalism seems to be twofold. First, it moves the discussion of persuasion to issues of practical application: journalism, by its own standards, eschews argumentative discourse within straight news reporting. If persuasive elements are present, journalism is interested in knowing about it. If journalism practice has, in some way, participated in argumentative strategy and persuasive appeal on behalf of special
interests, understanding the mechanisms by which it took place would be of practical benefit to journalism. A focus on rhetorical elements of objectivity encourages useful analysis for a very pragmatic field. Second, approaching rhetoric of journalism as a question of perceptions created by the discourse in terms of opening or closing of possibilities of social action could provide an attractive alternative to less productive discussions of intentional deception and chicanery.

Thus, a rhetorical perspective of journalism is, in brief, an investigation of the role of the rhetorical elements of objectivity and the consequences they may have to the goals of journalism practice. The case study proposed herein will offer an extension of rhetorical studies in the area of a rhetoric of inquiry by using rhetorical analysis as a tool to expand our understanding of knowledge production within American print journalism.

Procedures

A review of academic journalism literature, in Chapter Two, is followed by a philosophical discussion of the basis for the Project on Rhetoric of Inquiry in Chapter Three. Based on these discussions, representative rhetoric of inquiry projects are considered that suggest potential ways to develop a rhetoric of journalism. Specifically,
operationalized procedures of journalistic objectivity, identified in Chapter Two, are combined with rhetorical approaches suggested in Chapter Three, and cast as rhetorical elements of journalistic objectivity in the sense that they represent strategic choices made in order to achieve representational accuracy.

In Chapter Four, these elements are applied to a case study that was selected both for its association with objective journalism and its ties to a multi-faceted social issue. I first present the overall narrative of the event as it developed in the selected news coverage. In the spirit of rhetoric of inquiry projects, I relate the rhetorical elements of objective journalism practice to the text, identifying where value systems are visible, what underlying assumptions seem to be displayed, and how these values and assumptions might serve to open or close possibilities for social action.

In Chapter Five, another accounts of the events--an account which violates the tenets of objective journalism--is then discussed. This account, outside the overall narrative of the news coverage, is examined for the different value systems and assumptions it might hold and how it might serve to open or close different possibilities for social action or evoke different policy implications. A discussion follows on
the effect that a commitment to objective epistemology may have on the ability of journalists to engage multi-faceted issues of social consequence. In the final section, implications this study might hold for journalism theory, practice and pedagogy are engaged.

Summary

Journalistic practice has not been cast as a rhetoric of inquiry although American print journalism—especially as it is practiced among premiere newspapers such as The New York Times, the Washington Post, or the Los Angeles Times—is a form of inquiry with particular beliefs and practices that in large part contributes to our public knowledge of events and issues of social importance. By developing this approach for journalism, I propose to contribute to the rhetoric of inquiry literature and provide a bridge between rhetorical study and other critiques of journalistic practice under the rubric of rhetoric of journalism. I hope this project will provide another way to enrich journalism practices by encouraging rhetoric’s resources to enter journalism’s territory as a cooperative partner. I hope the significance of this project is seen in any contribution it may make to increasing the interdisciplinary conversation between journalism and rhetorical study.
It is in this spirit that I engage journalism practice as a rhetoric of inquiry.
Endnotes to Chapter I

1. The implicit dualism in this brief introductory presentation certainly does not represent the vast treatment of these ideas that has been undertaken by many scholars. For further discussion, see, for example, Stephen Toulmin's writings in philosophy, specifically "The Recovery of Practical Philosophy," (1988), or, Walter Fisher (1980) on the logic of good reasons, or Michael Leff (1985) for a discussion of similar ideas for rhetorical theory.

2. See Chapter Two for a full discussion of the criteria journalism recommends for achieving these goals.

3. A review of Communication Abstracts (Vols. 8-16, 1985 to 1993) and the Index to Journals in Communication Studies through 1990 (Matlon & Ortiz) yielded one recent Journalism Quarterly article directly related to a discussion of objectivity (Streckfuss, 1990), and none engaged critical assessments. Brooks et al. (1992) mention the critiques as an antithesis of the journalist's view: "It [objectivity] has been exalted by leaders of the profession as an essential, if unattainable, ideal. Its critics, by contrast, have attacked objectivity as, in the phrase of sociologist Gaye Tuchman, a 'strategic ritual' that conceals a multitude of professional sins while producing superficial and often misleading coverage." (p. 14) The distancing of journalism from this assessment is telling; Tuchman is identified as a "sociologist," although she is most closely associated with research in mass media.

4. See, for example, literature in journalism reviewing the work of Noam Chomsky's (1986) The Manufacture of Consent.
CHAPTER II

Objectivity and American Print Journalism

Journalism is a professional undertaking with practitioners who, in the words of Schmuhl (1984) are "cognizant of their basic principles, values, and obligations to their craft and to others" (p. 6). One professional tool that journalists use in translating these principles, values and obligations to a working model of the American press is a concept called objectivity.

Longman's Dictionary of Mass Communication (Connors, 1982) equates "objective journalism" with "straight news" which is defined as the "straightforward recital of news facts without coloring, embellishment, or interpretation." (p. 229) A good, working definition of "objectivity" for journalists is a blend of this technical definition and a common dictionary definition: "free from personal feelings or prejudice; based on facts; unbiased" (Webster, 1989, p. 993).

In this chapter, I offer two discussions of objectivity. In the first section, objectivity is shown to be a working credo of American journalists through a discussion of current views of objectivity within journalism, objectivity as a practical procedure to assure
representational accuracy, and the importance of attaining representational accuracy in straight news reporting as seen by practicing journalists. Having established the continuing importance of objectivity to American journalists, in the second section I proceed to contextualize this interest by tracing the history of objectivity as it developed in modern society to suppress subjectivity in journalism and other fields. I cast these observations in a philosophical framework offered by Megill (1994) in order to establish that journalistic objectivity shares common concerns with other fields of study. The chapter ends with a proposal to look to work being done in these other fields of study as model for illuminating the implications of journalism's adherence to objectivity from a rhetorical perspective.

**Objectivity as Working Credo**

**Current views on objectivity in American journalism**

In the Winter term 1995 introductory journalism classroom, students are advised in their current textbook\(^1\) that:

The rules that mainstream journalists follow in attempting to arrive at the best obtainable version of the truth are commonly summarized as objectivity. Objectivity has been and still is accepted as a working credo by many, perhaps, most American journalists, students and teachers of journalism. It has been exalted by leaders of the profession as an essential, if unattainable ideal. (Brooks et al., 1992, p. 14)
Looking at objective journalism as a question of how to arrive at the best obtainable versions of the truth emphasizes an overriding concern with representational accuracy in American print journalism. Pursuing truth, and accurately representing it to the American public have been fundamental principles of the American press since its inception. Indeed, as John Stuart Mill stated, decisions vital to liberty must be made on the basis of truth. The very existence of the press and the freedoms granted to it are justified by the regulative ideal of the pursuit of truth. In the best sense, the goal of journalism's pursuit of objective truth is "to honor...its obligation under the First Amendment, to place itself in league with the people's policy concerns and to transmit to the public mind clear pictures of the reality that can inform their judgments about those concerns" (Patterson, 1992).

Translating this regulative ideal to everyday practice, objectivity exists as a set of norms for journalists to follow. The quest for objectivity in journalism can be seen as serving as "rules of the game" as a means "to achieve an impartial report" (Merrill, 1991, p. 122). Merrill, who has written extensively in this area, sees journalistic objectivity as a style of presentation that emphasizes impartiality and requires systematic attempts on the part of the journalists to work
toward the recognizably difficult goal of presenting stories "so that individuals reading the report would have had the same perspective if they had been present themselves." (Merrill, 1991, p. 122)

In order to approach this ideal, textbook advises tends to emphasize facts and verification as a mainstay of objective journalism:

When journalists talk about objectivity, they mean that the news story is free of the reporter's opinion or feelings, that it contains facts and that the account is by an impartial and independent observer. Stories are objective when they can be checked against some kind of record--the text of a speech, the minutes of a meeting, a police report,...An objective story contains material that everyone would agree is based on fact. (Mencher, 1987, p. 48)

The neutral, objective, informative role of professional journalists has been described as an occupational ideology (Reese, 1990), an observation borne out by other studies as well (McQuail, 1989; Dennis, 1991). Zelizer (1990) has argued that the dominant frame of reference view for journalists as belonging to "a profession" generates an ideological orientation for the journalism community which is supported by the quest for objectivity. Citing Shiller (1979, 1981), Zelizer writes:

Being professional has not only generated an aura of authoritativeness based on a specific attitude toward accomplishing work, but has suggested that reporters ought to approach reporting in certain ways--as objective, neutral, balanced chroniclers. (p. 221)
Responsible journalism continues to be judged by standards that relate to objectivity: accuracy, completeness, accountability, fairness, and balance in the views presented (Schmuhl, 1984). One reason cited for objectivity's necessity is that as a professional tenet it provides the best protection against distortion of news that might otherwise lead to propaganda (Dennis, 1991).

Objectivity has remained central to journalism practice because it serves important pragmatic purposes for American journalists and media institutions. Carey (1969), for instance, notes that objective reporting was found to be serviceable for the growing heterogeneous audience of the commercial press in its early years (Carey, 1969), and objectivity offered a consistency which made wire service news profitable and thus possible (Gans, 1979).

Sociologist Gaye Tuchman (1972, 1978) contends that objectivity is a pragmatic tool that allows professionals to pursue specific goals to the benefit of the news organization. Tuchman's view of objectivity as a "strategic ritual" indicates that journalistic authority in this culture relies on specific steps, such as presenting the conflict, presenting the supporting evidence, incorporating judicious quotes, and structuring information in an appropriate sequence. Pragmatically, objectivity
expedites meeting the needs of the news organization by providing a protocol which, when followed, yields a usable product in a timely fashion. Beyond simply a quality in the work, objectivity is a set of procedures, what Tuchman calls "formal attributes" of journalism directed toward an ideal.

**Operationalizing objectivity to ensure representational accuracy**

This discussion of current views of objectivity is supported in journalism textbooks wherein objective news reporting is presented as a regulative ideal in itself, one that can be achieved through adherence to corresponding tenets of neutrality, balance, fairness, accuracy, and openness. The importance of these tenets led one textbook author to comment that "These are the stars that provide guidelines as we navigate toward the destination of truth" (Mencher, 1987, p. 51).

Truth, however, is recognized as a difficult concept: "After centuries of argument, philosophers and theologians have been unable to agree on just what truth is" (Brooks et al., 1985, p. 20), and thus the goal of reaching "the best obtainable version of the truth" (i.e., objectivity) is not definitive. In order to address this philosophical impasse in a practical manner, "truth" is operationalized as accuracy and fairness. Agreeing on what can be considered "accurate" or "fair" is
viewed as somewhat more achievable, and thus "The goals of accuracy and fairness often are summed up as journalistic objectivity" (Brooks et al., 1985, p. 22).

Directions for one goal often include achieving the other. Attribution of sources, for example, is seen as assuring both accuracy and fairness. Newspapers insist on knowing the source of any material, identifying the source by affiliation where indicated, and reporting that to the public. These measures are undertaken in order to disclose for public assessment any private agendas that might be otherwise remain hidden (Schudson, 1978). In this way accuracy ensures fairness, and fairness ensures accuracy.

With accuracy and fairness as important components of professional deportment for journalists of objective reporting, objectivity as a practice is closely aligned with factuality and impartiality; factuality in turn is aligned with truth and relevance, and impartiality is described in terms of balance, fairness and neutrality (Westerstahl, 1983). The arrangement of ideals, terms, and procedures has a circular nature, but specific directions are available for each goal.

Factuality. Journalism students are advised that "a story based on the reporter's first-hand observation is superior to one based on
second-hand or third-hand information" (Mencher, 1987, p. 27); where this is not possible, representational accuracy can be achieved "from authoritative sources such as documents and records (police files...) and from individuals (policy makers and participants...)" (p. 27).

Accuracy of fact is "so important that virtually all American newspapers run daily correction boxes" (Hohenberg, 1983, p. 82). "Accuracy is the most basic characteristic of the work journalists must do" (Garrison, 1990, p. 150). "Not all reporters are exceptionally good writers, but editors are entitled to expect them to be accurate in what they write" (Metz, 1985, p. 189).

Under the sub-heading "Accuracy above all else," Garrison (1990) advises that "For credibility's sake, we must take extraordinary steps to assure that the content of any story...represent the facts and only the facts" (p. 29). "In the words of the United Press International's editors: 'Get it first, but get it right.'" (Garrison, 1990)

Accuracy of facts can be enhanced by asking follow-up questions to get the same information in different words (Metz, 1985); "check all sources continually and leave nothing to guesswork or chance" (Hohenberg, 1983, p. 83); taking notes, using a tape recorder, improving observation of details, understanding what it is being said as
well as what is not being said (Brooks et al., 1985); and checking and re-checking all facts, figures and names (Garrison, 1990).

**Impartiality.** Directions for impartiality to achieve objectivity are discussed in terms of remaining neutral, uninvolved, and unbiased. The goal of impartiality is fairness and balance. "Unfair and unbalanced journalism might be described as failures in objectivity" (Mencher, 1987, p. 48). Impartial reporting additionally involves putting aside the self by concentrating on the procedures: "Fairness requires, above all, that you make every effort to avoid following your own biases in your reporting and your writing." (Brooks et al., 1985, p. 21) The separation from the report in order to achieve impartiality is further guided by the cautioned to "Always try to avoid becoming a part of the news. It is not your job to create news. Your assignment is to cover it, write or photograph it, and explain it" (Hohenberg, 1983; p. 332).

These directions have a very practical base. Garrison (1990) sees the evolution in journalism that has equated "objectivity" with "fairness" as arising from the recognition that a "reporter cannot be completely objective about a subject when writing about it" (p. 150). He writes:
Fairness in news writing and reporting entails a quality of evenness, of civility, and of 'by-the-rules' journalism. It is news writing and reporting without bias, imbalance or perspective, deception, or prejudice. And because the values of journalism--codes of ethics, for example--tell journalists to represent all sides in controversies, to present all relevant points of view, and to be complete, it is more realistic to discuss writing and reporting in terms of fairness." (p. 150; italics in the original)

Hence, the recognition that there will be some subjectivity involved in a news report is met with particular procedures designed to help a journalist achieve fairness in a news report, in the hope of coming as close to representational accuracy as possible by containing subjectivity that may lead to bias.

Impartiality also is demonstrated through "balance." Balance is a metaphor for fairness in journalism. The problem of competing perspectives in an event has been answered historically by the journalistic edict to provide "balanced coverage." This phrase encompasses the reporter's professional dictum to present all sides of the story. Balance is achieved by including "all sides in a controversy" (Mencher, 1987, p. 26). "Fairness requires that you as a reporter try to find every viewpoint on a story. Hardly ever will there be just one; often there are more than two" (Brooks et al., 1985, p. 21).
Arrangement. In organizing the observed facts into an appropriate sequence, the arrangement favored by journalistic practice in displaying observed material is linear structure. The lead states the theme of the article, and the body amplifies on this theme. The familiar "5Ws and H" of journalism--who, what, where, when, why and how?--is the guideline for the lead, although not all elements are included each time. The formation of the lead "forces [the journalist] to decide what in the story is important, what...to emphasize, and eventually gives shape to the rest of the story..." (Mencher, 1987, p. 106) The lead also is important to copy editors who use the main theme from the beginning of the story to write headlines. If the lead paragraph cannot suggest a headline to the editor, the lead is most probably a weak one that needs to be changed (Baskette et al., 1986).

Beyond the lead, there are customary arrangements that journalists employ in the writing of a news story. A general-to-detail design is called an "inverted pyramid." While the term is not to be taken literally, it is descriptive of the accepted journalistic practice of placing concise material first in the lead, followed by lengthier descriptive details in the body. "Story units" is a journalistic term for an organization that orders material within the article by related themes.
The lead theme is introduced and elaborated on first; then the second most important theme is introduced and detailed; and so on. "Multiple elements" stories are stories that deal with several important actions at the same time. Again, the structure is set up to highlight the most important action, or theme, with subordinate actions summarized following the lead sentence. For longer feature stories, the structure may vary. The Wall Street Journal, for example, structures its stories by opening with an anecdote, an explicit statement of the theme, a statement of significance of the theme, followed by details and answers to reader’s questions such as why the events are important or why the event is happening (Mencher, 1987).

In general, however, objective news reporting is displayed rhetorically by condensing the main elements, as observed by the reporter, into the headline and the lead paragraph, with subordinate actions or related themes introduced in the next few sentences or paragraphs. Arrangement of news stories in this sense is designed to reveal the essential facts of the events, and to provide the introduction to the event.

Placement. Although a systems-level decision, placement of stories within different sections in the newspaper has historical links to
objective reporting. The editorial page, for example, is differentiated by its opinions and value statements, and was separated from news reports to be able to identify the opinionated information clearly. Later developments of sections served the mutual purpose of providing a place to run stories of interest to specific audiences, as well as providing the newspaper with a distinct marketing tool for target audiences. Lifestyle stories, dealing with home and family issues, thus, are intended "to present news and features of interest to women in a distinctly feminine style" (Baskette et al., 1986, p. 382). The financial pages, as another section, present information that is of business interest. Specialized sections and placement enhances factuality and impartiality of material by allowing reporters to develop expertise in certain areas to afford them greater skill in relating factual information. The material in these sections, while usually dealing with distinct topics, remains objective.

Concrete details and attribution. Objectivity as a guiding principle leaves room to recognize that a good news story, even a straight-forward obituary, is more than a collection of facts. "How to Write News" as a chapter in a textbook (Hohenberg, 1983), for example,
uses a list of facts to show how a story is created. The result illustrates that even straight news is influenced by feature writing:

The writer tells a story [that] deals in specifics, not generalities...the writing style is simple, unaffected. It shuns personal opinion. Paragraphs and sentences are short. The words are familiar, most of them being limited to one or two syllables. The story is clear and coherent...the writer remains in the background. (Hohenberg, 1983, p. 29)

Basic rules for news writing respond to the concerns of objectivity in direct ways: "The purpose of all news writing is to communicate information, opinions and ideas in an interesting and timely manner. Stories must be accurate, terse, clear and easily understood." (Hohenberg, 1983, p. 42) Ultimately, Hohenberg argues for a writing style that is clear, simple, orderly and sincere. The observation of details that are confirmable steers journalists to the use of direct quotes from authoritative sources, and to official documentation such as police reports or other government agencies. The accuracy of these details is conveyed through appropriate attribution, which provides the audience with additional information on the relevancy and truthfulness of the information. In this way, attribution plays a key role in supporting factuality.
The rules guiding objective reporting, thus, are specific in terms of accuracy of detail: "Never take anything for granted in journalism. Support all conclusions with facts. Document everything with trustworthy sources and, except in the rarest of instances, name them." (Hohenberg, 1983, p. 31; italics in the original) These directions assure representational accuracy in the presentation of straight news. Thus, application of the quest for objectivity in journalism involves practical procedures to achieve the goals of accuracy and fairness. Operationalized, the procedures lead to presentations of actual events, with supporting evidence for the relevance of the event and quotes from the parties involved, that have been put in an appropriate sequence, and addressed to particular audiences.

**Objectivity and interpretive sufficiency**

The procedures, while specific and exact, have recognized limitations. "Straight reporting"--accepting the public record and relaying its content--came under attack by journalists and the public alike because it was inadequate to the task of providing understanding for public decisions. As professional journalism evolved in the 1950s, a distinction arose between "straight" and "interpretive reporting" that directed a journalists to contextualize a story with background, motives,
and side issues. The step was meant to add an explanatory layer to journalism. Mencher (1987) explains that journalists realized it was not enough to report what Senator Joseph McCarthy said when much of what he said was known to be false:

Journalists asked themselves whether they had a responsibility to go beyond mere transcription of what people say and do....That kind of journalism, with little predictive capacity, is unable to fulfill journalism's role of supplying the public with information on which to base decisions. (p. 50)

Objective reporting added a dimension to its factual reporting: interest turned to "reporting the truth about the fact" (p. 50). Journalists began "to look behind the breaking news story for causes, to find those with the authority to speak about possible consequences" (p. 51).

Interpretive reporting--from feature stories, to in-depth analysis, to investigation--evolved as a form of objective news writing that, while representing accurate information, was able to offer a deeper discussion of the events.

Interpretive reporting began and remains in the hands of an elite few, such as columnists or feature writers. Its content is that which we commonly associate lengthy, follow-up articles featured perhaps as an investigative series. Feature-length, in-depth, analytical stories also are regarded as highly desirable assignments by journalists. Interpretive
reporting is usually reserved for the most veteran reporters who have experience and special training. In this sense, the most professional of the profession are the writers who offer interpretive reports.

Interpretive reporting has been influenced by "new journalism," which first gained prominence in the 1960s with such writers as Tom Wolfe, Truman Capote, and Norman Mailer. Literary techniques such as scene-by-scene construction, realistic dialogue, and deep description lent the new journalism a power not found in straight reporting (Wolfe, 1973). Importantly, despite borrowing stylistic devices from literary arts and a more open acknowledgment of the reporter's presence in story, new journalism articles—and the spin-off interpretive articles—are tendered with an understanding that they reflect truth and represent a fair assessment of the events. The rule, Hohenberg (1983) reminds us, is that "the line must be carefully and clearly drawn to separate truth from fiction, fact from imagination, dream from reality" (p. 61).

While straight reporting—the objective recital of news facts, unbiased and without interpretation—remains the core news element of daily news as we know it today, interpretative reporting—written in a subjective, literary style—provides the coverage upon which the public
relies for its decision-making information. Despite its different style and arrangement, interpretive reporting seeks to present a truthful, fair, unbiased account of the events, and is a rendering of objective reporting. While there are fundamental differences between straight news and interpretive news, both are considered acceptable forms of news reporting and both are closely related to the quest for objectivity in journalism, especially as such a quest relates to issues of truth, fairness, and impartial account.

Thus, although recognized as a difficult if not impossible ideal, the pursuit of objectivity is operationalized in ways that allows it to remain a regulative ideal for American journalists:

Conventional wisdom among journalists is that objectivity in reporting is paramount and that the newsperson who is objective has fulfilled the highest and most responsible expectation possible. (Merrill, 1985, p. 391)

Operationalizing objectivity to ensure ethicality

Additional indications that objectivity is the regulative ideal within journalism can be found in the increasing discussions of media ethics that have been incorporated into journalism education in the past two decades (Christians, Rotzoll & Fackler, 1984). Central features of several professional codes for journalists address issues of neutrality,
accuracy, fairness, and serving the public interest and the public's right-to-know, elements that are also considered as elements of objectivity. If, as Dennis (1991) contends, "Journalists, like most people, are ethical because they want to do what is right," definition of right for journalism involves adherence to the tenets of objectivity in order to avoid dishonesty or violating the best interests of the public.

Brooks et al. (1985) cite agreement in the codes of The Society of Professional Journalists/Sigma Delta Chi, the American Society of Newspaper Editors, and the Associated Press Managing Editors that "The press exists to serve reader interests and has a responsibility to do it fairly and accurately without fear or favor." (p. 464). Journalistic ethics, Brooks et al. report, direct "practitioners to be honest, independent of special interests, dedicated to the best truth obtainable, committed to open government and protective of the readers' interests." (p. 464). Basic to the principles of American print journalism, for example, is that "Journalists must be free of obligation to any interest other than the people's right to know." (Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics, 1992) These ethical principles summarize the ideals of practice found in journalistic objectivity.
Further, ethical behavior is inextricably linked to journalism objectivity in that ethical behavior is attributed to the fact that "socialization of journalists, both through school and professional exposure, indoctrinates professional values which emphasize responsible news gathering, freedom of the press, and accuracy in reporting." (Dennis, 1991; p. 157) Thus, it is not surprising that "Increasingly one hears, in one form or another, that objective journalism is ethical journalism," Merrill (1985, p. 391). In a brief survey of 150 journalists and educators, Merrill found "a strong segment of opinion among journalists and journalism educators supportive of the contention that journalistic objectivity largely resolves the matter of reportorial ethics." (p. 393)

But beyond providing a deeper understanding of just how seriously journalism considers the practice of objectivity, the links with ethical behavior serve to intensify the importance of affording objectivity further attention. In engaging issues of objectivity in American print journalism today it is important to understand that

The press...maintains representational accuracy as its telos, with adjustments in detail but not in principle. We still assume, though without the enthusiasm of earlier decades, that news corresponds to reality and is bound ideally to neutral algorithms. (Christians et al., 1993, p. 118)
The history of this position, and its philosophical context, provide further understanding of the significance objectivity holds for journalism practice.

**History of Objectivity in Philosophical Context**

The quest for objectivity as the heritage of the field is indeed deeply entrenched historically, scholastically, and professionally. The 1800s, with industrialization and changing political structures, saw the rise of what McQuail (1989) calls a "journalistic profession dedicated to the objective reporting of events" (p. 21). Shiller (1981) traces objectivity to the 19th century popular press, while Schudson (1986) and Streckfuss (1990) trace the quest for objectivity to a more modern interpretation found in several essays by Walter Lippmann in the 1920s which link the phenomena with growing concern for professionalism in all aspects of life. In general, it is most likely that both derivations are valid interpretations of the origin of a journalistic quest for objectivity in that the scientism of the 1800s contributed to the 20th Century acceptance of scientific method and an emphasis on the ideals of objectivity as an epistemological foundation for all areas of modern life.
Controlling subjectivity

Early accounts of news gathering and journalistic responsibility indicate that news people have long recognized the subjectivity of the news. Schudson, in his 1978 classic, Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers, discusses this in depth. Subjectivity thrived in the form of yellow journalism and sensationalism, but more mundane incidents of reporting were seen to be rife with subjectivity as well. Before 1850, newspapers contained reports of business transactions and matters of interest to an elite few, such as arrival and departure times of boats. When "penny presses" of the mid-1800s newspapers opened journalism to the events of daily life for the masses, the stories covered lent themselves to subjective interpretation. The new penny presses were criticized as a "press-o-cracy" because of a tendency to play on the emotions of the uneducated masses to the detriment of democracy, and objectivity was proposed as the answer to these perceived problems of subjectivity. Thus, rather than not recognizing subjectivity, it was the promise of control which led to a widespread endorsement of objectivity in journalism that was eventually described in terms of professionalization.
Journalism was not alone in this evolution. The move to professional status in the early part of this century affected all fields as America underwent a fundamental shift from small town to urban center (Wiebe, 1967). Wiebe writes that in journalism, as in other fields, the development of technical schools was encouraged as journalists sought "ways to use what they regarded as a scientific method of reporting." (p. 120) Far from being unique to journalism, the rise of professionalism was played out in other fields as greater occupational skills, largely linked to scientific method, were required to enter medicine, law, education, social work, or architecture, to name a few. The close link with scientific method and a quest for objectivity in journalism is not by accident but rather is historically embedded in the fabric of this nation. Scientific method, in this sense, was seen as a way to ground the society during a period of unsettling change in which control of nature and man was emphasized. Lippmann (1922), for example, called objectivity "the governor" of the subjectivity of human involvement, writing: "As our minds become more deeply aware of their own subjectivism, we find a zest in objective method that is not otherwise there." (Schudson, 1978, p. 151)
The appropriateness of containing subjectivity is related to the needs of a democracy to maintain a free marketplace of ideas. The free marketplace of ideas is highly desirable under a social responsibility theory of the press in which an informed public is empowered to decide what is in its own best interests by rational assessment of the ideas offered (Seibert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). Democracy cannot prosper without a rational public sifting through competing claims, claims that are presented as objectively as possible. The shaping of public opinion is not a function of the press but a function of a rational, informed public that has been presented with objective information. The news report itself is not seen as a persuasive tool in forming public opinion except as it relates to the facts of the matter; partisan favoritism is specifically to be avoided in news stories.

Along these same lines, recognizing that there will be some persuasion that takes place in news stories, John Merrill (1983) argues that journalists may be seen as legitimate persuaders if they follow the guidelines of objectivity. Whatever persuasion to whatever ends is then seen as inherent to the resulting text and is legitimate, or ethical. Conversely, the product produced by journalists who do not follow the
precepts of objectivity, Merrill argues, is to be considered illegitimate, or unethical, persuasion.

Thus, when McQuail (1989) tells us "there seems to be general agreement that [journalistic objectivity] is both necessary and impossible" (p. 108), we can understand the necessity as heir to a tradition that views objectivity as the best way to preserve a legitimate, strong, free press that is capable of serving society. The normative precepts that dictate separation from the values and interests of the stories reported are meant to enhance American print journalism's ability to represent accurately to the public "a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context that gives them meaning" (Siebert et al., 1956, p. 87). Necessity of objectivity, then, has very practical roots. The claim that objectivity is impossible, however, is a much more philosophical consideration shared by other fields of study within the social, behavioral, and natural sciences.

Objectivity as a philosophical concern

Allan Megill (1994) groups philosophical senses of objectivity in Western thought into four categories: absolute objectivity that seeks universalizable criteria with which to judge validity of representations and thus provide a basis for rational judgement; disciplinary objectivity
in which community standards serve as a basis for judgement in fields of study; procedural objectivity that seeks ways to eliminate subjectivity to provide alternatives to personal judgement; and dialectical objectivity that insists on connecting subjectivity with the process of active knowing. Journalism's relationship with objectivity can be placed in this framework.

Journalism displays the absolute sense of objectivity in its ontological view that there are things that "really are" and in its epistemological position that we can indeed know these things. At a very practical level, absolute objectivity becomes a project of deciding valid "criteria for judging claims to have represented things as they really are." (p. 2) Megill writes:

These criteria of validity would then help us to advance toward knowledge-claims sufficiently authoritative that no rational person, after due investigation, would call them into doubt. And the criteria themselves ought to evoke a like universal rational assent. The knowledge produced would at least move us in the direction of the Cartesian (and Baconian) absolute conception of reality. (p. 2-3; italics in the original)

When journalism presents criteria to achieve, or approach, journalistic objectivity, it is invoking a sense of absolute objectivity in that these criteria are "criteria for judging claims to have represented things as they really are" (Megill, p. 3). Regulative ideals that direct
journalists to present the "best obtainable version of the truth" (Brooks et al., 1992, p. 14) are in this sense criteria of validity intended to produce knowledge claims that no rational person would doubt.

But as Megill’s observations on objectivity would lead us to suppose, absolute objectivity is not the sole sense of objectivity tendered in journalism.

Disciplinary objectivity also is invoked in journalism training and practice and speaks to claims to knowledge in particular areas of academic inquiry. "Disciplinary objectivity refers to the claim by practitioners of a particular discipline to have authoritative jurisdiction over its area of competence." (Megill, 1994, p. 5) This form of objectivity "stands as a highly important form of academic authority," and provides an answer to the question "By what authority do you speak?" (p. 7). This sense of objectivity is demonstrated in journalism practice by codes of professional journalism: the authority to speak of the event is authorized by the adherence to professional standards of journalism which entail the criteria of validity as indicated in absolute objectivity.

The regulative ideals of journalism and the directives found in the professional codes can also be considered as part of a third sense of
objectivity, that of procedural objectivity. If the procedure is followed, the best assessment and presentation of truth is assumed to have been reached. Rules in procedural objectivity are intended to narrow subjectivity and act as substitutes for any personal judgement. Any appeal to transcendent value or community standard (as found in absolute or disciplinary objectivity) is absent. Procedural objectivity is linked to other senses of objectivity in that "'correct' procedure is often disciplinary, a matter of conventions arrived at within a particular sphere of research." (p. 11)

Dialectical objectivity is the only sense of objectivity that emphasizes as positive relationship with subjectivity; the other three senses of objectivity are connected by a desire to expel subjectivity. Absolute objectivity appeals to transcendent norms to expel completely subjectivity from the process of knowing. Disciplinary objectivity recognizes that subjectivity cannot be excluded, but works to contain it by appealing to intersubjective agreement. Procedural objectivity expels subjectivity by taking a "hands off" approach to the truth with a set of rules for narrowing subjectivity by providing alternatives to personal judgement. But dialectical objectivity emphasizes the active character of the knowing subject.
A stance of dialectical objectivity grows out of a special sensitivity the researcher may have to the object of investigation. There are, on occasion, instances in which the journalist has become a participant in the events; to recover objectivity on the event, the recognition of the subjective stance might take the form of a first-person account. In this way, the journalist has the opportunity to represent the event to the audience with a deep subjectivity that is clearly labeled as such. Such stories are the result of happenstance; to plan having one’s apartment burn down, for example, would be out of the question. Except in unusual and unplanned situations, journalism practice does not view active participation as a route to objectivity. Neither does journalism operationalize dialectical objectivity to account for involvement that a reporter might have with the events as a reporter; to do so would be in conflict with procedural and disciplinary objectivity designed to exclude subjectivity.

Megill’s discussion of objectivity illuminates McQuail’s observation that journalism sees objectivity as both desirable and impossible. Journalism’s enduring quest for the unachievable represents the belief that although absolute objectivity is unattainable, an approximation of it is necessary and desirable in order to preserve
representational accuracy. The claim to disciplinary objectivity asserts journalism's authority to provide the representations, and procedural objectivity, with its emphasis on regulative ideals, provides the necessary direction to practitioners to achieve as accurate a representation as possible. Dialectical objectivity, with its positive relationship to subjectivity, and which emphasizes an active knower, "doing" rather than "viewing," does not appear to be operationalized within journalism education or practice.

A Rhetorical Perspective

I have spent a great deal of time here establishing the role of objectivity in journalism. It is important to any judgement that the standards for that judgement be articulated clearly and completely as justifiable. By explicating the tenets of objectivity as operationalized within journalism practice, I may conclude that the standards for a successful article within American print journalism may be articulated as:

1. is based on facts
2. displays a concern for balance and fairness
3. presents events with a high degree of accuracy
4. avoids partisan favoritism and persuasive appeal
(5) demands adequate support of, and contextual detail for, claims.

Clearly, journalism shares with its critics the desire to avoid violation of these standards.

Yet critical challenges which have long indicted the serviceability of objectivity have had little practical bearing in journalism. As Christians et al. (1993) note:

[O]bjectivity has become increasingly controversial as the working press’s professional standard, although it will remain entrenched in our ordinary practices of news production and dissemination until a convincing alternative mission for the press is formulated. (p. 118)

With objectivity seen as providing neutrality, balance, fairness, accuracy, and openness—all of which are values of mythic proportion in American society—it is no wonder that a convincing alternative mission for the press remains unformulated.

With that in mind, this project is not a call to abandon the traditional goals of objectivity, but rather it is a call for establishing an interdisciplinary dialogue that will direct attention to the role of rhetoric in producing knowledge and hiding persuasive appeals. The evolution of journalism practice in the 1950s to embrace a more literary style of writing was meant to provide a more sufficient base of decision-making
information for the public. Yet a parallel development of a literary style to assess the implications of this news coverage failed to develop.

I propose to illuminate the issues the quest for objectivity has brought to journalism by assessing practical application of the rhetorical elements that have been used to operationalize objectivity. The precedent to illuminate the practical application of objectivity as a regulative ideal from a rhetorical perspective is found in parallels to other fields of study through the Project on Rhetoric of Inquiry. Given that journalism’s involvement with objectivity springs from a very similar philosophical base, and given that parallels have been drawn regarding this similarity, employing a similar perspective may provide a useful path to assess objectivity’s service to the goals of American print journalism.
Endnotes to Chapter II

1. The text, in its fourth edition from St. Martin's Press, enjoys a substantial circulation. It is used at The Ohio State University in Journalism 201: Basic Reporting and News Writing, a required course for all journalism majors; annual enrollment is approximately 80 students. Approximately 70 institutions nationwide—including Purdue, Georgetown, Iowa, Cornell, University of New Hampshire, University of Georgia, several Cal State branches, New York University, Villanova, and Temple—ordered the text for the 1993-1994 school year, according to Elizabeth Toomey, associate editor, St. Martin's Press, journalism and mass media division (personal conversation with the author, February 22, 1994).

2. Textbooks by Hohenberg (1983), Brooks et al. (1985), Metz (1985), Mencher (1987), and Garrison (1990) all discuss similar story structures that emphasize a linear hierarchy of material observations based on variations of the “who, what, where, when, and why” structure.

3. Hohenberg (1983) offers an analysis of a well-written, objective news story. The “feature lead” is followed by “color,” a journalism term for interesting peripheral information. Further documentation for the lead is supplied by specific details. The report refers to timely information, explains its importance, and further documents the lead. Quotes are used judiciously, and descriptive comment adds further color. Details on the background of the events are included, and a summary is given. The writer, he notes, was soon promoted from the Oak Ridger, in Tennessee, to the Philadelphia Inquirer.

4. "Attribution" is used throughout this document in referring to the identification of sources in journalism stories. While a large, separate literature on attribution theory exists within communication study, that database addresses how an auditor assigns motive or reason to the actions of another. The focus
here is on the use of the term within journalism practice where it serves a pragmatic function of identification. Eventually, the two uses of the term do intersect, especially when one considers how it is that auditors might use journalistic attribution to evaluate the statements.

5. The Kiplinger Program, which leads to a Master's degree in journalism at Ohio State, for example, focuses on interpretive reporting and is reserved for writers who have at least three years field experience.

6. New Journalism as a style is not without its critics. Hohenberg (1983), for example, indicts new journalism for destroying the credibility of the press by re-creating events, reading minds, neglecting to identify sources, using composite characters, and other techniques "that have no factual basis." (p. 60)

7. While academic journalism literature does not address what philosophers would call a "correspondence theory of the truth," directions to journalists in achieving objectivity through accuracy bear a striking similarity to its concerns. Under a correspondence theory of truth, for example, a statement would be true only if it corresponds to what actually exists. Similarly, in journalism, verification and confirmation of statements is used to assess correspondence to the truth. The problems posed for journalism in this approach arise, for example, when a quote is true—in that someone actually said it—but what the quote represents is false.

8. Critical theory has long addressed questions of how journalism does or does not achieve its goals. The focus, however, is systemic and largely from a concern with the role of social institutions in controlling individual actions. I find this view helpful in some ways, and limiting in many other ways. A major limit to the helpfulness such critiques may offer is that journalism literature indicates a silent or hostile reception to most of the work. Additionally, the self-perceptions of journalists, as Weaver & Wilhoit (1986) note, would indicate that systemic constraints are recognized by individuals; that the presence of systemic constraints dictates absence of control over text remains at issue.
CHAPTER III

Rhetoric of Inquiry as a Model for Rhetoric of Journalism

The scientific method of reporting that so strongly influenced the development of American print journalism, and its relationship to objectivity today, is a legacy that has close parallels in other areas of study. As Wiebe (1967) indicates, scientific methods in a number of different fields provided comforting control during a period of rapid change in the early part of the 20th century. The move to objective journalism, with its emphasis on controlling subjectivity, was quite similar. As with the scientific method of investigation, journalism education and practice focused on procedures to follow in order to provide accurate, rational, professional knowledge to the audience. Providing empirically verifiable statements in a fair and balanced manner summarizes a journalist's responsibility to the profession and to the audience.

Yet troublesome questions remain, especially when fulfilling this responsibility is equated by many to be fulfilling the ethical responsibilities of journalism as well. Pulitzer prize-winning reporter Georgie Anne Geyer (1984) quite rightly points out that questions of
journalism ethics have greater public importance today than the classical question of whether or not to accept the bottle of whiskey at Christmas. She, along with many practicing journalists and journalism educators, advocates attention to explicit study of practical case histories and more discussion about the consequences of journalism's daily activities. She describes social changes that have fashioned journalists as "arbiters of truth" (p. 72) which resulted in wider questions of ethical behavior in relationship to the goals of journalism. She suggests that these question be addressed by widening the understanding a journalist has of other kinds of knowledge. Geyer intuitively calls for highlighting some very rhetorical aspects of knowledge production when she suggests that journalism schools and newsrooms teach courses in "psycho-political knowledge" (p. 78) such as the uses of imagery, persuasion, and political movements. Rhetorical aspects of knowledge production currently are being explored under the rubric of rhetoric of inquiry.

In this chapter, I will discuss an alternative perspective through which to approach the issues surrounding objectivity in the hopes of clarifying objectivity's service to the goals of American print journalism especially as the goals relate to impartiality, avoiding partisan promotion
In straight news stories, and, ultimately, to ethics. In the first section, I discuss the philosophical basis and interdisciplinary approach of rhetoric of inquiry as an academic project, especially insofar as it engages the rhetorical implications of objective postures within other social and natural sciences by opening interdisciplinary dialogues. Common theoretical beliefs found within the project are discussed, and particular projects are looked at for suggestions in developing a rhetorical approach to journalism. In the final section, I develop these discussions for application to journalism, and propose a model for a rhetoric of inquiry for journalism.

**Rhetoric of Inquiry**

**Philosophical basis**

Rhetoric of inquiry, as a term, can be defined loosely as an interdependent convergence of postmodern epistememes through a rhetorical focus. As an academic field, it is developed sufficiently to support its own scholarly project, a project that brings together scholars with a common interest in understanding the "human controls over perceiving, knowing and assessing the world formally." (Gronbeck, 1987; p. 569). The Project on Rhetoric of Inquiry, housed at the University of Iowa, is "part of the current interest in the more subjective,
critical, humanistic aspects of knowledge-building and knowledge-testing" (Gronbeck, 1987; p. 569). The literature currently being developed in the area of rhetoric of inquiry highlights systems of beliefs and practices that have a characteristic structure and form within particular disciplines. The work is published in various venues, such as history, law, economics, psychology, criminology, biology, political science, and science. The common element shared by the project authors is a concern with how particular systems of beliefs and practices serve as argumentation for specialized fields. Rhetoric of inquiry seeks to expand understanding of knowledge by looking beyond the privileged, scientific mode of modern epistemology:

Rhetoric of inquiry insists on connecting the conduct of sciences not only to their logics and methods but also to their aesthetics, economics, histories, and sociologies. Remembering that even academic reason is practical reason, it situates research in uncertain but actual communities of human activity. (Nelson & Megill, 1986, p. 25)

In connecting sciences to their logics, and emphasizing the inseparability of rhetoric and reason, questions of social constructionism become closely aligned with rhetoric of inquiry (Simons, 1990). Social constructionism maintains that rather than reality existing independently of language, language is constitutive of
reality in a sociohistorical sense. As Simons explains, rhetorical analysis in large part is concerned with how constructions of this reality become persuasive. Social constructionism highlights the inseparable nature of rhetoric and reason, recognizing that there is relationship of knowledge to persuasion in proof, argument, style, ethos, and a host of other rhetorical considerations.

Yet many choose to cast social constructionism not in relational terms but as a choice between realism and relativism (see, for example, Bokeno, 1987, or Hikins & Zagacki, 1988). Positioning the project as a debate between realism and relativism tends to obscure its potential contributions to understanding how foundational values and presumptions are persuasive. This is apparent especially in the area of rhetoric of science research which offers an in-depth commentary on the relationship of rhetoric to scientific knowledge.

Realism is a perspective which assumes, briefly, that: (1) things exist to be discovered; (2) that the structure of reality is singular; and (3) that knowing about these things is "knowing the way things really are" (Melia, 1984, p. 308). Language, in this sense, becomes a mirror of reality, or a window to this real world; reality and the language used to describe it remain quite separate.
For example, Hikins & Zagacki (1988) argue that the basic presumption of a rhetoric of inquiry rests on linking rhetoric with philosophical inquiry to find foundational truth and objective knowledge in the sciences and the arts. Scholars have debated epistemological significance and rhetoric in many forums and exchanges (see, for example, Scott [1990], Vatz [1973], Bitzer [1968, 1980] and Brummett [1990]), and have provided the basis for divergent arguments on the ultimate wisdom or benefit of a program of rhetoric of inquiry.

The emphasis on reality versus social constructionism is a confusion that sidetracked promising avenues of scholarship for rhetorical analysis. According to Melia (1984), much of this debate between paradigms misses the "marching orders for rhetoric" (p. 303) in Thomas Kuhn's (1962) The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Melia sees Kuhn's concern with techniques of persuasion, argument and counterargument in circumstance in which certainty is unachievable as the province of rhetoric, and as providing a call to scholars to engage the rhetorical aspects of science. Despite the early, promising work of Paul Campbell (1975) who argued that "the scientific endeavor is rhetorical in that it explicitly urges its practitioners to adopt certain behaviors and attitudes" (p. 393), much of the academic debate on
rhetoric of inquiry and the philosophy of science concentrated on issues of relativism versus realism, a separate debate Melia argues would be more accurately characterized as a philosophy of science rather than as a rhetoric of science.

Rhetorical studies is not the only realm to misread Kuhn's observations. Concern with realism versus social constructionism can be found in similar discussions in other professions. The scientific community, for example, has responded coldly to the writings of Gross (1990) on the rhetoric of science (see, for example, reviews in *Isis*, Vol. 78), and economists for the most part do not clasp McCloskey to their collective breast when he argues that widely held propositions within economics are warranted by something other than objective science (Simons, 1985; McCloskey, 1989, Rosenberg, 1988).

Often objections are expressed as a choice between order and chaos. Understandably, a choice between objectivism and a promise of certainty in the natural world order may be preferable over a free-for-all world of relativism where everyone chooses her own millimeter length. The objection, however, can be traced to a (mis)understanding of the project as a choice between competing paradigms.
The competing paradigm problem is so pervasive that, even within the project, the influence of rhetoric on knowledge production is perceived as running the gamut from supporting role to full structure. Some, like Lyne (1990), see rhetoric as a supplement to empirical observation; others, like Gross (1990), argue that even scientific realism can be rhetorically defined, and as such science is a rhetorical construct like any other constitutes the totality of the experience; there is nothing left when the rhetoric is removed. Bokeno (1987) summarizes this latter view of a rhetorical understanding of science:

Such analyses see scientific knowledge of natural or physical reality, which positivism understood and advocated as genuine, objective and as the ultimate standard for all knowledge, as contingent and negotiable. From this perspective, the truth of scientific theories lies not in their perceived correspondence with the antecedently given facts, but in the context of consensually validated meanings which inspire and influence scientific investigation. What counts as "true" or as "knowledge" is the result of context-dependent human agreement or the consensus of the scientific community. (p. 290)

This "true for now" concern is summarized neatly in the title "Rhetoric versus reality" found in a 1991 review of Gross' 1990 book, The Rhetoric of Science, in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (p. 34-35). That science is real there can be no doubt, and thus rhetoric is unreal.
The roots of this dilemma--and indeed the roots of the rhetoric of inquiry movement in general--are firmly planted in the ongoing tensions left to us from the 17th Century Enlightenment dream for a single, certain, natural, rational order that could be authoritative for everyone, and the resulting dualism most commonly discussed as the subject/object split.

Nelson & Megill (1986) offer a thoughtful discussion of the implications the subject/object split holds for modern epistemology and rhetoric of inquiry. Subjects, they explain, are free and active, susceptible to persuasion, and holders of subjective opinion. Objects, on the other hand, as part of the natural world, have a passive and predetermined existence; they partake of a certainty, or conviction, that is knowledge. It is in the natural world that objective truth is to be found.

The subject/object split places subjects into a moral world and objects into a natural world, and can be seen as a series of oppositional ideas: moral/natural; free and active/passive and predetermined; persuasion-driven/conviction holders. But in the greater scheme of tensions, the most well-known opposition is that of opinion as a perverse imposter of Truth. In the objective world, ironclad rules of
inference lead to unassailable conclusions that are imposed--mostly without adequate argument or contextual detail--by authority.

The implications, Nelson & Megill (1986) point out, are that "the rhetorical dimensions of language and argument--which focus on the actual criteria and dynamics of persuasion--come to be barred from processes of knowing proper." (p. 21) The result is what McCloskey (1985) sees as a curious paradox:

Something is awry with an appeal for an open intellectual society, an appeal defending itself on liberal grounds, that begins by demarcating certain means of reasoning as forbidden and certain fields of study as meaningless. (p. 23)

The Demarcation Problem "(What is Science? How is it to be distinguished from nonscience?)," as McCloskey puts it, are ways of stopping conversation by limiting engagement to those on one side of the demarcation line. (1985, p. 26) He argues that it is economists strong belief that the "only real knowledge is...scientific knowledge, that is, knowledge tested by certain kinds of rigorous skepticism" (p. 5) that prevents them from seeing that they, too, argue and persuade. He links the belief in science to the tenets of modernism, which themselves are rooted in the subject/object split describe by Nelson & Megill. McCloskey writes:
Philosophically speaking, modernism is the program of Descartes, regnant in philosophy since the seventeenth century, to build knowledge on a foundation of radical doubt. Modernism views science as axiomatic and mathematical and takes the realm of science to be separate from the realm of form, value, beauty, goodness, and all unmeasurable quantity. (p. 5-6)

Gross (1990) further focuses the demarcation problem by noting that the "general freedom of scientific prose from emotional appeal must be understood not as neutrality but as a deliberate abstinence: the assertion of a value" (p. 15).

**Interdisciplinary dialogue**

By whatever name the heritage of Descartes is described—modernism, logical positivism, the Received View—it is a philosophy all but obsolete among applied and practical philosophers (see, for example, the writings of Richard Rorty, Stephen Toulmin, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Paul Feyerabend among others). The myth of modernism as "a myth in which, apparently, reason has subjugated the passions" (Gross, 1990, p. 15), is a well-recognized illusion. Why, then, despite explanations of modernism from philosophers and overall increased understanding of its limitations, can McCloskey detail an unaffected sacred belief in science and objectivity that thrives among practicing economists? Why has Gross (1988, 1990) written pages on
the same topic for geneticists and biologists? More specifically, why can the precepts of objectivity for American print journalism be shown to be alive and well in professional training and practice? The problem, McCloskey suggests, is that there is a lack of interdisciplinary dialogue.

Rhetoric of inquiry is a project designed to increase this interdisciplinary dialogue. Carrying the news to other disciplines, however, as has been done by Chaim Perelman, Wayne Booth, Donald McCloskey, Alan Gross, and others, remains a lively conversation, one that is not without its critics. The similarities and spirit in the debates are to be found in the link between epistemology and methodology. The basic beliefs of a field of study are solidified by its methodology; the friction arises when the methodology steps outside the canons and the work is belittled with the epithet "It's not serious work" (McCloskey, 1989, p. 4).

Often, objections arise when the work of rhetoric of inquiry is seen as threatening a particular field. Rosenberg (1988a), for example, writes of the harm in Donald McCloskey's arguments:

McCloskey's view is especially important, because, shorn of its excess philosophical baggage, it is a Sophistic invitation to complacency about economics and an attempted seduction of the discipline into irrelevancy. (p. 130)
Rosenberg (1988b) interprets this perspective derisively as a "true for now" philosophy cut free of any moorings of reality. It need not be.

The false dilemma presented by a choice between a natural world realism and socially constructed perceptions of that world fails to engage the contributions that rhetoric of inquiry could make. That science deals with a common physical world is not at issue. Maki (1988) notes this important difference in reviewing McCloskey's work, concluding that "acceptance of realism does not depend on the rejection of any major insights of the rhetorical approach to studying economics, and vice versa." (p. 108) He writes:

[...]heoretical realism is compatible with the rhetorical approach, i.e., the admission that economics is rhetoric is not yet a denial that economists are capable of expressing true and false statements about the objectively existing real world and that they should pursue true statements....There are arguments against realism to be taken seriously, but the idea of the rhetorical character of communicative practices in economics is not inherent in any one among them. (p. 108)

The questions raised by conflicting world views can be addressed by asking to what degree do reality claims depend on rhetorical technique for their credibility. In this way, what is sought in investigating the relationship between rhetoric and reasoning is not subjective relativism but assurance of adequate argument and
contextual detail for all knowledge testing and knowledge production. In this way, what is sought is not so much foundational or transcendental knowledge but rather a more sophisticated understanding of how a field reaches epistemological consensus. This view provides some very practical advantages.

First, the realism/relativism debate can be bracketed with a recognition that reality certainly exists, although it may not be in the singular, and there are different ways of knowing about it. Second, by concentrating on contextual detail for knowledge testing and knowledge production, the perceptions created by rhetoric are revealed as persuasion that may otherwise go unnoticed. And, finally, rationality is not abandoned but is linked to the rhetoric from which it springs.

In a modern world where "passionate commitment has lost its connection with good reasons" (Booth, 1974, xi), rhetoric of inquiry works not to ridicule or belittle the passion, but to reestablish the connection to rationality.

Still, we remain heirs to a culture so seeped in modern skepticism and a yearning for philosophical craving for certainty that any investigation of the rhetorical dimensions of knowledge seem risky (Nelson & Megill, 1986, p. 24). At the same time, relativism, skepticism
and the philosophical craving for certainty that direct many scholars to wholesale rejection of the project on rhetoric of inquiry, may also be viewed as convincing arguments for this approach. Yet, Richard Rorty, Alasdair MacIntyre and other modern philosophers argue that skepticism itself is a result of modern epistemology (Nelson & Megill, 1986, p. 25 and p. 28). If we did not crave absolute certainty, would we be so uncertain, so skeptical? In this view, the traditional methods of knowledge testing and knowledge production with their emphasis on doubt and certainty are the ones that have resulted in skepticism and relativism.

A rhetorical perspective, as is advanced by the Project on Rhetoric of Inquiry, can be embraced not to disengage from reality, but rather to expand understanding of knowledge production by looking at knowledge in relationship to communal norms. This widened view of argument challenges established methods of reaching consensus in particular fields, methods that themselves had been put in place to assure adequate standards of judgment for knowledge. A focus on the relationship between rhetoric and reasoning is another way of assuring adequate reasoning about, and contextual detail for, all knowledge claims. Rhetoric of inquiry authors strive to reveal persuasion that
occurs in such a natural manner as to be all but invisible through its ability to pass as Truth. This stance neither abandons nor endorses a real world in favor of relativism; it does, however, emphasize the need to recognize the human element of communication in the creation of socio-historical understanding.

In sum, the philosophical bases for rhetoric of inquiry can be found in the questions that surround modernism, especially in the conversation which has developed regarding objective, scientific knowledge claims. From this base, the project has developed interdisciplinary dialogues focused on the role rhetoric plays in the production and dissemination of knowledge and reaching beyond traditional demarcation lines by reintroducing rhetorical dimensions of knowledge production into fields of study largely driven by positivism.

Theoretical framework

As might be expected in a project that develops interdisciplinary projects, there are several rhetoric of inquiries (Simons, 1990). Widely viewed, rhetoric is concerned with persuasion; some rhetoric of inquiry projects display this central concern by focusing on invention, or style, or adapting to audiences. Other theoretical conceptions, Simons writes, concern form, pattern, or genres; rhetoric of inquiry projects
taking this tact might investigate canons of particular fields, focusing on how discourse strategies are used to organize and perpetuate or challenge beliefs in those spheres. Other theoretical bases in rhetoric of inquiry support the idea that knowledge of the principles of rhetoric can be used to improve the quality of judgments. This is in concert with Booth's view of rhetoric as the "art of discovering warrantable beliefs and improving those beliefs in shared discourse" (1974; p. xiii), but guides our interests further into understanding forms of argument that affect discovery and improvement. The humanistic bias in rhetorical study is expressed in rhetoric of inquiry theories that focus on how language is used—as well as how it ought to be used—in specific arenas of human activity in which there is no definitive proof, but rather an overriding concern for discovering/developing better and worse reasons and arguments for personal and social action.

This wide theoretical view raises definitional questions for rhetoric of inquiry studies: what counts as a rhetoric of inquiry? Affiliations of spirit can be attributed to authors who are concerned with correlating questions stemming from the rhetorical tradition with the practices of inquiry in particular fields. Moving to center from the boundaries of other fields, rhetoric of inquiry projects make concerns of language use
the nucleus of study in different contextual settings. Concern with language use directs attention to developing an increased understanding of rhetoric's reconstructive capability. Reconstruction, in this use, indicates a perspective on rhetoric that highlights how meaning is established through rhetorical practices by questioning the interrelationships among text, meaning, historical context and social patterns.

Overall, then, the theoretical base for rhetoric of inquiry projects is guided by a concern with what a rhetorical perspective on the inquiry practices of distinct disciplines can tell us about that discipline as well as our own field of rhetoric. In this way, rhetoric of inquiry provides a theoretical basis to shape rhetorical study into an emancipatory, dialogic process that crosses disciplinary borders. Without forsaking criteria for judgements, rhetoric of inquiry moves beyond foundational objectivism and radical relativism by recognizing the role of rhetorical practice in determining what counts as reasonable.

Given these theoretical foundations, projects undertaken in rhetoric of inquiry tend to look at a variety of rhetorical practices. They tend to emphasize the significance of language and style, especially as it relates to persuasion, and while studies display a high regard for
context of argument, they do so with a clear understanding of how rhetoric crosses disciplinary lines. Projects develop a better understanding of persuasion within particular fields, and provide practical guidelines for better research (Nelson, 1990). Thus, specific rhetoric of inquiry projects engage diverse subjects through diverse methods. For example, concern for rhetorical invention might direct attention in projects toward understanding the relationship between persuasion and how the argument is expressed; it might, as a variation, direct attention to how narrative form provides persuasive appeal. Other projects might be concerned with ethos or credibility, or how authoritative discourse provides the basis for sound judgments, or serves as a warrant for knowledge.

Central to the beliefs held in rhetoric of inquiry is an understanding that persuasive discourse can be naturalized within discourse communities to the point where it is presented as objective, value-neutral information. When this happens, rhetoric of inquiry authors believe that adequate knowledge testing is not taking place. Rhetoric of inquiry project authors work to reveal the inherently rhetorical nature of discourse that is found in the extrafactual, extralogical factors of purportedly nonpersuasive discourse (Simons,
Rhetoric of inquiry encourages this approach to knowledge testing and knowledge production because it emphasizes the importance of persuasion where conclusions must often be reached from incomplete and uncertain evidence. The project turns toward details of argumentation in substantive fields of research [and] regards law, politics, and the like, less as inspirations for an abstract model of all argumentation than as suggestive starting points for contextual and comparative studies of inquiry within a wide variety of academic and other practices. (Nelson & Megill, 1986, p. 31)

This close alignment with argument fastens rhetoric of inquiry studies to a definitional framework that emphasizes rhetoric's persuasive capabilities and thus its inherent connection to reasoning. Connecting rhetoric and reasoning compels people, and journalists, to support their claims. The importance comes from understanding that "If people are not made out to justify their assertions and do not believe them, the conversation will, of course, be a poor one." (p. 5)

It is in this driving spirit to "make knowledge serve wisdom" (Lyne, 1985a, p. 71) that rhetoric of inquiry studies address how reasoning methods are influenced by presuppositions. The elegance of this rhetorical approach lies in "that which distinguishes our [rhetorical]
tradition from others: a commitment to understanding the dynamics of
words and other symbols in practical usage." (Lyne, 1985a, p. 73)

Lyne states the benefit of a rhetoric of inquiry approach thus:

The various research specialties of the modern day "knowledge
industry" tend to shield themselves from public judgment by their
self-isolating vocabularies and by the territorial claims of
expertise. If rhetoricians can begin to get a sense of rhetorical
practices of these specialties, however, it might be possible to
make the discourses of academic knowledge better mesh with
the discourses of public life. (p. 71-72)

In order to explicate "rhetorical practices" in the sense of how
arguments develop in purportedly objective texts, rhetoric of inquiry
directs us to a better understanding of persuasive appeals, what they
are and how they work.

As an interdependent convergence of postmodern epistemes
(Nelson, 1987), rhetoric of inquiry includes projects in a variety of areas
by a variety of rhetorics. John Nelson (1987), for example, identifies
seven different postmodern areas--poetics, tropics, topics, dialectics,
hermeneutics, ethics, and politics--arguing that the first five privilege the
last two. Developing rhetoric of inquiry as an interdisciplinary academic
area, Nelson argues, would infuse specific areas of inquiry with a
deeper concern for ethics and politics, improving societal connections
that do exist, and providing the impetus to ethicize and politicize other
areas. Nelson (1990) theorizes that a rhetoric of inquiry approach will direct disciplines to take seriously the challenge of finding alternatives to transcendental criteria on which to ground their judgments and decisions.

Thus, projects that are undertaken in rhetoric of inquiry focus on the communicative practices of different disciplines, exploring canonical logics of invention, arrangement, or style. They look at field-specific argument structure, and how structure might relate to socializing functions. The projects concentrate on discourse configuration as it relates to critical practice and as it relates to empowerment (Lyne, 1985a). With the guiding belief that rhetoric serves a constitutive function in discourse communities, rhetoric of inquiry is a practical approach to questions of epistemology in a variety of fields.

Developing a Rhetoric of Inquiry for Journalism

In consideration of the strong links to positivism found in journalism study and practice, specific projects in rhetoric of inquiry should provide insight and direction for the development of a rhetorical approach to journalism. A review of the literature reveals many representative projects that suggest--either through topic or approach--
potential ways to develop a rhetoric of inquiry for other disciplines. Of interest in this section is how to apply rhetoric of inquiry theories and principles to the practice of journalism.

**Developing basic characteristics**

Michael Leff (1987), in reviewing the conflicting—even hostile—history of rhetoric and philosophy, sees rhetoric of inquiry as one way to bridge objectivism and subjectivism through an understanding of the role of discourse in the social construction of all fields of human endeavor. Leff argues that rhetoric should not be located in just one place, but in all places as part of every discipline. Taking this wide, interdisciplinary view, Leff advises that we look for commonalities in specific areas:

The fact that rhetoric is present in all discourse does not mean that all discourse is essentially the same, or that all discourse uses the same kind of rhetoric...In the gap between an ideally rational language and ordinary talk, we can recognize various types of discourse that cluster together by virtue of common themes, strategies, and styles. No type is absolutely different from any other type, but the differences are sufficient to mark out basic genres. (p. 31)

The theory of rhetoric of inquiry offered by Leff suggests that, as an academic discipline and as a professional community, journalism supports specific rhetorical practices that would mark it out as a genre
of rhetoric of inquiry. One of the first steps in developing a rhetoric of inquiry for journalism would be to identify and develop basic characteristics of journalism practice. *Leff's theory indicates that in developing a rhetoric of journalism, very specific themes, strategies and styles of rhetoric found in journalism might be related to general rhetorical theories and practices.*

Allan Gross (1987, 1988, 1990) considers the rhetoric of science as a discipline, and holds that "scientific texts respond well to an analysis of their style, arrangement and invention." (1990, p. 2) The appeal of scientific texts, Gross argues, "is not exclusively rational; rather their total effect also depends on factors not usually connected with the domain of pure intellection..." (1988, p. 2) Gross shows how rhetorical techniques such as the structure of an argument, as well as stylistic considerations such as analogy, are used to develop a denotative structure that allows connotative meaning to take on added power through contrast. *Gross' work proposes a rhetoric of journalism concerned with understanding the interrelationship of basic characteristics of journalism.*
Examining the practical role of basic characteristics

Rhetoric of inquiry projects demonstrate the rhetorical nature of our modern foundations of knowledge, and they explore "how ignoring this has led social scientists, especially, to rely on such poor practices of inquiry as the uncritical use of mathematics and statistics to slip past troubles" (Nelson, 1987, p. 410). Nelson (1983) argues that the rational-choice model of political science turned what began as a desirable trope (in this case a theory) into a detrimental substitute for argument when it evolved into an unreflective mathematical process for formal analysis. Rhetoric of inquiry, in this sense, is a way to distinguishing different tropes--or rhetorical elements--used in addressing different issues and domains of argument. The importance of this approach, Nelson (1983) writes, is that such discipline-specific investigations can suggest very directly how academic--and other--arguments often go wrong. Nelson's insights suggest a rhetoric of journalism that would address the practical role of established rhetorical elements within journalism.

In a similar vein, Prelli (1989) concentrates on invention logic from a classical rhetorical perspective, developing a topoi of evidence, interpretation, evaluation and methodology for scientific argument. He
directs attention to how scientific discourse relies on these components of intersubjective reasoning for its compelling effect, and finds that the primacy of the experimental mode in science limits the types of questions addressed while it relegates studies that do not fit these modes to the category of "unreasonable." Prelli argues that parapsychology and primate language-acquisition researchers have met with difficulty in presenting their studies to the scientific community not because of the significance of the work but because the work lies outside accepted topics. As an introductory study to the ideas of rhetoric of science, Prelli's rhetorical perspective reveals the presence of foundational values and presumptions within specific academic communities. Prelli's work suggests that a rhetoric of journalism might search for and address how similar foundational values in journalism relate to what counts as evidence, and how such values relate to interpretation and evaluation of evidence.

Examining rhetoric as socializing discourse

Examining rhetoric as socializing discourse addresses the constitutive role of rhetoric--that is, how rhetoric constitutes and shapes the environment. These studies are concerned especially with rhetoric that responds to social exigence. In these projects, there is a strong,
literary concern with the development of social narrative through metaphor, voice, and other stylistic language. Narrative theory offers a rich, separate literature base for rhetoric of inquiry authors interested in investigating stories as "linguistic forms through which we think, argue, persuade, display convictions, and establish our identity" (Christians et al., 1993, p. 114). The challenges narrative theory provides to objectivity arise as a condition of social constructionism; as Mumby (1993) points out, "We are never neutral, dispassionate observers of behavior but are always heavily implicated in the construction of the narratives that provide insight to the social reality that we inhabit." (p. 4)

**Narrative and social response.** Particularly relevant to issues of journalism objectivity is Farrell’s & Goodnight’s (1981) evaluation of the rhetoric of the Three Mile Island nuclear crisis. Farrell & Goodnight argue that beyond the actual problem at hand—the failure of the cooling pumps and the exposure of part of the reactor core—the crisis was socially constituted by the rhetoric. They found that reliance on what they term "technical reasoning" of science rhetoric constrained social response, and relegated the public to a passive role. In addition, quotes offered by the power plant company that described the accident as an "incident," and metaphors that equated levels of radiation with
golf in the sunshine and which described the release of radioactive gas in the river to "bubbles in soda pop" served a socializing function of minimizing many troubling aspects of the event.

Further constituting the crisis was rhetoric in journalism coverage which served to portray the townspeople as "archetypal consumer-victim of technological decision-making" (p. 285), especially apparent because all interviews focused on negative action in which personal adjustments to the event involve not doing something. The resulting narrative within the news coverage, Farrell & Goodnight state, was constituted by "associations and oppositions that were surely beyond all conscious intent" (p. 286). In seeking authoritative knowledge, the rhetorical position of "expert" called for in the situation was established not by knowledge or understanding—which because of the crisis was limited—but by affiliation with the power company or government. The importance for the public, for science, and for rhetorical study is, Farrell & Goodnight argue, the recognition of how unreflective rhetorical practice reduced to ritual—in this case the rhetorical response of relying on expert voices—limits reasoning.
Farrell & Goodnight suggest a rhetoric of journalism that considers the development of social narratives in relationship to rhetorical practices.

Narrative and arrangement. The general rhetoric of inquiry interest in studying how arrangement influences narrative understanding is extended by Susan Wells' (1990) close look at persuasive effect of arrangement in developing narrative figures in a government report. Wells examines the rhetoric offered by a special commission in Philadelphia examining the decision to storm the house of a black radical organization, a raid that killed eleven people. She positions her analysis not as rectifying truth statements but as striving to understand the text; she looks to narrative theory to provide a way to understand how a particular story establishes connections in order to ask if the connections are the right ones.

Wells asks of her text, "given all the possible arrangements and presentations of these events, what is gained and what is lost by the arrangement that this text undertakes?" (p. 228) Her investigation of the rhetoric focuses on how the text of the report named the characters and connected the episodes; her analysis reveals a narrative pattern of subordination that implicitly supports a persuasive intent to portray the
actions of the government in a favorable light. The mayor, in this case, has his authority subordinated to "neighborhood pressure," and thus, despite his actions in initiating the attack on the house, the mayor's role is disassociated from the tragedy.

Wells' insights suggest a rhetoric of journalism concerned with the relationship of arrangement to social understanding.

Narrative and language. Phil Wander (1976) argues that technical language can be used to confuse issues, obscure values and priorities, and hide relevant social and economic facts. He writes:

Reliance on technical language in public debate is rhetorically significant, for in a democracy, whatever its practical imperfections, the people have a right, on the important public issues, to know the relevant social and economic facts as well as the policy conclusions to be drawn from them. (Wander, 1976, p. 227)

Speaking in terms that laymen can understand has been largely abandoned by scientists in favor of addressing other scientists. Wander focuses much of his work on the rise of expert and the concurrent decline and silencing of the non-expert citizen. Additionally, Wander argues that systematic over-use of certain conventions in science limits scientific study. The protocol of technical language, in this case, determines who will understand which aspects of project. Limiting
understanding of scientific matters is increasingly important for public
decision-making. *Wander's study suggests a rhetoric of journalism that
includes an investigation of how journalism practice responds to
instances of technical language use in society.*

Concern with language use is a theme developed by Nelson
(1992) in her analysis of gender and metaphor in economics. Nelson
argues that the dualistic, hierarchial metaphors for gender--such as
penetrate, dominate, and control--define economics and limit the ways
economics can be understood as a field of study. Tracing the definition
of economics to modern science, she effectively argues that a new
metaphor for the discipline emphasizing balance of humanity might
improve the ability of economics to assess negative and positive
consequence.

Similarly, Gross (1987) argues that words that convey
connotative meaning are especially persuasive in an otherwise
denotative environment of scientific language. Small differences in an
otherwise static use of language gain additional force by the relative
tension such difference expresses--in the reserved environment of
scientific texts, words such as "reliable," "reasonable," "important," or
"discovery" are words that Gross (1987) cites as especially persuasive
Nelson's and Gross' insights suggest a rhetoric of journalism attentive to the argumentative capacity of tropes and figures.

Narrative and voice. Lessl (1989) looks at the rhetoric of Carl Sagan as a type of religious rhetoric in a project that develops voice as a text-based expression of a particular point of view that relies on deeply embedded values within a particular culture for its meaning (Booth, 1988). Aligning science with religion, and casting Sagan as a priestly voice of the space program, Lessl argues that Sagan achieves identification with the audience by conceptually rendering the space program as an extension of earthly human experience. Lessl addresses the persuasive appeal of the classical trope of synecdoche—a figure of speech in which the part stands in for the whole—and links its use to identification strategies. The consubstantiality with science that is achieved through synecdoche in the rhetoric of Carl Sagan "is not merely to make science suitable for the people; it is also to make the people suitable for science" (p. 195). The mutual modification of science and people is an important observation about how language contributes to argument in public rhetoric. Lessl's commentary directs a rhetoric of journalism to understanding the implications of specific language choices.
Relating rhetorical elements to socializing functions

Comparing classical forms of proof. McCloskey (1987) sees an investigation of persuasive appeals as adding a level of self-consciousness to scholarly texts that is not exactly philosophical but rather more literary. This directs the critic, McCloskey writes, to look at texts for rhetorical characteristics such as logic of argument, figures of speech, appeals to authority, and other persuasive elements.

Questions about how these basic rhetorical principles and processes affect the success or failure of various types of discourse drive other studies. These inquiries cluster around various classical concepts including invention, logic, arrangement, ethos, and stylistic tropes and figures, as well as more contemporary rhetorical theories such as narrative and voice.

Waddell (1990) argues that classical rhetoric, revived for contemporary society, offers characteristics that can help us face today's problems. He writes:

[T]he features of classical rhetoric that are most pertinent to the problems of modern life are: (1) its emphasis on invention, not just style; (2) its emphasis on ethos and pathos, not just logos; (3) its emphasis on public deliberation about contingent areas of knowledge, not discipline-specific discourse; and (4) its emphasis on application and pedagogy, not just scholastic debate. (p. 397)
Waddell's concern is for finding ways for the public "to participate constructively in the scientific and technological controversies that are becoming increasingly crucial in our nation" (p. 397), controversies which are the stuff of American print journalism. Waddell's investigation of pathos focuses on the struggle of how a public committee, appointed by a city council to make the best decision possible about a scientific matter, assesses emotional appeals as appropriate or inappropriate. This seems especially important for assessing rhetorical elements in a discipline that is challenged frequently by similar questions: when and what kind of emotional appeals are appropriate to public issues, and on what basis are such appeals integrated in the larger discussion?

Concern with argument arrangement. Types of argument arrangement, such as the basic syllogism and enthymeme, have been investigated for the role played in presenting arguments within different fields of study (Holmquest, 1985). In such studies, rhetorical concern is for how one thought leads to another, or—in rhetorical terms—how one sign works to create another sign. Arrangement of argument, in which the audience fills in the missing major premise, exerts a persuasive appeal by directing and limiting the audience's choices. Holmquest's
study suggests that a rhetoric of journalism could beneficially address the relationship between arrangement and argumentation.

**Ethos.** Investigating the role of the classical proof of *ethos* is undertaken in other studies. In arguments presented as *logos*—or factual, rational appeals—*ethos* is often granted through alignment with the authority of the discipline with no further warrant. In economics, for instance, the use of statistics or graphs adds to the persuasive appeal of an argument (McCloskey, 1987). Unreflected belief that "statistics is expertise spoken numerically" (p. 485) does not enhance the practice of economics, McCloskey argues, but rather endorses the use of the fallacious argument by authority as the "heart of modern statistical practice" (p. 488). Use of statistics can also imply "an air of down-to-earth common sense" (p. 488) that increases persuasive power of the argument. *Since journalism is especially interested in authoritative sources, McCloskey’s comments indicate that an examination of the consequences of ethos would be useful in a rhetoric of journalism.*

Other work expands classical *ethos* to include the concept of persona, which is similar to *ethos* in that it is an expression of credibility that works in conjunction with *logos*. The concept of persona is especially revealing in matters of ethical appraisal. Paul Newell
Campbell (1975) notes that the "avoidance of ethical appraisals by both critics and authors of scientific communication is made possible by the presumed absence of personae." (p. 403) Yet personaes, Campbell argues, are "found in every discursive form, including the one we call scientific; and they require ethical appraisal, particularly when they presume to study, to manipulate, to experiment with people." (p. 405) "The scientist is an exercise in perfect dramatic futility: disclaimed of the prejudiced, the attitudinal, the opinionated as the scientist may be, the persona cannot be disclaimed; to discourse is, before anything else, to act, and the very nature of the act implies an actor..." (p. 404-405) By highlighting the personaes and viewing science writing as a rhetorical event, rhetoric of inquiry studies have argued that a new imperative for ethical criticism can be brought to bear through recognition of the active role required of the scientist in the rhetoric. Campbell’s comments suggest looking at how the persona of the journalist is constructed in journalism texts, whether or not there is an active agent present, and what this might mean for journalism’s goals.

Focus on ethical narrative

As Nelson (1987) points out, the interdisciplinary approach of rhetoric of inquiry is designed to reintroduce ethical and political
concerns to a variety of inquiry communities. Maintaining this emphasis for a rhetoric of journalism links ethical concerns of journalism with the best interests of the public, and challenges the assumption that ethical reporting can be attained by following the techniques of objectivity (see Merrill, 1985, especially p. 391; Mills, 1984; and Ellul, 1969, in particular).

When narrative is looked at as a way to organize experience, it is not true or false or propositional. The emphasis turns to how and what connections are established within the narrative (Wells, 1990). Narrative in this sense is less concerned with correspondence to "What Really Happened?" and more focused on a desire to understand why the text moves, convinces or misdirects us. The ethical concern focuses on how rhetorical elements of journalistic objectivity relate to opening or closing possibilities for public action. Do the rhetorical elements of objectivity develop and engage certain values of an event that are not directly observable? Do the rhetorical elements contribute to narrative construction in a way that makes fitting connections for the social good?

In this way, a rhetoric of journalism would extend the significance of narrative to encompass what has been described as the "crisis of
"Crisis of representation" is a term used to describe the challenges that recent scholarship has presented to realistic epistemology. Since American print journalism has been shown to be based in an epistemology of realism and produced from a position of objectivity, narrative analysis seems especially appropriate. In addition, narrative theory within rhetoric of inquiry suggests an interdisciplinary focus to explore the links between representation of news events and argumentation and persuasion. If we recognize the benefit in looking at narrative "as part of the complex and shifting terrain of meaning that makes up the social world" (Mumby, 1993, p. 3), the way rhetorical elements of objectivity contribute to that meaning may become clearer.

Extending a discussion of narrative to include issues of voice engages journalistic concerns at another level. The concept of voice can be described as a text-based expression of a particular point of view which relies on deeply embedded values within a particular culture for its meaning (Booth, 1988). The concept of voice directs analysis toward questions such as whose voice is being offered, to whom is the message addressed, and what is the probable theme that will be understood by the intended audience (see Black, 1978; Booth, 1988; or...
Bakhtin, 1990a, 1990b). For Bakhtin, the author of the text is not necessarily the author of the utterance--or in this case, the news article. An utterance in one context carries meaning from other contexts, and thus there are multiple authors in each utterance since meanings accumulate. Production of an utterance requires the use of a social language which is socioculturally bound and thus meaning is inextricably tied to a historical, cultural and institutional setting (Wertsch, 1991, p. 66). The use of a Bakhtinian concept of voice is particularly suited for journalistic evaluation because it focuses both on the perspective from which the message is designed (remembering that it is not necessarily the author of the text who designs the message), and the perspective to which the message is addressed. A concept of voice further directs the study to look at choices made in the construction of the reports. Booth (1988) argues that choices made in the writing of a narrative invite the reader to accept, either critically or unreflectedly, the ideas the stories support. Thus, it seems that examining narrative provides one way to assess ethicality by looking at (1) the connections the narrative makes; (2) the values and assumptions it supports; (3) the degree to which possibilities for social action are opened or closed by
it; and (4) the role of discipline-specific rhetorical elements related to the pursuit of objectivity.

In sum, selected projects from rhetoric of inquiry suggest specific areas of development for a rhetoric of journalism. A rhetoric of journalism would engage specific themes, strategies and styles of journalism as an academic and professional community. A rhetoric of journalism would consider the practical role of established rhetorical elements as interrelated, and work toward increasing understanding of how they may work in the development of social narratives. A rhetoric of journalism might be especially useful for assessing when and what kind of emotional appeals are appropriate to public issues, and on what basis are such appeals integrated in the larger discussion. A rhetoric of journalism could develop as a way to assess how foundational values in journalism relate to evidence, interpretation, evaluation and methods, or the relationship among arrangement, argumentation and social understanding. A concern with social understanding and narrative development might develop around the argumentative capacity of tropes and figures; understanding the implications of specific language choices such as direct quotes from public relations counsel; explicating authoritative sources as a question of ethos; or examining the presence
or absence of an active agent within the text as a question of journalistic persona. Overall, given the communal notion of narrative voice presented by language theorists such as Bakhtin, Booth or Black, concern with narrative provides an especially appropriate connection to ethical concerns of journalistic practice.

In order to develop these ideas further, I will discuss challenges this project may present to journalism, the relevance of this proposal to other critiques of journalism, and offer some clarifications for this project that I feel are important to investigations of journalism practice. Following the discussion, specific ideas for the project will be developed further by discussing ethical considerations in social narrative, and identifying some characteristic rhetorical elements of journalism.

Challenges, Parallels, and Clarifications

Challenges

The social constructionism function of rhetoric presents the most difficult philosophical challenges to current journalism practice. Objectivity as a regulative ideal within journalism is operationalized in accordance with a received view of knowledge. A rhetorical perspective on journalism asks, first of all, for an understanding of objectivity as a
crafted position that plays a role in the social construction of knowledge.

But given that journalists are "committed to open government and protective of the readers' interests" (Brooks et al., 1985, p. 464), and given that much of news coverage involves matters of social exigence, investigating how a crafted position--one that asserts neutrality as a value--opens or closes possibilities for social action in response to social exigence seems especially important to journalism. A rhetorical perspective, such as is offered in rhetoric of inquiry studies, will direct attention to the role of rhetoric in producing knowledge, especially in matters that relate to informing a democratic public of issues of social consequence. This demonstrates rhetoric of inquiry's "commitment to understanding the dynamics of words and other symbols in practical usage" (Lyne, 1985, p. 73).

It is worth repeating that a rhetorical perspective does not need to disengage from reality in order to expand understanding of knowledge production in relationship to communal norms, nor does it need to disengage from reality to invite a widened view of argument. While issues of social construction of reality certainly could be--and, indeed, has been--the focus of investigations arguing the effects and
strengths of rhetorical texts, the matter need not dissolve into a debate between realism and constructionism. Journalism, in operationalizing objectivity, grants that discourse is an imperfect representation of reality; extension of this pragmatic recognition thus becomes the interesting focus. Approaching journalism texts as socializing discourse encourages a greater engagement of practical constraints such as power and social norms (McGee & Lyne, 1987) without disregarding the role of the individual in a system. The petition to journalism offered here is another way to assess choices made in writing the stories.

Parallels

As the philosophical discussion and review of projects shows, a rhetoric of inquiry for journalism seems to offer a natural extension of much of the work associated with the Project on Rhetoric of Inquiry. Of interest, and particularly relevant to the project at hand, are the striking parallel areas of interest between rhetoric of inquiry and theoretical writings on journalistic objectivity.

Stuart Hall (1981, 1985), Gaye Tuchman (1978), and others have argued that objectivity in news reporting leads to bias because prominent sources are favored as neutral sources. Recent scholarship, such as that by Theodore Glasser (1992), makes a comparable
argument and proposes that objectivity hampers independent thinking and discourages journalists from pursuing a full understanding of the events on which they report. Finally, Glasser indicts objectivity for erasing accountability for what is reported; if a claim is made, it can be--and should be--reported despite its veracity.

In other studies, Condit and Selzer (1985) note that objectivity's dictum in journalism to concentrate on the material aspects of a jury trial does not allow room to develop the issues, and tends to eclipse values altogether. Christians et al. (1993) discuss the difficulty in distinguishing between mutually beneficial and self-interested information when following objectivity's directive to report the observable without judgement. A problematic side-effect of objectivity's control over subjectivity is that the legitimacy of particular topics is also controlled. "Professional ideology of impartiality...serves to obscure processes of censorship and self-censorship which are characteristic of the work of news organizations." (Barry, 1993, p. 489) Similarly, Johnson (1991) shows racial differences in standards for news coverage in prestige media, and voices concerns over the implications this holds for society at large when such bias is presented as objective.
The fairness and equality addressed by the balance metaphor in objectivity has been seen as more concerned with quantity than content. A balanced view in which "equal time" or "equal space" is given to "opposing views" thus can parade itself as a reasonable view, when perhaps neither side in the balanced report reflects such reasonableness. Collins & Clark (1992) theorize that what goes unrecognized in this attempt at balance is that the dictate to balance both sides might well constrain what can be found in the middle because privileging dichotomous perspectives in a balanced news story inadvertently encourages a polarizing, divisionist structuring of a "we-they" story line, and excludes the middle ground.

Dictating parameters of news, which can repress marginalized voices and alternative perspectives, is a shortcoming of journalistic objectivity cited by Hall (1985), Reese (1990), Bagdikian (1992), and Astroff & Nyberg (1992), among others. Silencing challenges to the status quo has also been seen as an unwanted by-product of reliance on authority to relay the story (Barry, 1993; Hall, 1985; Bagdikian, 1992). Bagdikian writes:

One assumption of the 'objectivity' doctrine of reporting is that every side of a dispute has an equal and opposite side. No 'extreme' views are considered legitimate....Anything beyond the
status quo is in danger of being seen as either communist on the left or fascist on the right. As a result, some of the most significant social forces of the 1980s remain nameless in social and political reporting and, consequently, they remain beyond public discourse and cannot be dealt with intelligently in society. (p. 205)

Bagdikian holds that casting news in terms of physical events does not provide a way of identifying, analyzing, or assessing any value of alternative perspectives. Objectivity in this sense cannot be equated with ethical reporting, Bagdikian argues, because it places "overwhelming emphasis on established, official voices and tend(s) to leave unreported large areas of genuine relevance that authorities chose not to talk about." (p. 180)

Objectivity as strategic ritual (Tuchman, 1972) provides the pragmatic service of protection against criticism, as disciplinary objectivity is prone to do. But concurrent with granting the authority to speak, the claim to objectivity has been used by the profession to silence its critics (Tuchman, 1972, Gans, 1972, Rachlin, 1988). For a democratic public relying on the press for its understanding of public issues, the implications are extensive, especially since objective journalism is equated with ethical journalism.
In a similar vein, but outside journalism literature, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule (1986) raise questions of whether or not neutrality as a crafted position is the best basis for ethical decisions. They argue that disinterested reasoning—the detached, impartiality so highly prized by journalists—may inadvertently lead to treating human, moral problems as just another technical problem, a "math problem with people" (p. 110). Similar to Paul Campbell's critique on the neutrally crafted personae of the scientist, recognition of the socially-constructed aspects of knowledge connects a reporter to ethical concerns through action, not inaction. Additionally, such a position makes it difficult to engage personal knowledge and experience, even if journalists' on-going participation provides them with more experience and knowledge about the events than their sources. With the goal of journalism to provide the basis for public decisions, neutrality as a crafted position becomes central to issues of ethical appraisal.

But these theoretical insights to journalistic objectivity have been offered largely as systems-level critiques, especially the work by Tuchman (1972, 1978), Hall (1981, 1985), Rachlin (1988), Bagdikian (1992). Systems-level critiques, while providing many insights to the field, do not engage the practice of journalism on an individual level.
Given that "Professional values of journalists still are typified by a sense of altruism and desire for autonomy." (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986, p. 166), and that "Individual autonomy's most pointed expression in the press is unconditional freedom for individual practitioners" (Christians et al., 1993, p. 30), a more individual approach to the problems of objectivity seem in order. Rhetoric of inquiry, however, while recognizing that the text ultimately is a product of individual and organization, might be able to provide an important perspective for journalists by emphasizing the written word.

A rhetorical perspective of journalism would examine the discourse for cues to the reader to view the facts in a particular way. Looking at this project as a question of choices presented to the audience through the perceptions created by the discourse allows room to engage organizational influence, as well as emphasize the importance of rhetorical choices made by the journalist. A rhetorical perspective on journalism is, to paraphrase Gross, a call to explicate the rhetorical techniques that serve as the "means by which we are persuaded that any mode of inquiry, including that of journalism, is a mode of truth." (Gross, 1990, p. 19) A rhetorical perspective such as this offers "a view from the outside" (McCloskey, 1987), and as such
should be helpful in assessing the choices made by those who create the stories. As with other rhetoric of inquiry studies, the aim is to enrich the discipline of journalism by adding a level of self-consciousness to practical application by using a rhetorical perspective to illuminate the practical application of objectivity as a regulative ideal.

Clarifications

In writing about the values and ideology of the American press, Gans (1979) states that "Journalism resembles other empirical disciplines and professions in its aim to be objective." (p. 182) Reese (1990) links science and journalism in his investigation of the ideology of objectivity, observing that:

Both science and journalism are empirical information-gathering activities that have developed learnable routines for their practitioners. Both scientists and journalists are presumed to be dispassionate observers of the world, guided primarily by their observations...Both science and journalism are guided by a positivist faith in empiricism, the belief that the external world can be successfully perceived and understood. (p. 392-393)

In spite of these remarkable similarities, developing a rhetoric of inquiry for journalism requires some clarification in relationship to the original project. Changes are found in two specific areas--appropriate artifacts, and intent to persuade.
First, rhetoric of inquiry projects emphasize investigation of scholarly research—how it is that scholars communicate with each other and with their publics. Developing this idea specifically for practicing journalism focuses this project on the role of rhetoric in the production and dissemination of knowledge offered to the public through the vehicle of American print journalism. The distinction I wish to make here is that rhetoric of inquiry projects provide ample basis for investigating scholarly research within journalism; engaging the practice of journalism, however, is a specific application of the general project.

Second, intent to persuade needs to be clarified for this project. Within rhetoric of inquiry literature, authorial intent is rarely stated as a central issue, but rather seems to be a starting assumption. Allan Gross for example, assumes a persuasive intent within each artifact throughout his work; scientists are trying to persuade their audience that their position is correct. Wells (1990), too, found a persuasive intent within the arrangement of a narrative to portray government actions favorably. However, Farrell & Goodnight (1981) find that a narrative in their study was constituted by "associations and oppositions that were surely beyond all conscious intent" (p. 286), and this is the position I wish to adopt for a rhetoric of journalism.
Because intent to persuade is linked to ethical judgements in journalism, and objectivity as a tenet of American print journalism is undertaken precisely to avoid persuasion (Merrill, 1983), Farrell’s & Goodnight’s observations are helpful. While still recognizing that all discourse is an intentional act, and that inclusion of rhetorical techniques that add to the persuasive appeal of a text cannot be completely separated from their source, granting good intentions to journalists focuses the discussion on the issues that remain concerning the perceptions created by the discourse and the possible persuasive appeal such perceptions may have.

Given those qualified statements, a rhetoric of inquiry for journalism seems a natural extension of much of the work associated with the Project on Rhetoric of Inquiry. The next step in developing this approach will be explicating characteristic rhetorical elements of journalism practice and focusing the study’s general method.

A Rhetoric of Inquiry for Journalism

A rhetorical perspective of journalism would be an investigation of how discursive elements in the text may act as cues to the reader to view the facts in a particular way. Looking at this project as a question of choices presented to the audience through the perceptions created
by the discourse is neither a denial of factual material nor an endorsement of disconnected rationality. It is, to paraphrase Gross, a call to explicate the rhetorical techniques that serve as the "means by which we are persuaded that any mode of inquiry, including that of [journalism], is a mode of truth." (Gross, 1990, p. 19) A rhetorical perspective such as this offers "a view from the outside" (McCloskey, 1987), and as such should be helpful in assessing the choices made by those who create the stories. As with other rhetoric of inquiry studies, the aim is to enrich the discipline of journalism by adding a level of self-consciousness to practical application by using a rhetorical perspective to illuminate the practical application of objectivity as a regulative ideal.

Following theoretical leads provided by representative projects on rhetoric of inquiry, we turn now to developing an approach for practical application.

**Explicating rhetorical characteristics**

In developing a rhetoric of journalism, specialized practices within journalism can be looked at as rhetorical practices that contribute in some way to how arguments develop in purportedly objective texts. In this way, rhetoric of inquiry for journalism would be designed to yield a better understanding of the significance of rhetorical practices might
hold for the achievement of journalism's goals. Returning to the discussion of operationalized objectivity in Chapter Two, these same regulative ideals can be viewed as the basic rhetorical elements of objectivity.

**Placement.** Placement offers us a convenient overview of how the news reports as a way to organize the experience for the audience. Since the different sections of the paper are directed to different audiences, placement provides an additional clue to the reader on how to view the events. Lifestyle stories, dealing with home and family issues, for example, are intended "to present news and features of interest to women in a distinctly feminine style." (Baskette et al., 1986, p. 382) Writing to particular audiences is unproblematic within a positivist epistemology that views information as part of the audience's world. As a rhetorical element of objectivity, placement identifies information clearly as of interest to distinct audiences. From a received view, placement presents impartial information to audiences who are interested in it; a rhetorical perspective raises questions of the relationship between meaning and context.

**Linear structure.** Arrangement of news stories is designed to reveal the essential facts of the events and to provide the introduction
to the event. Rhetorically, this arrangement is displayed by condensing the main elements, as observed by the reporter, into the headline and the lead paragraph, with subordinate actions or related themes introduced in the next few sentences or paragraphs. Many within journalism would say that the familiar "Who, what, where, when, and why" serve as pragmatic organizational directions for journalists. A question thus arises for journalism practice: How do prescribed arrangements of news stories designed to emphasize concrete features of the events affect a full understanding of issues or values. Exploring this question from a rhetorical perspective may offer additional insight into the relationship between argumentation and journalistic arrangements such as the "who, what, where, when, why" structure or thematic hierarchy.

**Emphasis on observable details.** A received view of truth directs journalists to material aspects of events which are observable and confirmable (Condit & Selzer, 1985). Observation of concrete details enhances accuracy in a received view. Direct quotes are highly prized as observable and verifiable, a fact that is not lost on public relations counsel. Yet a strict journalistic focus on the observable may overlook the structuring role of language. Does an emphasis on the observable
work to create and support a particular rhetorical environment that cultivates particular views? What are the implications of this for public understanding of issues and values?

**Balance as a means of achieving fairness.** The question of argument structure in general for journalism seems important because journalism presents arguments. That is part of the job in covering controversy, and it is recognized that attention to balancing of arguments of opposing sides is part of journalistic fairness. How does the convention of balance, in terms of oppositional arguments, work to create and support a particular rhetorical environment that serves to cultivate particular views? More specifically, in seeking balance, how does a strong belief in the epistemology of objectivity contribute to the formation of such an environment? Our interest here is directed to how the conventions of journalism practice may work as separate arguments within the text of a journalism story, especially in ways that may support partisan views within the text.

**Attribution as a form of ethos.** Journalists are encouraged to use direct quotes from authoritative sources, or to go to official documentation such as police reports or other government agencies in order to find accurate details. Attribution—the naming of sources of
information--provides the audience with additional information on the relevancy and truthfulness of the information. Attribution in this sense can be seen as a rhetorical element similar to ethos in that it serves as proof of factuality. What role does attribution as a form of proof play in constructing the overall social narrative?

**Passive construction to remove rhetor.** The use of passive construction has been seen as a syntactic option that privileges physical objects by investing them "with the importance ordinarily bestowed on human beings" (Gross, 1990, p. 70). Gross suggests that "systematic overuse of certain syntactic options" (p. 69) act as semantic strategies for argumentation within purportedly objective texts. Passive construction, because it is valued in objective journalism for its ability to remove or distance the writer from the events, can be considered a rhetorical element. What underlying values does this relationship to the events authorize, and what are the implications of any relationships for the goals of journalism?

**Implications of language choice.** In a program that highlights the structuring role of language, the implications of language choice become important to engage. A rhetoric of journalism could address the implications of language choice by addressing how textual meaning
develops understanding, which in turn structures our response to the events. How tropes and figures convey meaning would be important to ascertain in a rhetoric of journalism.

Summary

Despite many explanations of modernism from philosophers and an overall increased understanding of objectivity as a crafted position, many different fields—including journalism—hold fast to rhetorical practices closely linked to the pursuit of objectivity. These fields have been approached through rhetoric of inquiry projects that successfully direct concern to how specific rhetorical practices contribute to knowledge production within discourse communities. Characteristics suggested by particular projects provide direction for developing a rhetorical approach for journalism. Specifically, a rhetoric of journalism might be concerned with basic themes, strategies and styles of writing found in journalism as an academic and professional community; it might beneficially investigate the interrelationships of these characteristics, and assess their practical role within journalism. Attention to the socializing functions of discourse within a rhetoric of journalism suggests concern with how journalism practices affect narrative development, and the blending of social voices in news
coverage. Attention to arrangement, language, style, and proof also provides insight into journalism practice from a rhetorical perspective.

While the discussion above does not, by any means, offer an exhaustive engagement of journalistic practices, it does offer a starting place to engage implications of particular rhetorical practices that are especially visible from a rhetorical perspective on the text and which have some heuristic ties to other rhetoric of inquiry projects. Combining this discussion with the explication of journalism practice presented in Chapter Two, the question arises: What can a rhetorical perspective on journalism can tell us about the pragmatic aspects of objectivity within journalism practice?

With these considerations in mind, the study now turns to a close look at the discourse within American print journalism texts of a particular public event.
Endnotes to Chapter III


2. Additionally, although this is not a Marxist study, the approach is complementary to a moderate interpretation of Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony in that it supports his contention that power in a society derives not solely from force but from persuasion as well—including unintentional persuasion. Rhetoric of inquiry provides a convenient bracketing of intent by focusing on text.
As discussed in the previous chapters, the philosophy that undergirds contemporary American journalists is a philosophy of excluding the subjective in order to be able to achieve the highest representational accuracy and fidelity to pre-existing truth. Also as discussed in the previous chapters, rhetoric of inquiry studies have been able to demonstrate limitations of similar objective epistemology in other fields. Now, taking these observations as a starting point, I want to examine what a rhetorical perspective on journalism can tell us about how objectivity as a regulative ideal affects coverage of actual news events.

In this chapter, I discuss selection of the artifacts, and offer a brief introduction to their background. In the first section, I present the event as it developed in the selected coverage. I then analyze rhetorical elements within the stories as they relate to the development of an emerging worldview created by the telling of the story. I discuss where value systems are visible in this account, the underlying
assumptions that are displayed through this, the relationship of these values and assumptions to objectivity, and how they might serve to open or close possibilities for social action. I end the chapter with a discussion on the effect that a commitment to objective epistemology may have on the ability of journalists to engage multi-faceted issues of social consequence.

Background and selection of the artifacts

The case study selected for this investigation is the rhetoric that was used by the top three newspapers in the country in the telling of the story of *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) food poisonings in early 1993. The event is a particularly helpful example in examining what happens when journalists who are highly trained to be objective apply those principles to the narration of a public crisis event because the event is, at once, a scientific event, a business event, a political event, and a human drama. As a story, the *E. coli* food poisonings are replete with expert voices that provide authoritative sources for objective journalism, yet it is also an event that features elements of human crisis and questions of social policy.

Sometime during November 1992, beef carcasses from an unknown location contaminated with *E. coli* 0157:H7 bacteria arrived at
a meat processing plant somewhere in the western United States. At least some of the meat was used by Vons Meat Processing to make frozen ground beef patties for Jack in the Box restaurants. The frozen meat was shipped to Jack in the Box fast-food restaurants in California, Utah, Nevada, Oregon and Washington.\(^1\) By the end of January, 1993, \textit{Escherichia coli} 0157:H7 would be identified as the source of illnesses in more than 500 people in Washington, Idaho, California and Nevada between November 19, 1992, and February 28, 1993. The 0157:H7 strain of \textit{E. coli} implicated in the food poisonings is found in the intestines of infected cattle. The bacteria is spread through unsanitary slaughter practices in which fecal matter comes in contact with flesh which will later be consumed by human beings. In meat processing, ground beef becomes an especially good host to \textit{E. coli} bacteria since grinding spreads the bacteria throughout the meat, providing many surfaces on which it can grow.\(^2\)

What makes this case different than numerous others in the past 13 years since \textit{E. coli} 0157:H7 was first identified is that first, the illness could be traced to a single outlet: Jack In The Box. Secondly, and tragically, this case drew national attention because three small children died: two-year-old Michael James Nole; two-and-half year old Celina
Shribbs; and 16-month-old Riley Detwiler. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (1993), many other young survivors of this incident face life-long health problems including seizures, heart problems, weakened and degenerating kidneys, and colostomies. The December 28, 1992, death of a fourth child, six-year-old Lauren Rudolph of San Diego, was later linked to Jack-in-the-Box, as were 34 other food poisoning cases in Southern California.

The selection of the artifacts was influenced by the reputation of several individual newspapers that are known for their high professional standards: The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, and the Washington Post. (See Table 1.) These particular papers play a large role in creating public knowledge of news events. In fact, Garrison (1990) indicates the influence of these papers on other papers: "What is news?...It's what The New York Times, The Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times have on their front pages in the morning....Hundreds of daily newspapers subscribe to The New York Times News Service, the Los Angeles Times-Washington Post News Service, or both." (p. 44).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Los Angeles Times</th>
<th>Section/Page</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 22</td>
<td>Front; A3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firms reject blame in food poisoning; Jack in the Box and Vons officials deny responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 23</td>
<td>Front; A1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant not to blame for tainted meat, officials say</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 24</td>
<td>Local; B5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death linked to tainted burger</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>January 27</td>
<td>Local; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy's illness linked to outbreak of infections due to tainted meat [Dateline: Las Vegas]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>Front; A3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poisoning by bacteria kills second child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>Business; D2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burger safety on back burner in state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 30</td>
<td>Front; A2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tainted meat linked to California cattle</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>January 30</td>
<td>Front; A2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. issues hamburger cooking warning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>February 3</td>
<td>Front; A3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton plans tighter rules on meat safety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 5</td>
<td>Business; D1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA meat inspection system under fire; Jack in the Box case brings a renewed call for reforms [feature article]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 6</td>
<td>Front; A16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Espy calls for overhaul of meat inspection system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 9</td>
<td>Business; D4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack in the Box parent posts record profit</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>February 11</td>
<td>Leisure; H2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat inspection: no longer adequate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 12</td>
<td>Front; A14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Espy vows to hire meat inspectors, cut USDA staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 13</td>
<td>Business; D1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack in the Box admits not following rule</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 16</td>
<td>Business; D4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack in the Box puts new eateries on hold; expansion plans delayed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 16</td>
<td>Local; B4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning up the heat on meat inspections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 17</td>
<td>Business; D2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefly: Other News [one paragraph account of San Diego girl's December 28 death]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 21</td>
<td>Front; A16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child dies from bacteria; parents had voiced an appeal to Clinton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 23</td>
<td>Business; D1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDC narrows search for source of contaminated burger patties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 4</td>
<td>Business; D1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bacteria next time; another outbreak likely according to CDC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 4</td>
<td>Food/Leisure; H28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Sidebar] Food poisoning under a microscope: Challenges for a safe food supply</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 5</td>
<td>National, A27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef carcass inspections standards tightened to bar contamination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 11</td>
<td>Business; D1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bouncing back: The Box burger chain sees sales start to recover</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 25</td>
<td>Food/Leisure; H40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat inspection: the $100-million question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 22</td>
<td>Food; H29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much more tainted hamburger meat?</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The New York Times</th>
<th>Section/Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 23</td>
<td>Front; 1, jump to 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy dies in bacterial outbreak tied to hamburger chain in west</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 27</td>
<td>Front; A10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tainted hamburger raises doubts on meat safety [illustrated]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>Front; A2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second child dies in bacterial outbreak; linked to tainted hamburgers sold by Jack in the Box</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1</td>
<td>Front; A15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain with tainted burgers offers to pay hospital bills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 6</td>
<td>Business; 1, jump to 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack in the Box's worst nightmare [illustrated]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 6</td>
<td>Front; 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture secretary plans to upgrade meat inspection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 7</td>
<td>Front; A2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrections: one child who died did not eat at Jack in the Box; secondary infection possible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 9</td>
<td>Health; C3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Times: Lessons are sought in outbreak of illness from tainted meat [illustrated]</td>
<td></td>
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Table 1. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Section/Location</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 9</td>
<td>Q&amp;A: Science Desk [illustrated, drawing]</td>
<td>Health; C10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 12</td>
<td>Clinton orders hiring of 160 meat inspectors; due to public outcry</td>
<td>Front; A23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15</td>
<td>Foodmaker halts expansion plans</td>
<td>Business; D1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 22</td>
<td>17-month-old is 3rd child to die of illness linked to tainted meat</td>
<td>Front; A11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 23</td>
<td>Investigators nearing source of bacteria that killed 3</td>
<td>Front; A14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 3</td>
<td>Agriculture department policy blamed for tainted food</td>
<td>Leisure; C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 18</td>
<td>Vons expects bad publicity will hurt sales</td>
<td>Business; D3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 25</td>
<td>Parent of Jack in the Box sees $20 million loss</td>
<td>Business; 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 17</td>
<td>Another suit for Foodmaker</td>
<td>Business, p. 44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Washington Post**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Section/Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 19</td>
<td>50 poisoned by burgers</td>
<td>Front; A6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 23</td>
<td>Boy's death linked to tainted burgers at Jack in the Box [<em>Around the Nation</em>]</td>
<td>Front; A5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>Bacteria claims another child [<em>Around the Nation</em>]</td>
<td>Front; A2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 30</td>
<td>Espy cites obligation in tainted food case</td>
<td>Front; A2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2</td>
<td>Jack in the Box says it will pay hospital bills</td>
<td>Front; A6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 5</td>
<td>Meat seized in poisonings [<em>Around the Nation</em>]</td>
<td>Front; A4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 6</td>
<td>Espy to seek new U.S. meat inspection system</td>
<td>Front; A5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 8</td>
<td>From herd to hamburgers: the mysterious patterns of E. coli</td>
<td>Front; A3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 9</td>
<td>[Cover story: Health Magazine] Hamburger Hazard: Deaths traced to bacteria in ground beef raise questions about meat inspections and cooking techniques</td>
<td>M8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Sidebar] U.S. meat inspections come under scrutiny</td>
<td>M9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Sidebar] How E. coli attacks the body</td>
<td>M10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Sidebar] Safe cooking tips</td>
<td>M10; M15 jump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 12</td>
<td>USDA plans to add 160 meat and poultry inspectors</td>
<td>Front; A13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 21</td>
<td>Food poisoning death [<em>Around the Nation</em>]</td>
<td>Front; A11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 23</td>
<td>Food poisoning's many bacterial causes</td>
<td>Health; Z15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 26</td>
<td>Bacterium statement rescinded [<em>Around the Nation</em>]</td>
<td>Front; A7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 5</td>
<td>Stricter beef carcass inspection standards ordered</td>
<td>Front; A3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 12</td>
<td>8 cases of E. coli infection in San Diego [<em>Around the Nation</em>]</td>
<td>Front; A12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From these three papers, the artifacts represent an exhaustive listing of stories dealing with the food poisonings between January 18, 1993, when the first food poisoning cases were reported, and April 22, 1993, when initial coverage appears to have ended.
Since the three papers feed other news organizations, the selected artifacts embody a large portion of the public's perception of what has taken place. With the permission of each newspaper, a full text of the artifacts appears as Appendix A. Selection of the artifacts also has been influenced by Rothman (1990) who sees issues related to scientific matters, as these events are, as more objective in content than other topic areas because of the availability of tested and quantified knowledge. Events in which it is appropriate for scientific authority to comment have, at least, an added level of objectivity from the scientific sources.

Equally important, however, is that the topic is not solely made up of science issues. Indeed, since the events raised questions of meat safety, the topic area of meat consumption—especially consumption of beef—is one that has found itself presented with many challenges in recent years. The benefit of this latter criterion is suggested in general by Tuchman's (1978) classic study which utilized social movement discourse and the marginalized voices of the women's movement to problematize objectivity. Specifically, however, there is additional benefit to the purposes here found in the importance of marginalized voices to both media theory and critical theory. A topic area that
includes identifiable marginalized voices represents a topic area that is presenting challenges to the status quo. Media theory tells us that these marginalized voices would be important to engage in providing a comprehensive accounting of the issues (Siebert et al., 1956). If an artifact is selected from a topic area of growing challenge to the status quo, marginalized voices would have a higher probability of being salient. On the other hand, critical theory has identified authoritative voices as being supported by a quest for objectivity (Hall, 1981, 1985; Astroff & Nyberg, 1992). It has been argued that authorized speakers are empowered by the dominant structure, and are respected as credible sources by the media, and that it is the authorized speakers who are able to frame the problem, thus limiting subsequent discussion of the topic (Astroff & Nyberg, 1992).

This seems especially true in public issue debates in which alternative perspectives are seen as value-laden and motive-driven, and thus are eyed warily by journalists trained in the value of objectivity. To select a topic area that has identifiable marginalized voices provides a starting place from which to investigate the implications of a positivist epistemology. To identify a topic in this manner is, of course, a subjective and slippery designation. If the topic is too new to the social
conversation, it may be difficult to identify salient marginalized voices. On the other hand, if a topic area is too firmly entrenched within the status quo, marginalized voices may disappear as they become part of the epistemic values approved by the dominant culture. The appropriateness of the selected topic area thus needs some explication.

The topic area can be considered to be, to a greater or lesser degree, that which deals with food safety and human consumption of animals. As such, several marginalized voices immediately suggest themselves as salient to the topic area: periphery issues of varying ethical and moral considerations of animal consumption; other issues voiced by animal rights activists; environmental concerns of intensive animal agriculture; and health concerns regarding animal product consumption by humans. These marginalized voices present a challenge to traditional American culture, and they are known and acknowledged by the status quo. For example, questions of human consumption of animals have been seen as part of the animal rights movement (Albright, 1986), and the same question is central to several religious groups (Sprondel, 1986). Questions and challenges to the beef industry from the ecological movement is documented in the popular press (Robbins, 1988), particularly concerns about federally-
owned grazing lands, atmospheric pollution from methane gas, and water pollution from stock yard run-off (Rifkin, 1992). In this particular event, challenges to meat processing have come also from government watchdog groups who have identified shortcomings in the existing system. The Government Accountability Project (GAP), for example, has provided legal services to government meat inspectors who were harassed or fired after complaining of unsanitary conditions in the slaughterhouses.

Growing health consciousness has presented questions of another sort in the popular press, engaging a growing segment of the American public and thus creating additional challenges to established meaning in the topic area. The most noted example of this latter challenge can be found in the 1992 U.S. Agriculture Department pyramid food-group chart that emphasizes grains, fruits and vegetables as food choices and deemphasize meat, fat and sweets. On a similar note, challenges to the status quo regarding human consumption of animals can be seen in action by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, a splinter group of the American Medical Association, which advocates vegetarianism and lowered meat consumption (Pentella, 1991).
Thus, the artifacts selected are ones which seem to be representative of (1) rhetoric produced from a position of commitment to the quest for objectivity; (2) rhetoric representative of distinguished American print journalism; (3) rhetoric stemming from a science-related area; and (4) rhetoric from a topic area that has been presented with growing challenges from marginalized voices.

Given these artifacts as a specific case study, what can a rhetorical perspective on journalism can tell us about how objectivity as a regulative ideal affects coverage of actual news events?

**Telling the Story of E. coli**

Until his two young daughters became seriously ill after eating contaminated hamburgers at a nearby Jack in the Box restaurant, Joseph Dolan of Kent, Wash., never doubted that any meat was fit to eat.

"Meat is inspected by the government, he knew, stamped with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's seal of approval."

"You just assume everything is safe," Dolan said.

But the alarming wave of illness that has touched the Dolan girls and hundreds of other Jack in the Box customers has shaken that assumption for countless Americans who have come to trust the USDA stamp. *(Los Angeles Times, 2-5-95)*

"Inspected for Wholesomeness" is a label on fresh meat products that American consumers have come to rely on. All meat sold for human consumption in this country carries the stamped approval of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, indicating that the product has been inspected and deemed fit for human consumption. The inspection by
government authorities is viewed popularly as providing American consumers with one of the safest food supplies in the world. Additionally, the variety and abundance of food at the supermarket has been used as a national symbol of all that is good about American free enterprise. In contrast, news photos of empty shelves in Eastern European markets have become almost a shorthand for all that was wrong with the recent Communist regimes. When something happens to threaten the food supply of this nation—be it unseasonal freezes to the orange trees, or floods in the California valleys of America’s "salad bowl"—it is appropriately newsworthy as an issue of social consequence.

The news reports of the E. coli food poisonings entered into this social context in January, 1993, representing a particularly worrisome threat in terms of food safety. At first, the number of people ill was reported to be 50; within days, a child had died and number sick grew to 150. Within two weeks, 300 people were reported stricken, and another child had died. By mid-February, 1993, three children were dead, and more than 500 people were stricken. News stories developed around questions of who was responsible for the poisonings, the response by government authorities to the poisonings, how the
public can protect itself against the bacteria, and the business implications of the poisonings. Public announcements by Jack in the Box, its meat supplier, and government authorities provided material critical to developing many of the articles dealing with responsibility and response. Business implications were developed in investigative reports using additional sources who spoke to business concerns.

The major characters in these events were quickly identified in the news reports as Jack in the Box, its president Bob Nugent, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy. Throughout the coverage, Vons Meats (Jack in the Box's meat supplier), and its spokespeople, miscellaneous health officials, and other Federal and state officials were given voice as minor characters. Not to be overlooked as characters in these events are *E. coli* bacteria, and the hamburger itself, which was closely aligned with questions of cause in the poisonings.

From the first article in the Washington Post on January 19, the cause of the problem was quickly identified as undercooked hamburger that was served at Jack in the Box fast-food restaurants throughout the Northwest United States. Several stories pointed out that if the meat
had been cooked to Washington State standards of 155 degrees, most, if not all, of the bacteria probably would have been killed.

In terms of a threat to food safety, identification of the cause of became important. Chronologically, the news coverage displayed a growing concern with a question of who had caused the events in question. Direct or implied answers to that question can be seen as organizing much of the rhetoric within the artifacts. Should Jack in the Box be blamed? Or was it the supplier, Vons? What part of responsibility should be allotted to the slaughterhouse, and to which slaughterhouse?

The finger pointing has been intense. The San Diego-based chain blamed its supplier, the Vons Companies of Arcadia, Calif., for supplying tainted meat and filed a lawsuit against Vons on Thursday. The meat was contaminated at the slaughterhouse, according to Washington State health officials; Jack in the Box acknowledges that its contract did not call for Vons to test the meat. (New York Times, February 6, 1993; Business, p. 1)

Initially, the narrative focused on Jack in the Box president Bob Nugent, as spokesperson for the company, in a search for who was responsible. Nugent took a rhetorical stance of accepting responsibility ("We feel very responsible for anyone who eats in our restaurants" Los Angeles Times, January 23, 1993; National, p. A1; "We really do want to fulfill our responsibility" Washington Post February 9, 1993; Lifestyle, p. M8), and was able to make statements directing the narrative toward a
view of Jack in the Box as a victim of the events. Nugent himself was
described as feeling "betrayed by the sources of the tainted beef" (Los
Angeles Times, January 23, 1993; p. A1). "We rely on our suppliers to
provide us with meat that is not contaminated and that did not happen,' Hancock [Jack in the Box spokesperson] said" (Washington Post
February 9, 1993; Lifestyle, p. 10).

Indeed, the events raised questions of how contaminated meat could
slip the USDA's inspection process in general:

The fact that so much contaminated meat could be shipped to retail outlets
without being detected has called attention to the meat safety process itself.
Federal officials say that 7,400 inspectors examine the carcasses of 120 million
animals a year and that very little contaminated meat gets through. But the
Inspections are limited to visual examinations, for discolored meat, rather than
laboratory analysis of certain samples.

"It's unbelievable that such a low level of inspection exists in a society so
advanced," said Joseph Dolan, whose two young daughters suffered kidney failure
after eating contaminated cheeseburgers from Jack in the Box. "No matter where
you buy ground beef, you're susceptible to getting sick." (New York Times, January
27, 1993; National, p. A10)

By coincidence, the timing of these events presented newly
appointed Department of Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy with the topic
of his first speeches. In these reports of official action taken to rectify
the problems, a strong theme of reassurance emerged around
straightforward talk that although there had been a problem, immediate
steps were being taken by responsible government authorities to
correct it.
Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy said yesterday that the government has a "moral responsibility" to victims of food-borne illnesses in the Pacific Northwest but that he believes federal safety guidelines were obeyed.

Espy told reporters that he planned no immediate changes in the way meat and poultry are inspected "until all the research is in." He said his first priority was to make sure the outbreak that has killed two children and sickened 250 other people this month is controlled. (Washington Post, January 30, 1993; National, p. A2)

Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy said today that his department would quickly upgrade its meat inspection system, but he added that it was impossible now to prevent food poisoning outbreaks like the one that recently killed a child in Washington State.

Mr. Espy told a Senate Agriculture subcommittee that he would ask President Clinton and Federal budget writers for permission to hire 550 more meat inspectors. The department's program also includes upgrading the present inspection regimen, and eventually creating a new one based on more advanced science, Mr. Espy said. (The New York Times, February 6, 1993; Business, p. 1)

The narrative thus turned to slaughterhouse procedures and meat inspection, as many of the headlines indicate:

Espy cites obligation in tainted food case (Washington Post, January 30)

Clinton plans tighter rules on meat safety (Los Angeles Times, February 3)

Espy calls for overhaul of meat inspection system (Los Angeles Times, February 6)

Espy to seek new U.S. meat inspection system (Washington Post, February 6)

Agriculture secretary plans to upgrade meat inspection (The New York Times, February 6)

Espy vows to hire meat inspectors, cut USDA staff (Los Angeles Times, February 12)

USDA plans to add 160 meat and poultry inspectors (Washington Post, February 12)

Clinton orders hiring of 160 meat inspectors; due to public outcry (The New York Times, February 12)

Stricter beef carcass inspection standards ordered (Washington Post, March 5)
Meat inspection: the $100-million question (Los Angeles Times, March 25)

The USDA was described as taking an "immediate and hard-line stand on insuring public safety of meat supplies" (Los Angeles Times, February 3, 1993; National, A3). "...the Agriculture Department said yesterday it will examine every possibility to cut the risk of food poisoning from meat such as occurred at Jack-in-the-Box last month." (Washington Post, February 2, 1993; National, p. A6). By March 2, the Department had proposed "zero-tolerance" standards: no level of contamination by feces, milk, or undigested food would be allowed on carcasses or boneless beef (Los Angeles Times, March 5, 1993; National, p. A27), a change from previous standards that did allow "a certain number of 'specks' of contamination." "We did allow extremely small amounts," he [Jim Greene, an inspection service spokesman] said. "That's because it's practically impossible to guarantee a carcass that's entirely free."

The reassurance offered in the rhetoric of immediate and hardline USDA actions, and the proposed zero-tolerance standards, was supported by discussion of the overall safety of the food supply. At the same time, however, the inability of assuring that safety was part of the story as well. Implicit statements of safety indicated that the problem
was atypical: Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy is quoted as describing the bacteria as "rare" (Los Angeles Times, January 30, 1993; National, p. A2); The Washington Post noted that "The deaths were caused by a rare strain of E. coli bacteria..." (January 30, 1993; National, A2), or by "the relatively rare strain of E. coli" (February 2, 1993; National, A6). Explicit statements regarding food safety were also made:

[Director of Federal Government’s Center of Food Safety and Applied Nutrition] Dr. Archer, like other food inspection officials interviewed, emphasized the nation’s food supply might be the safest in the world. "How many billions of hamburgers are consumed annually with no resulting illness?" he said. People should put this case in context." (New York Times, January 27, 1993; National, p. A10)

"In the last 10 years, we’ve sold 400 million pounds of hamburger safely and without incident," said Robert Nugent, president of Jack in the Box, the nation’s fifth-largest hamburger chain, with 1,170 outlets in 13 states in the West. "Then bang, it hits you. It’s your worst, worst nightmare." (The New York Times, February 6, 1993; Business, p. 1)

The perceived safety of the American food supply stood in glaring contrast to the difficult if not impossible task of keeping E. coli out of the food supply in the future:

Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy said today that his department would quickly upgrade its meat inspection system, but he added that it was impossible now to prevent food poisoning outbreaks like the one that recently killed a child in Washington State. (New York Times, February 6, 1993; Business, p. 1)

The outbreak was the largest and most serious of a dangerous bacterium that has struck before and will surely strike again. (New York Times, February 9, 1993; Health, p. C3)
In addition to the political and bureaucratic difficulties in revamping the inspection system, the Agriculture Department is also faced with what some see as an almost impossible task of ensuring the safety of food. (Washington Post, February 9, 1993; Lifestyle, p. M8)

As the story developed around solving the "almost impossible task" of meat safety, the *E. coli* 0157:H7 bacterium gained presence in the overall narrative as the source of the immediate problems. It was described as a "worthy opponent," "highly infective and particularly dangerous" causing Washington state health officials to have "considerable respect for *E. coli*" (Washington Post February 9, 1993; Lifestyle, p. M9). Other coverage reflected this view as well:

"We can only assume that the tainted meat patties were somehow different..." (Douglas Archer, director of FDA's Center of Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, quoted in Los Angeles Times, February 6, 1993; National, A16)

Like all living things, it is a creature of both habits and mysteries.... ECO157 comes from the commonest and humblest of origins. (Washington Post, February 8, 1993; National, A3)

The bacterium can also produce a wide variety of baffling symptoms, even fooling doctors into performing unnecessary surgery. (New York Times, February 9, 1993; Lifestyle, p. C3)

Discovered only 11 years ago, but researchers say it is emerging as a major cause of food poisoning.* " (Washington Post February 9, 1993; Lifestyle, p. M10)

The *E. coli* bacteria responsible for the deaths gets a nickname ("ECO157"); an elevated standing in the animal kingdom ("a creature"); a personality ("fooling doctors," "habits"), and a traditionally nondescript, germ-next-door history ("humblest of origins"). There is clear indication
that *E. coli* is somehow different, somehow stronger, and somehow more dangerously random.

In light of this foreboding threat to food safety, four solutions surfaced: adding more inspectors and improving record-keeping at slaughterhouses, irradiating meat, testing levels of bacteria of meat, and labeling meat products with handling and cooking instructions.

Adding more USDA inspectors to a visual-based inspection system had its recognized limitations. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy addressed the problem of visual inspections in his news conferences. All three papers reported Espy as "acknowledging" that, although visual inspections are not failsafe, "adding more eyes" will ensure "all that can be seen will be seen." Other stories mentioned that under current meat processing procedures of visual inspection, the inspectors cannot detect microbiological infestation. Adding inspectors was mentioned in news coverage seven times.

Irradiating meat first was mentioned by Espy as a solvency step in his February 5 news conference: Espy said he would "press for the approval of irradiation for raw beef" (*Washington Post*, February 6, 1993, National, p. A5; and February 9, 1993; Lifestyle, p. M8). Irradiation was explained as
a technology that exposes food to gamma rays from radioactive sources to kill bacteria, extend ripening or control insects. The process, which does not make food radioactive, has been approved for use on raw poultry, pork, flour and fruits and vegetables. (Washington Post February 9, 1993; Lifestyle, p. M8)

As a solution, irradiation was mentioned in five stories10.

Implementation, pros and cons, and a separate debate pitting "techno-phobes" against the "real scientists" that developed in letters-to-the-editor (see Appendix B) was not developed further in news coverage.

Bacterial testing and a risk-based inspection system also was proposed by Espy, and endorsed by other officials as well. Bacterial testing was mentioned in eight stories11, in text that noted its benefits clashed with its cost (an estimated $58 billion dollars to test one in five carcasses and chickens [New York Times, February 12, 1993; National, A23]) and the very pragmatic concern that "existing tests for some harmful bacteria take several days to produce results...making them impractical for checking meat" (Los Angeles Times, February 5, 1993; Business, p. D1). Adding to these solvency concerns, a February 9 Washington Post story raised the question of labor union involvement:

Some industry groups contend that overhauling the meat inspection system has been stalled because of a powerful meat inspectors' union that fears loss of jobs if a more science-based system is adopted.

"Inspectors are very effective in organizing resistance to change," said [American Meat Institute vice president James] Marsden. "They don't know where they'll fit. They're not microbiologists."
"I take offense to that," said Dave Carney, president of the North Central Council of Food Inspection Locals, the meat inspectors' union. "This is not a labor issue. This is a consumer issue."

Carney said that the union is "not against technology, and we're not against moving forward. What we have a problem with is removing inspectors from their traditional mode and replacing them with a scientific-based system. We need to maintain traditional inspection and enhance it with a scientific program."

Nevertheless, Carney believes that the training conducted for inspectors by the Agriculture Department is too focused on supervisory and managerial skills, and doesn't include continuing education for inspectors, such as teaching them about bacterial hazards in the meat supply. (Lifestyle, p. 15)

Thus, three of the four solutions seem to have received little discussion, and what discussion did take place emphasized the constraints facing success of the solution or its implementation. Adding more inspectors was seen as a good, but costly, idea, one that could not be expected to solve an invisible problem, and one that deteriorated into a clash between industry and labor. The benefits or drawbacks of irradiating meat generated a limited but spirited debate from the public (Appendix B) but was not developed in further news coverage. The benefits of bacterial testing encountered questions of cost, practical application, and labor union approval. However, the fourth solution—increased cooking and labelling meat products—was treated differently throughout the articles:

...cooking the hamburger at 155 degrees normally kills the bacteria... (Los Angeles Times, January 22, 1993; National, p. A3)

But most of the bacteria could have been destroyed if the meat had been properly cooked, officials said. (Los Angeles Times, January 23, 1993; National A1)
Although the restaurant could not be blamed for contaminating the meat, "The undercooking [of the hamburger patties] was a major factor in all these people getting sick," Washington Health Department spokesman Dean Owen said. (Los Angeles Times, January 23, 1993; National, p. A1)

"Health authorities have made it clear that proper cooking would have prevented this tragedy," (Washington Post February 9, 1993; Lifestyle, p. M8)

Despite the elaborate system of inspections, the safety of meat depends, ultimately, on whether it is cooked adequately enough, officials say. (The New York Times, January 27, 1993; National, p. 10)

Federal officials said most food poisoning from meat comes from home cooking, particularly on outdoor grills. The Government recommends that people cook hamburger to a temperature of 160 degrees. (The New York Times, January 27, 1993; National, p. 10)

When it comes to killing E. coli 0157:H7, the bacteria that struck people in Washington state, a few degrees can be crucial. Health experts there say that at an internal temperature of 140 degrees, 90% of the bacteria is killed. At 155 degrees, 99.9999% of it is destroyed. (Los Angeles Times, January 29-93; National, p. 3)

"Health authorities have made it clear that proper cooking would have prevented this tragedy," (Washington Post February 9, 1993; Lifestyle, p. 10)

...the Agriculture Department last week issued a new standard raising the recommended temperature for cooking hamburger from 140 degrees to 155 degrees. (The New York Times, February 12, 1993; National, p. A23)

This overwhelming emphasis on cooking was further developed in relationship to the cause of the poisonings. The cause noted in almost every story was the hamburger and the hamburger cooking process:

...traced to tainted hamburgers... (New York Times, January 23, 1993; National, p. 1)

...traced to undercooked hamburgers... (Los Angeles Times, January 29, 1993; National, p. 3)

...illness brought on by the same contaminated meat... (New York Times, January 27, 1993; National, p. 6)
With contaminated, undercooked hamburgers blamed for illness in three western states, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has recommended raising the minimum internal temperature to kill bacteria to 155 degrees from 140 degrees. (Los Angeles Times, January 29, 1993; Business, p. D2, sidebar)

...the tainted fast-food hamburger meat blamed for the death of at least one child... (Los Angeles Times, January 30, 1993; National, p. A2)

Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy Friday defended the USDA's meat inspection and blamed undercooking for the outbreak of poisoning caused by the bacterium. (Los Angeles Times, January 30, 1993; National, p. A2)

...has been traced in most cases to the sale of undercooked hamburgers at Jack in the Box restaurants in Washington state... (Los Angeles Times, February 3, 1993; National, p. A3)

The source?...tainted hamburger patties. (Washington Post February 9, 1993; Lifestyle, p. M8)

Although the restaurant could not be blamed for contaminating the meat, 'the undercooking [of the hamburger patties] was a major factor in all these people getting sick.' (Washington Post February 9, 1993; Lifestyle, p. M8, clarification in the original).

...undercooked ground beef... (Washington Post February 9, 1993; Lifestyle, p. M15)

...from undercooked hamburgers... (New York Times, February 12, 1993; National, p. A23);

...caused by undercooked tainted hamburgers served at Jack in the Box restaurants,... (Los Angeles Times, February 17, 1993; Business, p. D2)

...from hamburgers... (New York Times, February 15, 1993; Business, p. D1)

...tainted hamburgers... (New York Times, March 3, 1993; Lifestyle, p. C1)

...undercooked, tainted hamburgers that sparked a food-poisoning epidemic... (Los Angeles Times, March 11, 1993; Business, D1)

...a deadly outbreak of bacterial contamination earlier this year that was linked to Jack in the Box hamburgers. (New York Times, April 17, 1993; Business, p. 44)

With the cause so clearly identified as undercooked hamburger, it is the solution of cooking that develops the most presence in the overall
Ironically, the proposed Federal regulations calling for an internal cooking temperature of 155 degrees for all meat was already in place in the State of Washington during the events. Jack in the Box claimed that they had failed to follow the regulations because the two memoranda notifying them of the rule change had not been brought to the attention of appropriate management:

Discussing the Washington state regulation, Nugent told the annual meeting [of shareholders] that Foodmaker was notified in May, 1992, of the new rule in a memo from the Bremerton-Kitsap County Health Department. The same memo was mailed last September to a Jack in the Box restaurant in Tacoma, Wash., Nugent added. According to Nugent, the memos "were not brought to the attention of appropriate management" until earlier this week.

Nugent said Foodmaker has appointed a committee of board members to find out why the two memos were not brought to the attention of appropriate company officials. (Los Angeles Times, February 13, 1993; Business, D1)

"Stunned shareholders" characterized the story of business implications throughout the coverage: What did the events mean to the business survival of Jack in the Box? How did the company respond, and how should they respond? Who among similar businesses would be affected? When would business get back to normal?

Jack in the Box has reeled from bad publicity following the outbreak because 75% to 80% of 149 cases in Washington involve customers who were afflicted with bloody diarrhea or severe stomach cramps after dining at the restaurant. (Los Angeles Times, January 23, 1993; Business, D1)

Since the outbreak of food-poisoning from hamburger sold at Jack in the Box outlets here in mid-January left two children dead, the stock of the chain's parent company, Foodmaker Inc., has dropped more than 30 percent. The 60 Jack in the Box restaurants in the state have been barraged by anonymous telephone callers accusing them of being baby killers. Customers are scarce. And local newspapers
have carried advertisements by lawyers offering to represent poisoning victims.

Analysts worry whether Jack in the Box will be able to recover. Public relations specialists say the chain had acted correctly in offering to cover the medical expenses of victims, in setting up a special telephone hotline, in making a generous contribution to help find a cure for the E. coli infection and in replacing Vons and letting the public know through an advertising campaign. But they agree that the company's initial reaction was damaging. [paragraph 6 of 21]

"Jack in the Box got off to a bad start because they first said they had no comment," said Michael Brennen, vice president of DeLauney Phillips Inc., a Seattle public relations firm that has followed the situation. "Then, they attempted to pass the blame to Vons. I would have advised them to step right up and accept responsibility. But they were acting from a legal standpoint of not wanting to accept the fault." [paragraph 7 of 21] (The New York Times, February 6, 1993; Business, p. 1)

'We are confident that our quick response, our financial resources and our insurance coverage are sufficient to protect the long-term viability of the company,' said Jack Goodall, president, chairman and chief executive of Foodmaker." (Los Angeles Times, February 9, 1993; Business, p. D4)

A decline in sales at Jack in the Box since the poisonings have begun to result in job losses...[loss of business] has been 'considerably harsher than the degree announced by Foodmaker.' (Los Angeles Times, February 13, 1993; Business, p. D1)

Most of the 65 new Jack in the Box fast-food restaurants planned for this year have been put on hold while the chain's parent company, Foodmaker Inc., assesses losses from an outbreak of food poisoning. (Los Angeles Times, February 16, 1993; Business, p. D4)

... [plans are] delayed a few weeks or deferred indefinitely depending on how Foodmaker rebounds from the outbreak, which killed one child and made more than 300 people ill...(Los Angeles Times, February 16, 1993; Business, p. D4)

The business angle was developed further in stories that speculated on the consequences of lawsuits that are either filed or anticipated (in particular, The New York Times, February 6 and April 17; Los Angeles Times, February 5; Washington Post, February 9). On March 25, 1993,
the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Jack in the Box was recovering from the episode:

Foodmaker said sales have bounced back thanks to product advertising and heavy discounting. Sales last week were 19% below the same period a year ago, a "significant improvement" from the 37% drop recorded in the week ended Feb. 7, Goodall said.

Foodmaker's stock rose 12.5 cents to close at $8.50 a share on the New York Stock Exchange, after trading as high as $9.125 earlier in the day. Analyst Sheila O'Connell of Duff & Phelps said the size of the projected loss is not surprising and that the company is expected to recover eventually.

"The important thing is getting that core customer back," O'Connell said, even if that means cutting into earnings with big product discounts. "I don't think the company minds losing money as long as sales are increasing." (*Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 1993; Lifestyle, p. H40)

The narrative of business concern, then, came full circle with this story. Jack in the Box "reeled from bad publicity," and sales declined; the missing memorandum regarding cooking temperatures stunned shareholders; the events worried business analysts; and expansion plans were delayed. In February, business prognosis depended "on how Foodmaker rebounds from the outbreak"; in March, stock was rising and heavy couponing was "getting that core customer back." Things were looking up for Foodmaker and Jack in the Box.

In contrast to the thorough development of the business narrative was the incomplete human drama that involved the victims of the food poisonings.
The individual people who died in Washington State from this food poisoning outbreak were Michael James Nole, Celina Shribbs, and Riley Detwiler. These people were mentioned by specific identifications in a total of ten stories: Michael's name was noted in six stories; Celina's name was noted in one story; and Riley's name was noted in three. Lauren Rudolph, of San Diego, was never mentioned by name, but was referred to five times as "a six-year girl" who had died in late December, 1992, from *E. coli* 0157:H7; four of the five stories noted that her death could not be linked to Jack in the Box. When names were not used, any mention of the dead children was by age:

So far in the state of Washington, state health officials have tallied 250 cases, positive and likely, of *E. coli* 0157:H7, a bacterial infection that strikes children especially hard. A 2-year-old boy died last Friday of complications associated with the infection. On Thursday a second child infected with the intestinal bacteria died suddenly, but health officials said they found "no obvious connection" to Jack in the Box. The 2 1/2-year-old girl was not known to have eaten at one of the restaurants, nor had any of her relatives, who could have spread the potent bacteria.

At Children's Hospital in Seattle, another 20 youngsters remain hospitalized with symptoms of *E. coli* poisoning. One is in grave condition, another in serious condition and six others are receiving dialysis. Infected individuals suffer strong cramps, vomiting and bloody diarrhea. Severe infections can result in kidney failure. *(Los Angeles Times, January 29, 1993; National, p. A3)*

But even when the children are named, they were not the featured theme of the story. In one example, under the headline, "Restaurant Not to Blame for Tainted Meat, Officials Say," Bob Nugent's personal
suffering is featured and developed as a theme prior to naming the two-year-old boy whose death has occasioned one particular story:

Jack in the Box President Bob Nugent said he felt betrayed by the sources of the tainted beef.
"Our responsibility as the people who cook and serve hamburgers is to put into place proper procedures and cautions to ensure the safety of our guests," Nugent said from the company's headquarters in San Diego. "We feel very responsible for anyone who eats in our restaurants. "But we have to rely on our suppliers to hold up their end of the chain of events, to make sure they do the prudent procedures and take the necessary precautions (to process and deliver good meat). Yes, I feel like somebody let us down." (paragraphs 10, 11, and 12 of 23)

Dr. John Kobayashi, a Washington state epidemiologist, said Friday that it was established that 2-year-old Michael Nole had eaten at a Jack in the Box within a week before being hospitalized with severe abdominal cramps and bloody diarrhea. The youngster died Friday of severe kidney complications, he said. (paragraph 17 of 23) (Los Angeles Times, January 23, 1993; Local/Metro, p. A1):

It was Riley Detwiler's death that received the most attention in connection with his parents' appearance at the nationally televised "Town Meeting" with President Clinton on February 11:

A child whose parents appeared on President Clinton's electronic town meeting earlier this month became the third person to die from an outbreak of food poisoning, doctors said.

The boy, 17-month-old Riley Detwiler, died Saturday at Seattle Children's Hospital from respiratory failure brought on by an infection with the E. coli bacteria, they said. (Los Angeles Times, February 21, 1993; National, p. A16)

His parents, Darin and Vicki Detwiler, on Feb. 11 asked Clinton to move quickly on health revision and to improve the U.S. system of meat inspection....Vicki Detwiler told the president the family faced a staggering health bill because her husband lost his job -- and the family's medical insurance -- just two days before their son fell ill. (Washington Post, February 21, 1993; National, p. A11)

A boy whose parents appeared on President Clinton's "town meeting" in Michigan this month has become the third person to die from an outbreak of E. coli bacteria poisoning traced to hamburgers at a fast-food chain. (paragraph 1 of 16)
The boy, 17-month-old Riley Detwiler, died Saturday at Seattle Children's Hospital from respiratory failure brought on by an infection with the E. coli bacteria, doctors said. (paragraph 2 of 16)

His parents, Darin and Vicki Detwiler, appeared on Mr. Clinton's "town meeting" on Feb. 11 to ask the President to move quickly on health reform and to improve the nation's system of meat inspection. (paragraph 3 of 16)

During the "town meeting," Vicki Detwiler told the President that the family faced a staggering health bill because her husband had lost his job and the family's medical insurance two days before their son became infected. (paragraph 10 of 16)


Toward the conclusion, the same story mentioned the deaths of the other two children:

The first victim of the food-poisoning outbreak was Michael Nole, 2, of Tacoma, Wash., who died Jan. 22 of renal failure caused by the bacteria. The child had eaten a hamburger from a Jack in the Box outlet. (paragraph 12 of 16)

Another child, Celina Shribbs, 2, of Seattle, died Jan. 28 at Children's Hospital as the result of an E. coli infection. The source of her infection has not been determined. (paragraph 14 of 16)

It was only through the interaction of Riley Detwiler's parents with President Clinton that the national news coverage developed a human face for the events in terms of a mother's worries about her family's challenges. It was a different social issue—that of health care—that emerged as the driving force behind the Detwiler's pleas.

Thus, in the narrative of E. coli 0157:H7, Michael James Nole's death and the serious illnesses of three other children is subordinated to business concerns of Jack in the Box; Celina Shribbs is identified as "another child," and by name in a dependent clause; the reports of Riley Detwiler's death highlight the unrelated national circumstances of a
Presidential Town Meeting; and Lauren Rudolph's death in San Diego in December 1992 remains unconnected to the events at hand.14

Analysis and Discussion

As we saw in Chapter Two, objectivity as a journalistic ideal is operationalized through practices geared to present impartial information to audiences in a linear organization, with emphasis on concrete details, balance of views, clear attribution of sources, and a passive construction to separate the writer from the information. All of these practices may be considered rhetorical elements of objectivity. Rhetoric of inquiry, as discussed in Chapter Three, has looked at how these and other rhetorical elements may--intentionally or otherwise--serve to create and support particular worldviews within purportedly objective texts. Based on the narrative of E. coli 0157:H7 as it developed in this particular news coverage, how do these rhetorical elements relate to journalism's worldview of positivism? What underlying values and assumptions does this relationship authorize, and how do these rhetorical elements of objectivity serve to open or close possibilities for social action?
Placement

The development of separate sections in newspapers served the mutual purposes of providing a place to run stories of interest to specific audiences, and providing a distinct marketing tool for target audiences. The objectivist epistemology that drives journalism sees placement as an efficient—and pragmatically marketable—means of directing pre-existing information to an audience who would find the material interesting. What such a view overlooks is that meaning cannot be separated from its cultural setting. Taking a rhetorical perspective on journalism directs us to view placement as part of narrative construction for the audience because designated sections of the paper have pre-determined meaning.

The news stories were offered in three different sections of each newspaper: national, business, and lifestyle (see Table 2).

Table 2. Placement of News Reports by Paper, Section, and Number of Words

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<tr>
<td>Total of 16,500 words</td>
<td>Total of 7,620 words</td>
<td>Total of 8,299 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,100 Business pages</td>
<td>2,959 Lifestyle</td>
<td>6354 Lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,650 Metro pages [Local]</td>
<td>2,137 National pages</td>
<td>1,945 National pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,130 Lifestyle [Food/men/home]</td>
<td>2,009 Financial pages</td>
<td>[Science/ Health]</td>
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<tr>
<td>2,632 National news</td>
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Each of the different sections developed the *E. coli* narrative with an emphasis appropriate to the section. As we saw above, the business themes developed in the narrative dealt with continued success of the company, stock prices, lost sales, canceled expansion plans, and appropriate public relations responses for companies facing public crises, as well as concern for legal ramifications. The themes of the lifestyle stories developed in conjunction with questions of the appropriate actions to take in safeguarding the food supply. In terms of placement, the value of the story of *E. coli* 0157:H7 lies not in it surrounding national or political issues, but in issues of interest to women and family home caretakers—the intended audience for "lifestyle" coverage—or as a question of threat to business viability.

Valuing this story as a Lifestyle or business story has implicit policy implications in terms of appropriate solutions in that women do not hold the same political power to change the system that is held by either men, or by both men and women in the wider audience given to national news. As a rhetorical element, placement functions as an unchallenged, normative assumption that directs in part how we should feel about the events. In this way, placement does, in part, serve to
construct meaning. Recognizing the role of different rhetorical elements in constructing meaning is profoundly important to journalism's ability to achieve its own goal of representational accuracy to increase understanding of the day's events. The story here of *E. coli* is unsatisfying, and questions remain: Is this a story of national importance or not? And, if so, does its importance lie in the business implications, or in changing how we cook in our own kitchens?

**Linear structure**

As noted in Chapter Two, the linear structure of news stories allows information to be organized in a hierarchy of themes. Objective news reporting is displayed rhetorically by condensing the main elements, as observed by the reporter, into the headline and the lead paragraph, with subordinate actions or related themes introduced in the next few sentences or paragraphs. Arrangement of news stories in this sense is designed to reveal the essential facts of the events, and to provide the introduction to the event.

Looking at structure from a rhetorical perspective, the emphasis on hierarchy directs the writer to give supplementary, not equal, treatment to other views, and encourages an overall pattern of subordination. For example, when discourse emphasizing Bob Nugent's personal suffering
is featured and developed as a theme prior to naming the two-year-old boy whose death has occasioned one particular story (Los Angeles Times, January 23, 1993), Michael James Nole's death, and the serious illnesses of three other children, is subordinated to the business concerns of Jack in the Box.

Hierarchy values relationships of domination, and developing relationships within the news stories develops our understanding of the events. The consequences of this to the goals of journalism are not visible from an epistemological position of gathering and presenting pre-existing knowledge. In objective journalism, the journalist acts as witness, not judge, to the most important theme. However, in an arena of evolving socially-constructed knowledge, choosing the pattern of domination for the public good can be seen to be an undertaking with immense ethical implications.

But structure does not work alone in subordinating some views to others. Valuing the concrete at the expense of the abstract is another rhetorical element of objectivity that encourages this.

**Concrete details**

A received view directs journalists to the observable and confirmable, which emphasizes concrete details of an event. Numbers, places, and
names, for example, become important. These stories are no exception. But from a rhetorical perspective, the consequences of relying on quotes and official interpretation of events may not be in accord with journalistic goals.

For example, there is no reason to doubt that the journalist accurately observed Bob Nugent, president of Jack in the Box, saying that he felt "betrayed" (see Los Angeles Times, January 23, 1993, paragraphs nine through eleven). But when objective news procedures allow—even encourage—Nugent to name the additional problem of "betrayal," the rhetoric positions him as having been wronged. When someone is betrayed, the failing is not bad management, or disregard for human life, or crass commercialism at the expense of food safety; arguably, the failing can characterized as "trusting." Trusting is a sympathetic failing; the implied solution of "not to trust" is, on the other hand, a harsh solution, one that is contrary to decency. In this way, the rhetoric of a factual, accurate, received quote develops a sense of concern for Jack in the Box and its president, Bob Nugent. It positions the company as suffering from the events; the rhetoric creates a sense of vulnerability for the company. Naming the problem as betrayal develops those who are betrayed as suffering wrongly and of being
worthy of the audience's concern. Persuasively, the discourse offered shows why the audience should be concerned about Bob Nugent (he was betrayed), and Jack in the Box (the headline reads: "Restaurant not to blame"). Betrayal and blamelessness argue that Nugent and Jack in the Box do not deserve the suffering that has befallen them (Clark, 1984).

While concrete observation of material quotes names the emotions of vested interests, emotional engagement of the deaths of Michael James Nole, Celina Shribbs and Riley Detwiler remains mute. The epistemic paradigm of journalistic objectivity that has historically valued the rational over the emotional has, in this case, assimilated the values of one particular party through rational procedures designed to exclude subjectivity of the reporter. The vested interests of the business involved have, through their quotes, establish whatever emotion appears in the story. There is no comparable development of the emotional aspects of death. When lack of development is considered in light of the narrative's emphasis on audience obligation in making sure meat is thoroughly cooked, the rhetoric of concrete, observable details such as quotes in this one example seems to put the victims in
the uncomfortable position of being somewhat responsible for their own suffering.

The importance in this example lies in the fact that it is an exclusion of journalist emotion that has allowed—through observation of concrete detail—a particular expression of emotion to enter the social narrative, that of restraint of emotion. We are asked, in a sense, not to feel.

**Balance**

The received view directs journalists to search for a pre-existing truth, and it assumes that by telling the story fairly, the truth will be allowed to surface. The problem of competing reports in journalism has been answered historically by the journalistic edict to provide "balanced coverage" and balanced reporting appears as a metaphor for objectivity throughout journalism literature, a phrase which encompasses the reporter's professional dictum to present both sides of the story.

The fairness and equality addressed by the balance metaphor assumes that one of the "opposing views" contains the truth—or at least, in less than ultimate terms, contains a reasonable view of the events. In operationalizing balance, journalists attempt to identify and interview those who are interested parties. This narrative, for example, first exhibited balance by casting the events as causal questions between
Jack in the Box and Vons, their supplier: who was responsible?

Fairness of coverage was achieved by quoting both. The USDA then entered the conversation as a third voice, balanced by its perceived counterpart, the meat industry. The complex topic of meat safety thus was fragmented into simply dualities: either Jack in the Box or Vons is telling the truth; the USDA inspectors will oppose the meat industry.

The resulting oppositional frame within which the story is cast implies that one side is right and one is wrong, thus dictating the relationships of interested parties. Reducing the complexity of choices to either/or equations would seem to hinder journalism's goal of informing a democratic public of issues of social consequence: What happens if the "truth" lies outside the dichotomy? Casting the USDA as watchdog over the meat industry, for example, disregards completely any ethical and moral considerations of animal consumption or other issues voiced by animal rights activists. Such a dichotomy similarly does not seek to engage ecological concerns of intensive animal agriculture that have been raised by environmentalists. Concentrating the discussion on how to provide "safe hamburgers" assumes that any health concerns regarding consumption of high-fat animal products by humans have no merit. These topics provide a layer of complexity, but indeed are all
part of the wider questions that a democratic public needs to consider in order to make more reasoned decisions within the topic area.

Does the audience need such a complex picture of interrelationships in order to make reasoned decisions? From a perspective that does not publicly concede that knowledge is negotiated, the participation of other voices is not only unnecessary but may be viewed as dangerous diversions to finding Truth. However, a full recognition of the implications of a social construction of knowledge emphasizes the need to clarify issues within the topic area in order to understand what is at stake in assenting to a particular position. Other voices are not diversions at all, but contributory forces in constructing the social panorama. Objectivist epistemology constrains the ability of the reporter to provide a democratic public with this fuller understanding of the events by not recognizing other voices as relevant. Although undertaken to increase fairness, when dichotomy denies the complexity of issues of social consequence, a fuller understanding of important interrelationships among social events does not develop.

**Attribution**

Attribution works in tandem with balance in assuring representational accuracy by providing important information about the source of the
information. The style of attribution of sources has also been seen as a journalistic practice that works to ensure fairness by disclosing a private agendas that might be otherwise remain hidden (Schudson, 1978). In public issue debates, alternative perspectives are seen as value-laden and motive-driven, and thus are eyed warily by journalists trained in the value of objectivity. Conversely, those who represent the status quo, especially in positions of authority, are viewed as neutral. In taking a rhetorical perspective on these conventions, attribution of material has striking similarities to the classical proof of ethos. Looking at this journalistic convention as a form of ethos directs us to look at how this type of attribution warrants the knowledge presented by serving as proof of the source's credibility.

The government authorities who responded to the events are identified as "health authorities," "health experts," "health officials," "federal officials," "federal and health scientists." This style of identification, accepted as good journalistic practice for providing background on the events (Garrison, 1990), signifies a high level of competence for the speakers through the terms "experts," "officials," and "scientists." Weaver (1953) would call these "god terms" because of the close alignment these terms have with truth. The consistent use of
plurals denotes not a single person, but rather a whole community that has spoken definitively on these events. The effect connotes a discourse not from an actual human, but from an ultimate source. The use of these terms is profuse. In coverage by The New York Times, material is attributed to "health officials" or "health authorities" eighteen times; the Los Angeles Times uses these identifiers thirty-nine times; and the Washington Post uses the terms twenty-two times.

Authorities have offered a double-edged narrative of reassurance and impossibility: the U.S. has the safest food supply possible despite the impossibility of removing all bacteria. Is pathogenic bacteria at the lowest level possible or not? Reassurance seems incompatible with the emergence of a new, stronger, different toxin in E. coli 0157:H7.

Through attribution, issues of food safety became aligned with special interests. Looking at attribution as a form of ethos reveals the convention to have powerful persuasive appeal in that the use of a personified plural encourages the audience to view the material as being offered from the ultimate source, and conversely, challenging voices are limited through qualification. Such an approach sets the boundaries of truth carefully and limits the alternatives severely. To present the truth as given by the authorities is to short-circuit the ability
of journalists to tell the full story. Unsubstantiated by authority, the information cannot be included, or is included to a lesser degree.

Challengers to the status quo of the authorities thus are kept from speaking on important societal questions. Journalism understands the importance of presenting information for full understanding: How do we as a society respond intelligently to situations in which we do not hear alternative views to dominant paradigms?

Passive construction

Passive construction in news writing is supported by a received view that endorses removing the author from the events. Passive voice increases objectivity by emphasizing the separateness of author and information. But as a consequence, when the witness to the events—that is, the journalist—is removed from the scene, the reader takes a step back, too:

The President was asked Wednesday night at the "town hall" meeting to address the problem of tainted meat sold by the Jack in the Box fast-food chain in Washington State. A 2-year-old boy died and 400 people became ill after eating the hamburgers. (New York Times, February 12; national, p. A23)

The paragraph is not wrong or inaccurate, but passive construction directs the audience around the human element of the story: Who asked the question? Despite the length of the article (816 words), this information does not appear, and the salience of the topic to the
questioner was never made clear. It was Riley Detwiler's mother, Vicki, who asked the question. Passive construction privileges the question over the questioner. When the questioner has passionate involvement in topic, marginalizing the questioner marginalizes the passion. Again, this is not problematic under the aegis of passionless rationalism; indeed, passive structure is viewed as desirable exactly because it removes passion. Yet separating reason and passionate commitment, as Booth (1974) points out, keeps people from a full understanding of each other's views, and it directs us around questions of ethical care and concern. Here is a woman whose child lies dying in a hospital far away, who is voicing concern for two significant social issues—health care and food safety—yet passive construction asks us to focus on the question to a politician as our object of care.

The use of passive construction holds other consequences for journalism, as well. The use of passive construction is a syntactic option that can work to privilege physical objects by investing "objects with the importance ordinarily bestowed on human beings" (Gross, 1990, p. 70). Gross suggests that "systematic overuse of certain syntactic options" (p. 69) act as semantic strategies for argumentation within purportedly objective texts. Interestingly, while Gross assumes
intent to argue, his comments are equally well-taken when the rhetor intends not to argue, which is the assumption here. A close look at a particular example is a case in point.

As discussed above, the hamburger and the hamburger cooking process developed great presence in relationship with assignation of blame. Of interest in the many characterizations of the cause of the problem is the construction of the verb phrase "undercooked hamburger." The active form--undercooking--is used in only two of these prominent examples; the passive construction that reinforces autonomy of the hamburger is the favored construction for this verb phrase.

In the *E. coli* stories, the hamburger itself becomes a privileged physical object through this passive construction. Although the origin of the *E. coli* bacteria is stated factually as unsanitary processing conditions of sick cows at one or more slaughterhouses, "undercooked hamburger" develops as the cause of the poisonings. In a Burkian sense, undercooked hamburger encompasses both agent and agency by combining "who did the act" with "how it was it done" (Burke, 1990; Brock, 1990). The effect rhetorically is that "undercooked hamburger" as a freely active physical object unto itself becomes more salient to the
audience because of its close association with both cause and
ingredient. Salience, in turn relates to persuasive force of the ideas
presented. This increased presence, as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca
(1969) call it, serves as the base from which other suppositions may
follow. In each case, the reporter has related factual information that *E.
coli* 0157:H7 is spread during slaughter when fecal matter in the
intestines of sick cows comes in contact with meat. Yet passive
construction, prized by objective writing and valued for its ability to
remove the human factor, has created increased presence for the
undercooked hamburger as the causal agent. Again, rhetorical
elements have connected the events to changes in cooking, not in
meat processing.

Passive construction as a rhetorical element of objectivity does not,
in this example, seem to increase understanding of other possible
solutions. In fact, it seems to have encouraged disregarding other
options. An important consequence for journalistic practice lies in
whether or not this was something the writer wanted to do. Given that
objectivity has been embraced by journalists to avoid coloring the
information with partisan arguments, the answer would seem to be no,
the writer did not intend to do this. The pragmatics of passive
construction as a rhetorical element of objectivity thus is questionable: it not only prevents full engagement of reasons, it can inadvertently structure the text to privilege one perspective over another. Other consequences of language choice result not from the conscious selection, but from a lack of awareness of rhetorical strength of certain language conventions.

**Unconscious language choice**

Through concepts such as Aristotelian *stases*, or more recently Bitzer's rhetorical situation, rhetorical theory recognizes that naming the problem dictates much of what follows. Relying on material observation of concrete detail encourages—even requires—others to name the problem for the journalist. Rhetorically, the character of the events is developed by naming the problem and the solution to that exigence. In story after story, as the narrative indicates above, the problem was clearly identified:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem:</th>
<th>undercooked beef</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solution:</td>
<td>more cooking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As witness to the events, the journalist had many ways to name the problem in this story; "undercooked beef" is just one choice. This choice directs the audience to the solution of "more cooking" as a
reasonable solvency step for this problem. If the problem were to be stated as "the presence of infected beef," for example, the audience might be directed to a solution that entails avoiding having infected beef at the restaurant in the first place.

The presence of the *E. coli* bacteria, however, is not noted as a problem; in fact, the bacteria is noted as "commonly found in beef that has not been properly prepared" (Washington Post, January 19, 1993). This implies that if beef is properly prepared, then there was no *E. coli* present. Presenting the problem this way, however, again directs the solution to proper beef preparation:

- **Problem:** *E. coli* bacteria, commonly found in beef that has not been properly prepared
- **Solution:** prepare beef properly

Disregarding the structuring role of language choices is possible, and unproblematic, in a received view supported by objectivist epistemology because as long as the language is factual, the implications are beyond ethical concern. The significance for journalism is that some meanings are developed by some language and not by others, and—most importantly—not all meanings contributed to a greater understanding of issues of social consequence. Developing meanings develops our understanding of the events. Thus language structures our response to
the event as well. In this case, since the problem implies such a clear solution, the blended meaning in this language might well be to disregard other paths of action without engaging the issue of contaminated meat fully.

Overlooking the structuring role of language choices holds other consequences as well. Tropes and figures in direct quotes throughout the coverage smuggle in arguments that work within the rhetorical environment to direct understanding in a very subtle yet unmistakable manner.

Throughout the coverage, statements are attributed to inanimate entities which, in addition to drawing on the strength of god terms as discussed under attribution, above, results in personification for these entities. Nineteen references in the artifacts associate the "Federal Government" with an action verb: "said," "presents," "prepares," "inspects," "fails." Twenty-one other references can be found for the Agriculture Department--"issued," "said," "has," "gave approval," "wrestled," "had made an effort," as well as nine such references for health departments. Personification of these agencies invests them with a human quality; in this case, since the attributions are closely aligned with health concerns, the human quality of concern is manifested for
these entities because of the style of attribution. In effect, 
personification in conjunction with an appeal to credibility provides a 
vehicle for an emotional response of concern that is appropriate to the 
narrative. But it is the discursive design of attribution in this case that 
denotes this concern, a concern that is neither warranted nor assured, 
nor indeed even human.

In stark contrast to this, interested parties who speak in opposition to 
the findings or suggestions of these universal authorities are identified 
specifically by name, agency, and agenda.

Gerald Kuester, director of food safety of the Center for Science in 
the Public Interest, a health advocacy group, is identified as such and 
quoted by The New York Times in a February 12 article: "We need a 
single agency, as has been proposed every year since 1977," said 
Gerald Kuester, director of food safety of the Center for Science in the 
Public Interest, a health advocacy group." Later, in a March 3 article, 
Kuester's former association with the Agriculture Department is 
highlighted:

Gerald Kuester, a microbiologist who spent 20 years at the Agriculture 
Department and at the Food and Drug Administration before becoming the director 
of food safety for the Center for Science in the Public Interest in Washington, 
blames "the institutional thinking" at the Agriculture Department for the outbreak of 
food poisoning from the deadly bacterium, E. coli 0157:H7. (The New York Times, 
March 3, 1993)
The attribution and identification reads in at least two ways. Certainly, Kuester's long-term association with the department lends him a credibility as an insider, one who knows about which he speaks. But, identified as whistle-blowing discourse from a former employee, it enters the social environment as suspect. Of whistle-blowers in general, Jeff Goldberg (1990) writes "Whistle-blowers are shunned as malcontents, loose cannons, and misfits even after such wrongs as Watergate, Three Mile Island, thalidomide, and the Dalkon shield stirred widespread outrage over government and corporate misconduct."

Whistle-blowers represent both the best of our society in fighting for the social good, and the worst, in refusing to be "a team player," or breaking the cardinal rule of "don't rock the boat." Identification of Kuester as a malcontent destroys much of whatever credibility is created through the long-term association. Further supporting Kuester's persona as a disenfranchised outsider is attribution wherein he "contends" rather than "states": "Mr. Kuester contends that the department should have investigated the source of the 1982 outbreak but didn't." (The New York Times, March 3, 1993)

Similar attribution is afforded to Carol Tucker Foreman, whose quotes are qualified with "in my view" and "wondered":
Carol Tucker Foreman, who was an Assistant Secretary of Agriculture in the Carter Administration, said: "In my view, fresh meat and poultry and fish do not have to be contaminated with pathogenic bacteria. Pathogenic contamination is not a natural occurrence and should be viewed as an added substance." (The New York Times, March 3, 1993, paragraph 6 of 30)

Ms. Foreman, now a public-policy consultant, wondered whether the Agriculture Department's seal of approval on the meats it inspects was misleading. "Does it really make sense for the Government to put a stamp on something that says 'inspected for wholesomeness' and know it contains pathogenic bacteria?" she asked. "The department can't have it both ways." (The New York Times, March 3, 1993, paragraph 15 of 30)

Linguistical modifiers such as "in my view" can be seen as a way of "calling attention to the object [here the discourse] as a private possession of the mind." (Gergen, 1994, p. 275) Although this is a direct quote from Ms. Tucker-Foreman, it must be recognized that "in my opinion" or "in my view" is a common lead-in or tag line when expressing convictions. Why it does not appear in other discourse is the question. There is a chance that authorities speaking on behalf of organizations do not say "in my view," but Ms. Tucker-Foreman is a former bureaucrat and who probably would share their speech codes. Another (unprovable) interpretation would be that similar lead-in quotes from authorities have been edited. If authorities, in a received view of knowledge, have access to the truth, there would be no need to label their thoughts as opinion—which has long been seen as the perverse imposter of truth.16
Summary

This analysis looked at the practical application of some well-accepted positivist rhetorical elements of objectivity. Placement, which functions as a normative assumption regarding the value of the text, directed us to value this story as one of Lifestyle or business concern. Linear structure forces the journalist to choose whose interests are more important but does not provide for explanation of the choice. In this case, condensed thematic elements offered in the headline and lead paragraph resulted in supplementary—not equal—treatment for the victims in the narrative.

Other elements were equally restricting. Rhetorically, reliance on observation of concrete details encouraged the journalists to report verbatim vested interests; the voices of the children were only heard through hospital spokespeople and—in the case of Riley Detwiler—in relation to political questions of health care reform. The interpretation of balance as opposing, authoritative views cast the events in an oppositional framework between restaurant interests and the USDA. This excluded and devalued other voices entirely, denied the complexity of the events, and prevented development of a fuller understanding of the events. The forms of acceptable attribution afforded to various
perspectives presented the voices of the USDA and health departments as conclusive authoritative information. At the same time, and in stark contrast, expression of alternatives to authoritative views, which might have provided a fuller understanding of the issues, was hindered because the rhetorical element of attribution from a positivist's view directs journalists to label authorities as value-neutral truth, and alternative voices as value-laden opinion.

In constructing the overall story, the practical application of passive voice stems from positivist direction to remove subjectivity from the story; as a rhetorical element of objectivity, passive voice served to remove not only the writer, but the audience as well by denuding any sense of passion from the events. By removing a human factor in the discourse, passive construction directed disproportionate attention to inanimate objects—especially to the hamburger as a causal agent—with similar disproportionate sanction for one solution over other possible routes of social action. Ultimately, the language choices dictated by the rhetorical elements of objectivity developed different meanings which in turn developed our understanding of the events. Since the elements work together to produce a news story, their limitations work together as well.
Condit suggests that narratives provide "grounds and fuel to generate an argument but do not point us fully toward precise social claims" (p. 36). Without making precise social claims, these narratives do provide frameworks for meaning of the events and evaluation of the incident. As such, their persuasive significance can be found in how the narratives serve to limit or direct the areas of discussion to assessment of blame, loss of business, and concerns of public trust. Contrast these agenda items to resolution of the problem, providing a safe food supply, and avoiding future problems, and a very different meaning emerges for the social impact of the news coverage. Alternative narratives would provide alternative frameworks for evaluation of the incident.

In sum, many of the interpretations likely to be reached do not support journalism in its goal of providing a complete news report, nor do they focus on public good above public harm, and it is questionable whether the information reached a level of interpretive sufficiency in representing the event in terms of human tragedy. How to get beyond the wall between private and public interests is one of the biggest challenges to journalists today, especially when we recognize the
probability that the private interests involved in a story are schooled in press relations.

In this particular study, specific rhetorical elements designed to exclude the subjective have been linked in subtle ways to varying consequences for the goals of journalism. The irony is that the shortcomings result from the very principles of journalism reporting that were designed to protect the public interest: the operationalized tenets of objective journalism. It appears that the current features of journalism news stories are too constraining to describe the affective features of human crisis. Procedural objectivity minimizes humanity while it maximizes the more tangible economic foci. The importance of this observation is found in assessing journalism's ability to incorporate an alternative ethical system that might position journalism practice more closely in line with the needs of a democratic society in terms of understanding social implications of complex issues. While journalism ethicists such as Clifford Christians et al.'s (1993) argue eloquently for a new social ethic for American journalism, deep rhetorical practices of objective journalism do not bridge application and actualization.

As we saw in Chapter Three, part of the promise of rhetoric of inquiry is in finding a way to reach beyond such impasses by recognizing and
connecting a human element of communication to the creation of socio-historical knowledge such as is presented in these journalism texts. Connecting the findings here with implications for the study of journalism theory, practice and pedagogy is the next step, and I turn now to alternative accounts to reinterpret journalistic objectivity from a position of deep subjective engagement.
Endnotes to Chapter IV

1. The vagueness of the preceding sentences is not literary foreshadowing. The herd from which the infected cow or cows came, the slaughter house where they died, and the processing plant where their remains were mixed with the flesh of cows from at least five other locations, remain unidentifiable. Records of this nature are not kept in the American cattle business. There was some call for improved recording keeping since identification of the contaminated herd, for example, would facilitate treatment of the infected animals. Cost and logistics make it unlikely that such records will be kept in the near future.

2. The bacteria also has been linked in two separate cases to contaminated apple cider and a city water supply. The unpasteurized apple cider appears to have been contaminated by cow feces in the apple orchard, and the water supply in southern Missouri in December 1989 was contaminated when water lines burst. The water supply poisonings indicate that E. Coli 0157:H7 is unusually potent since ill effects were not diluted by the large volumes of water.

3. The San Diego County coroner determined the presence of E. coli 0157:H7, but county health officials did not make a public announcement of the finding despite the fact that Jack in the Box hamburgers were being served in several elementary schools there during this time. To date, the San Diego County Health Department lists five illnesses associated with Jack in the Box hamburgers, while the Center for Disease Control associates 34 cases with Jack in the Box fast food outlets. Questions of political interference arose in San Diego, the corporate home of Foodmaker, the parent company of Jack in the Box. Adding to the controversy is the fact that the mayor's husband is chief executive officer of Foodmaker (personal communication with San Diego-based food safety activist Donna Rosenbaum, October 13, 1994).
4. Although some of the local stories are carried in the selected papers as "specials" or through reprinted Associated Press stories, the local newspaper texts were not used as artifacts for two reasons. First, it is national policy implications that are of interest here, not local questions. Second, by selecting the top three papers in the nation, the level of journalistic expertise across the artifacts may be assumed to be on a somewhat equal footing, as may a commitment to objectivity as a professional tenet of journalism.

5. Contrary to evidence in the artifacts, questions of meat safety had been raised by inspectors for at least eight years prior to this outbreak. The Streamlined Inspection System was approved by the Reagan administration in 1984 as part of a program to deregulate the meat industry. In the program, meat inspection was transferred to quality control workers at the individual plants. Although SIS was amended in 1992, government inspectors still have little no power to stop shipments of diseased beef; they can only report it to the business.

6. On March 10, the Government Accountability Project (GAP) issued a news release with copies of a follow-up memo from the meat industry representative detailing agreement by the USDA inspection administrator that the new regulation only applied to obvious fecal matter. "Obvious" fecal matter was defined as being greenish, and not mixed with mud or other dirt; if it was mixed, it was not to be considered "obvious." The memo also indicated that "inspectors who seem to get out of line on this" should be "reported to the Dallas Regional office." None of the three papers used information from the release, or reported the equivocation. Elaine Dodge, legal counsel for GAP, said she believes the obvious political agenda of her office often prevents information from being used by the big papers (personal communication, October 7, 1994).

7. At a February 5 news conference, USDA Secretary Mike Espy outlined a number of short-term measures he plans to implement over the next two years:
   * Label all raw meat and poultry product packaging with handling and cooking instructions.
   * Accelerate federal approval of irradiation for use on beef.
* Improve record-keeping at all federally inspected meat plants.
* Fill 550 meat inspector vacancies nationwide.
* Use organic acid rinses on carcasses in slaughter plants.
* Develop rapid laboratory tests that can detect the presence of E. coli 0157:H7 within 24 hours.* (Los Angeles Times, February 6, 1993)

8. Under the current rules, they could not stop the meat from reaching the consumer even if they found bacterial contamination; the only power a Federal meat inspector has is to tag and report the suspected product to the meat processing plant. Many inspectors have complained of harassment when they do tag and report (see EN:5).

9. Coverage on February 6 and 12 in all three papers following Espy's news conferences mentioned adding inspectors, with the Washington Post headlining the information on February 12. One additional story in the Los Angeles Times, on March 18, referred to the plan as well.


12. Senator Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.), who heads the Agriculture committee noted the limitations of this solution:
   "I know thorough cooking is an answer, but it is not the complete answer because errors are made," said Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt). "Children will continue to eat in restaurants. Children do not bring meat thermometers with them to restaurants. Parents make mistakes also, but the death penalty is too strong a penalty for a cooking error." (Los Angeles Times, February 11, 1993; Lifestyle, p. H2; paragraph 10 of 23)

13. For privacy purposes, newspaper policies sometimes require family consent before naming minor children, especially in instances of questionable death. This was not the case with the Rudolph family. (Personal communication, Donna Rosenbaum,
October 17, 1993; Ms. Rosenbaum works with Lauren’s mother, Roni, in the food safety coalition, “Safe Tables Our Priority!”

14. The problem was popularly perceived as a local, Seattle problem affecting one company despite indications that the problem was more widespread. For example, since hamburger meat processing takes place in a continuous run, the likelihood of the bacteria being in more than one particular “batch” is very high. While the original source of the bacteria could have come from one cow, many batches of meat would have been contaminated. Indeed, based on the widespread recall, this possibility was recognized, yet the links to Lauren Rudolph’s death in San Diego were all but overlooked in this narrative. The potential harm this presented to the public—especially to San Diego, where elementary school lunches are catered by Jack in the Box—remains unfathomable.

15. If this situation is looked at as a debate, rather than a news event, the implications are clear. The Affirmative (unsubstantiated source) in the debate challenges the negative (status quo, authority). The Affirmative has the burden to prove that there is something significantly wrong with the status quo, and the system needs to be changed in order to solve the problem. Suppose that the Affirmative raises issues, evidence and testimony to that effect, and does an admirable job of meeting the burden of proof. Debate rules at this point would direct the Negative to respond to the evidence as given, in order to show that the problem is not significant, or that the system can accommodate the problem, or that the proposed solution will not work. But what if the Negative never hears the Affirmative’s objections? There would be no way to respond intelligently to the proposals. Or what if, upon hearing the Affirmative’s concerns, the Negative just said, “You’re mistaken” and sat down. The debate judges would have an easy time making a decision—in favor of the Affirmative—because the Negative, representing the authority of the status quo, has not met the obligation to engage the issues that are of concern to the challenger.
16. The term "in my view" does not appear anywhere else in the text. Similar expressions are limited: "I think" is attributed once to Bob Nugent, Jack in the Box president, and once to Denny Lynch, vice-president of Wendy's; one use of the term "in my opinion" was attributed to USDA Secretary Mike Espy (Los Angeles Times, February 3, 1993); holding an "opinion" was used once in conjunction with Gerald Kuester: "Mr. Kuester reflects the widely held opinion that crowding chickens together, the use of feed heavily contaminated with salmonella, the lack of rodent control in chicken houses, the mixing of clean and dirty birds after slaughter all increase the number of pathogens in the birds." (New York Times, March 3, 1993; emphasis added)

17. Especially in light of journalism's goal of avoiding partisan endorsement, the difference is noted here to emphasize that this rhetoric both limits some perspectives while it serves to enable other perspectives.
CHAPTER V

Achieving Objectivity through Subjectivity: An Alternative

Of all the things that rhetoric of inquiry tells us about objectivity and rhetorical practices, the combined insights rest on understanding the role of rhetoric in social construction. Rhetorical elements of objectivity as operationalized in journalism practice contain their own sets of values, assumptions, and emotions. The importance of understanding the difference between a received view of knowledge and a socially constructed view lies in the ramifications of subjective involvement on the part of the journalist.

As we saw, a rhetorical perspective on journalism revealed the limitations of objectivity as operationalized in journalism. Separating the journalist from the events separates the audience from the events as well. Audiences share the journalists' removed-eye's view of aloof observation. Concentrating on observation limits the ability to engage abstract issues and implications. It would seem, then, that placing the journalist in the story—that is, connecting the subjective with the
objective—would connect the audience to the events in a substantially
different manner. What happens when the journalist tells a story in first
person, acknowledges feelings, and relates personal experiences?
What happens when the quotes of others in opposition are replaced
with a synthesis of experience from a person—including a journalist--
deeply involved in the events? Do these alternatives suggest any
benefits to changing the rhetorical practices of journalists?

In this final chapter, I discuss the concept of subjectivity, and
look briefly at an alternative account of the E. coli poisonings that
displays characteristics antithetical to journalistic objectivity. Examining
the difference displayed in this alternative account leads to a brief
discussion of some experimental journalism coverage. I use these
examples as background to a discussion of what a rhetorical
perspective on journalism might provide in terms of understanding
subjective involvement as a way to move beyond objectivity and
relativism. I end the chapter with a discussion of implications for
journalism practice and some directions for further study.

Developing Subjectivity

Objectivity is embraced in journalism, as well as in other social
and natural sciences, for its perceived utility in offering valid criteria for
evaluation. The limitations of objectivity described in this study and others support the necessity of looking closely at other models. Within rhetoric of inquiry's understanding of objectivity, one model remains that has not been operationalized for journalism practice and which seems especially appropriate to the concerns at hand: dialectical objectivity which emphasizes the connection between knower and known.

The difference between dialectical objectivity and the way objectivity is currently operationalized in journalism practice stems from an emphasis on the special sensitivity a journalist may have to the object of investigation. Rather than a negative attitude toward subjectivity, as is found in current operationalized senses of objectivity, dialectical objectivity embraces subjectivity. It rejects the aloof observation of procedural objectivity in journalism in favor of deep involvement of the journalist, which in turn emphasizes the role the investigator plays in developing the knowledge.

But the "special sensitivity" is connected deeply to the context. It does not arise from disconnected procedures, nor is it inherently found in a journalist's makeup. In other words, there is no professional imperative here that a journalist would have a special sensitivity, but
rather a recognition that, in a world constructed through our social interactions such as is provided in a rhetorical view of journalism, there is a difference between the involved and uninvolved. This allows for a greater appreciation of the fact that journalists' perceptions guide the reporting. In acknowledging the active subject, the link between the rhetoric and its implications becomes clearer.

The questions posed by ethnographer Johannes Fabian for anthropology seem very relevant to questions found within journalism: "How do anthropologists (journalists) turn their experiences with a given culture (event) into objects of anthropological (journalistic) investigation and reflection? (Megill, 1994, p. 8) Fabian's work is driven by a concern to improve anthropological practice, to enhance the concept of interpretive sufficiency for that field. For Fabian, overpowering emotional involvement in the event is essential, a claim that has been received with much controversy in anthropology (Megill, 1994; Fabian, 1994). Rather than remaining detached, immersion in the event is necessary to be able to represent it, according to Fabian's view. Similarly, the emphasis in dialectical objectivity for a journalist would center on the journalist actively participating in the event. Dialectical
objectivity would ask that journalists be present—in soul as well as body—before they re-present.

As a comparative example, the *E. coli* events provide an unusual occasion to consider another story that relates the events is a very different manner.

**Mary's Story**

*Seattle Times* reporter Bob Sherwin found himself in a unique and painfully difficult situation during the *E. coli* food poisonings. His daughter, Mary, was one of the victims. Sherwin wrote about the experience in the first-person in a story that deeply and emotionally involves the audience. His editors praised the veteran sports reporter for offering a story that was "an astonishing combination of journalistic detachment and parental intimacy." The editors recognized the power in Sherwin's "harrowing tale [that] carried readers through a 10-day ordeal of physical suffering and mental anguish." This account stands witness to the events in a unique way: "Sherwin wrote the story he knew best, but all of the fear and fortitude he described has been repeated in homes and hospitals around the state." (*Seattle Times*, February 10, 1993; Editorial, p. A8). In other words, this is a story full of passion, a story that displayed the emotion of the events, emotion that was hidden
in other accounts. With permission of the *Seattle Times*, the full text is
reproduced below:

Copyright 1993 *The Seattle Times Company*
LENGTH: 3341 words
BYLINE: Bob Sherwin
HEADLINE:
"MOMMY, AM I GOING TO DIE?" -- ONE FAMILY'S 10-DAY ORDEAL WITH E. COLI

My cherub-cheeked, 6-year-old daughter gleefully bit into her fast-food
cheeseburger, as millions of kids do every day. But those few bites would drag her
and her family through the depths of eight days in the hospital, five days of kidney
dialysis and one terrifying turn after another.

Twenty years in the newspaper business, observing and reporting the news,
and suddenly my Mary and my family were the news. Just days after eating that Jack
in the Box burger, Mary came down with an insidious disease, hemolytic uremic
syndrome (HUS), in the nation's largest outbreak of poisoning from the bacteria *E.
c. coli* 0157:H7.

We have her back home in Issaquah now, regaining her strength, thanks to
the experienced hands at Children's Hospital, the indefatigable spirit of her mother
and the deluge of the most powerful of medicines: prayers from family and friends.

There were times when prayer was all we had, because HUS can be
described as disease out of control. It can cause kidney failure, and is virtually
untreatable. There is no antibody; there is no magic pill. It has to run its course.
The dialysis machine only replaces the kidney function, ridding the body of
wastes so it can maintain its strength. It doesn't destroy the bacteria's toxins, which
can attack any organ, from the heart, to the pancreas, to the liver, to the brain. For
these handful of children, the kidneys generally became its wicked playground.

As a parent, you feel helpless, like your child is adrift on a raft, floating down a
river with the family on one bank, the doctors on the other and each trying to lure the
child to safety. Yet the swift current of HUS controls her fate.

There is such irony that Mary was even at Jack in the Box that evening,
Wednesday, Jan. 13. I have occasionally taken our four kids to the fast-food outlets,
but their mother never has. Charlotte is so careful about what the kids eat: She bakes
her own bread, makes her own pasta, cooks tofu burgers, bean tacos and homemade
vegetable soup. Red meat, and especially ground beef, rarely finds a spot in the
shopping cart.

I couldn't remember another time when she took any of the kids to a fast-food
restaurant without me. On this evening, she and Mary went along with another family
that had been taking my son with their son to karate class. The routine for the
previous six weeks was to drive through a nearby fast-food place afterward, so
Charlotte joined them this time, even though Mary had eaten dinner. Mary pleaded
for a cheeseburger and mom reluctantly agreed. It was the first time either Mary or her
mother had ever been to a Jack in the Box restaurant.

Four days later, Sunday, Jan. 17, Mary complained of a stomach ache.
Monday, the diarrhea began. Tuesday, she had more severe stomach pain and by
that afternoon Charlotte noticed a reddish-orange color to the diarrhea. I tried to
explain it away, but this suspicious mother was not easily assuaged.

We finally headed for Children's late Tuesday evening and Mary underwent an
exam and testing until 3 a.m. Later that morning when we returned home, Charlotte,
who couldn't remember where they had eaten, talked to the neighbor who had
accompanied her to the restaurant.

"You know," the neighbor said, "we ate at Jack in the Box."

It struck us like a knife to the heart, because the E. coli scare was beginning
to make the news. The next day the hospital confirmed that Mary's stool samples
contained the E. coli bacteria.

A good day for Mary Wednesday provided only false hope. She was lively.
She was urinating--indicating her kidneys were functioning--but her diarrhea persisted.

That was the day of the big storm, blowing 80-mph winds through Issaquah
and the region, knocking our power out for 36 hours. Mary's bloody stool had to be
checked by candlelight, we used the wood stove to keep her warm and we worried
whether we would take more trips to the hospital.

Mary was a sick little girl but she continued to show kidney function. She had
another blood test at Children's Thursday afternoon. We left the hospital briefly only to
return once again to the emergency room when her vomiting began.

Her blood tests did not show much change from her Tuesday test so we want
home with the hope that she could avoid HUS. That uneasy hope was crushed Friday,
Jan. 22.

When Mary woke up that morning, she urinated. It would be her last one for
nearly 48 hours. She stopped drinking and eating. Her diarrhea stopped but her
vomiting continued. She complained of a sore lower stomach. Her bottom hurt. She
was turning pale, with a yellow tinge to her skin, her eyes drooped and she became
listless.

By late afternoon, it was clear we had to get her back to the hospital.
As we left, we saw the Seattle Times at our doorstep: A 2-year-old Tacoma
boy had died that day of E. coli poisoning.

One more time through the emergency room. We took another blood test and
prayed for an hour and half as we waited for the results. But we saw the signs. It
was apparent, as Mary lay on the white hospital sheets, her face so yellow. The tests
confirmed that Mary's kidneys had stopped function. She had descended into HUS.

Fewer than 10 percent of the more than 350 E. coli cases developed the
disease. This just couldn't be happening.

Mary's platelets, which help clot the blood, went from a normal of 350,000 to
52,000. Her hematocrit, a reading of red blood cells that is normal at 35, was at 28
and falling. The disease was destroying her blood products faster than she could
make them.
It was hard. We feared what was ahead: kidney dialysis and scary unpredictability. We looked at each other from either side of the bed and broke down. Mary, her eyes darting from parent to parent, readily sensed the seriousness.

I asked Charlotte to leave so Mary wouldn't key in on her tears. Then, with the two of us alone in that small emergency room, I tried to hold back my emotions while quietly reassuring my daughter. She saw through it. As I bend over, she put her arms around my neck, burst into tears and said, "Daddy, I'm scared."

You do everything you can to protect your children, then something like this out the most ordinary of circumstances, attacks with extraordinary virulence. The disease causes tiny vessels in the kidneys to swell, which makes the platelets and fibrin clot. The number of platelets in the bloodstream is then dramatically reduced. As the red blood cells move through this mesh, they become damaged and break into fragments, leading to anemia.

When the kidneys fail, waste products cannot be removed. The patient becomes lethargic and pale.

Charlotte and I huddled in the dark ward room all that night, shaking almost uncontrollably. We didn't know where this disease would take Mary, or us.

From my child's bed next to us, I heard a familiar sound: Mary sucking the index and middle fingers of her left hand as she slept. It instantly reminded me what a little baby she still was and that she didn't deserve to go through this pain. It was strangely normal sound, the only sense of normalcy in a world gone out of our control.

The hospital social worker strongly suggested that I bring our 18-year-old daughter, Amy, home from Washington State University so the whole family could be together. I called Amy at 7:30 a.m. Saturday and suggested she catch the 9 a.m. flight to Seattle.

She wanted to come but didn't think she could make the plane in time. She didn't have a ride to the airport, she didn't have enough money to cover the cost and she had a big test Monday. I told her we could overcome all those things, and for the first time my words caught in my throat.

"Mary could be in a life-or-death struggle here," I told her. "You have to come."

At 11:20 a.m., Amy walked into her kid sister's room at Children's. Mary, who idolizes her oldest sister and looks almost exactly like Amy when she was that age, smiled for the first time in days.

After some morning delays, it was finally determined dialysis would be necessary. Mary was in pain. Surgery to place a catheter in her abdomen was scheduled for 2:30 p.m. Drs. Israel Zelikovic, John Brandt and Jill Obremskey, all thorough and reassuring, detailed the process. Dr. Edwin Hatch, a skillful and compassionate surgeon, performed the operation.

We stayed with Mary until the operating-room door closed. As she was wheeled into the room before disappearing around the corner, I saw her break down in tears. She was so scared.

It took about an hour and a half. The best piece of news we got all week was Dr. Hatch's OK sign from across the room as he walked up to brief us. Charlotte said...
she saw tears in his eyes as he told her, "It's just a shame what's happening to these kids."

Saturday was a terribly painful day for Mary. The catheter had to be inserted through the muscle wall in the abdominal cavity below her belly button. the 3-inch catheter ran under her skin where it exited through a portal on one side of her abdomen. She was given no post-surgery pain medication other than Tylenol because narcotics could build up in her kidneys and they would also slow the motility of the bowels. She had to lay motionless on her back so she wouldn't stretch her incision and cause more pain. when the medical team finally left our room, Mary asked her mother to bend down.

In a weak whisper, she asked, "Mommy, am I going to die?"

She peed. Good God, she peed.

It was 3:55 a.m. Sunday. I was sleeping on a couch down the hall from Mary's room when Charlotte woke me with the news. Mary had urinated and we thought it was a wonderful sign. It meant her kidneys were working again. Doctors had said she might not urinate for another week.

But, as with most situations in this unpredictable disease, it was tempered with medical reality. Dr. Brandt said that is was significant, but it might be only "dumb urine"--the kidneys might be passing water through them but not fully functioning as a purifier.

My daughter's life now was dependent on a Baxter PAC-Xtra APD Cycler. the dialysis machine took the place of her kidney function.

Late Saturday night, it started to malfunction. By 3 a.m. Sunday, it took twice as long to fill and drain her. It was temporarily turned off. The staff suspected that the catheter had clogged.

The doctors said there were three options: injection a solution to break up the catheter clog, returning to surgery to fix the problem, or another type of surgery to insert a different catheter in her leg or shoulder.

They also considered the possibility that the catheter had shifted, and they called in a x-ray technician to take an exposure.

Up to this point, Mary had agreed to everything the doctors and nurses had asked. Her fingers and arms were bruised from countless blood draws. She couldn't move without pain and even the ebb and flow of the dialysis fluids caused her great discomfort.

When the technician asked if he could place a board under her to take her picture, my suddenly assertive 6-year-old was not going to accept what the adult world was seeking. "No, I don't want to do that anymore." Good for her.

We dreaded having her undergo another surgery and prayed for an hour while the solution went to work. Our prayers were answered; by late afternoon Sunday the solution seemed to do the job. Although the process was still slow, it was flowing. It also worked better when we hand-cranked the bed up for draining and lowered it for filling.

Charlotte said she was willing to crank the bed up and down every 15 minutes for as long as Mary was in the hospital if that meant she wouldn't need another
surgery. It didn't turn out to be necessary but it demonstrated the kind of unselfish concern that she and the other mothers showed for their suffering children. There is a difference in the genders. I saw it all around the third floor. Mothers who bear these children seem to have a higher stake in protecting them. They seem to love a little deeper and feel their pain more acutely.

From Tuesday night when we first were confronted with the E. coli scare until the following Tuesday, four days into Mary's stay, I counted four hours of sleep for her mother. She never let the room for more than 10 minutes. She slept next to her youngest child and popped up at her side with any movement.

Despite my and the nurses' best arguments to get away for a while, she stayed. "When Mary goes home, I go home," she said. She stayed at her bedside for the entire eight-day ordeal and Mary's positive response to the disease can be attributed, at least in part, to maternal devotion.

Dr. Ellis Avneer, the head of nephrology department at Children's, addressed the half dozen or so E. coli parents in a group session Monday evening. A hospital official opened the meeting by saying, "The media wanted to attend this meeting but we told them it was for parents only."

I felt somewhat like an interloper. Here I was, a concerned and troubled father, yet I was also a reporter. By tragic coincidence, I happened to be on the inside looking out. For the sake of one role, I needed to play down the other.

For nearly two hours, Dr. Avneer dealt with all the parents' concerns. How much damage could there be? How safe is the blood? Will the children need lifelong treatment? He was candid and competent in his answers, but E. coli is a relatively new disease. I have not had the clinical case studies other diseases have had. For the most part, medical science still does not know the long-term effects.

In the final 20 minutes, the parents talked about media intrusions. Some wanted to maintain their privacy. Others felt they could help the public by talking to reporters. I just sat quietly.

Dr. Avneer said he would protect the families' right to do either one. Mary's color remained poor and her blood counts were worsening again. By Monday, her hematocrit had dropped from 26 to 22. When it drops below 20, the medical staff becomes very concerned.

She didn't improve Tuesday. She began slumping back into lethargy. She had been taken briefly off dialysis but was put back on. Her blood numbers go even worse, with the hematocrit dropping below 18.

At that level, it's a parent's dilemma. When the red-blood count drops so low, the body instinctively tells the heart to pump harder to distribute more blood to more places. Their little hearts can start working so hard that heart failure, among other complications, becomes a factor.

Pediatric kidney specialist Dr. Laurie Fouser told us to watch the heart/respiratory monitors next to her bed and if the flashing numbers appeared to be climbing we should alert the medical team.

We watched those beeping numbers intensely. But every time Mary stirred, the numbers, sensitive to movement, soared to unreasonably high rates. Moments later, they would return again to a lower, steadier pattern. After repeatedly going
through these cycles, it go to the point where our hearts were beating faster than hers.

She urinated a little and ate and drank virtually nothing. She had one macaroni noodle and one bean for dinner Tuesday—her first food since the previous Thursday. The IV attached to her right arm had been sustaining her all week.

But at one point she said she had a taste for red grapes and a whole peach. Not a sliced peach, a halved peach or a diced peach. A whole peach. It was Jan. 25. Where was I going to get a whole peach?

I believed it was my role to say strong throughout the ordeal and I tried not to break down when Mary was looking. My intention also was to promise her what she wanted in exchange for her best effort to fight it and be brave through all the needles and stomach pain.

First I started with a promised trip to the toy store. She could have anything she wanted, I said. Her mother said she could have everything she wanted. There is a difference.

Later in the week, when things weren’t going particularly well, I said I’d send her and her mother to Disneyland when they got out of the hospital. She liked that, but said, “I want the whole family to go.”

This was going to cost me.

“I think something’s happening here,” said Dr. Douglas Esposito, who examined Mary Wednesday morning. Mary’s blood numbers were going in the right direction.

Dr. Fouser said she wanted to see how Mary would do without dialysis that night, for the first time.

We were guardedly optimistic.

Again, however, our spirits were sent crashing.

By the next day, Mary was beginning to fade again, as we had seen twice before. More dialysis? More complications? And she wasn’t eating or drinking enough to sustain herself.

At noon, we heard that another child—this time a 2-year-old girl—died from E. coli.

The horrific news cast a quieting pale on the third-floor E. coli parents. Then we later heard that the little girl had been released and died on the way back to the hospital.

Was there no end to this nightmare? When, if ever, will our children be out of jeopardy?

It was all getting to me. After seven days of working to present a strong face to Mary and Charlotte, I was an emotional wreck, weary of the roller coaster. I had seen enough of those four walls. I had paced every inch of the floor. I had read every note on the wall. I had heard every projection. I just wanted to take my 6-year-old home.

Then, Friday morning, I heard a rumor that Mary may be released soon, but Dr. Esposito said, “maybe tomorrow.” Her blood numbers were more favorable, particularly her hematocrit, leveling off at 25. It was a long way from a normal 35, but the rate of decline had slowed.
By 5 p.m., Dr. Fouser cleared Mary to go home, provided she would come back Sunday for a blood test, Monday for day surgery to remove her catheter, and three other exams within the month. She also would need to be closely followed this year and annual checkups for the rest of her life.

Surprisingly, sending Mary home was not welcome news for her mother. After a week on machines and constant attention, leaving the security of the hospital was a daunting thought for her.

We finally arrived home at 7 p.m. Friday, Jan. 26, but it was not a glorious homecoming. We were still riding a nervous edge. Our hearts were filled with an assortment of emotions, from the concern over the health of our child, the empathy we felt for those poor afflicted children of various diseases still back at the hospital and the sadness for the families who had lost their children.

As I walked through the house late that evening, turning off lights, I came to Mary's room. Her light was one of the last to be turned off after having been on for the entire eight days. The kids had wanted to keep it on as a hopeful signal. As one neighbor put it, "You'd see it on, day and night, like a beacon to bring Mary home."

Her mother again was sleeping at her side. Things were almost normal again. Normal—that simple quality of life we had been seeking for the past two weeks. Twelve year-old Bobby had his little League signups. Fourteen-year-old Beth was getting ready for the track season. Amy said she did well on her big test and couldn't wait to see Mary again.

Spring training—and my beat of covering the Seattle Mariners—was a couple weeks away.

Perhaps Mary would go back to school within the month. She'd probably miss five weeks. Perhaps soon she could return to her gymnastics class she loves so well. We wanted to take it slow. We didn't know what she could tolerate or what long-term affects this might have, but I wanted to see her normal again. As Amy's boyfriend said, "The first time she does a cartwheel, I'm giving her a standing ovation."

It was time, thankfully, to pay my debts, a toy store spree and a trip to Disneyland.

But the next day, I had just one simple task: to find some red grapes and one whole peach.

The story of Mary Sherwin, told by her father, acts as a witness not to the business questions, or political narrative, but to pain and suffering in a way that emphasizes the humanity of the victims. A father alone with his daughter in a hospital emergency room, a six-year-old wondering if she will die; pain and suffering of the victims is real, in
a way that the removed and passive voice of objective journalism proceduralized to exclude the subjective did not capture. Mary's story is filled with rhetorical tropes and figures not as unwitting smugglers of argument but as conscious invitations to the audience to share the events with a deep empathy: A "swift current of HUS controls" Mary's fate; remembering where they had eaten, "struck us like a knife to the heart." Writing from a position of dialectic objectivity, Sherwin imbues the story with a consciousness, an overwhelming awareness of the events. Bob Sherwin's passionate involvement allows him to name the events as "horrific," to affirm the moral dimension of the events. He helps us understand that it is not just stock prices that fell, but parents and families, too, into "emotional wreck(s)." In search of the objective, the subjective in this case works as a safeguard against distortion of the events--this is Bob Sherwin's view. The social construction of reality is very real, and we are invited to acquire new meaning from his perspective.

Bob Sherwin has crashed the boundaries of proceduralized objectivity, but he has done so in a way that provides us with a greater understanding of the events. If we relate the rhetorical elements of objectivity to Bob Sherwin's story, the differences are clear. First, a
news decision was made by the editors that reflects a compassionate understanding that this perspective is important. That the story ran on page one of the Sunday *Seattle Times* indicates the value of this story as a general concern to all readers. There is a lack of linearity to the piece, as it wanders from theme to theme, with abrupt twists and turns: talk of normal parenting expectations dissolves into medical discussion of platelet count; a sister's reunion fades into the need for dialysis. The deep involvement of the journalist helps explain some of the choices; there is a focus in this piece that does not treat interests equally and indeed a focus that is not concerned with providing even supplementary treatment. The balance achieved in this news report is not a whipsaw of competing claims. It is a balance of extension—we have not heard this voice before in any of the many stories that ran in the national press.

Rhetorically, Bob Sherwin does not rely on observation of concrete details but on expression of his own feelings—as a parent he felt helpless; as a father of a victim, he senses an even deeper pain from the mothers of the victims. As a journalist at the parents' meeting, he felt like an intruder. He lived in fear for days; he and his family had hopes crushed. His joy at his daughter's homecoming was tempered
with empathy for others still sick, and sadness for the loss of other children. In Bob Sherwin's value-laden, deeply involved journalism, doctors cry and children feel pain. The attention here is directed to Mary as an active agent, as an "assertive 6-year-old."

The voices of the children and their families become real from Bob Sherwin's perspective; only when the voices become real can they be valued. Deep subjective involvement allows us, through different language choices and different rhetorical constructions, to develop a different understanding of the events. Removing Bob Sherwin from the story denies our humanity and judgment just as surely as it denies his. Subjective involvement in a story connects passion to our judgment of Mary's story, a passion that stems from care about a six-year-old girl, about parents and families, about individual human beings. Through Bob Sherwin's humanity, we are empowered to be human as well, to feel, to cry, and to care.

Scott (1993) proposes that journalists may find within an ethic of emotivism and care a way to describe the affective features of human crisis. Different meanings of death and illness emerged from objective news coverage than emerge from the emotive engagement offered by Bob Sherwin. For example, compare the description of death and
illness from national coverage with Sherwin's description. The New
York Times (January 23, 1993, National, p. 7) reported that "Michael
had died of heart failure brought on by a kidney disease resulting from
his infection with the bacterium, *E. coli* 0157:H7." Bob Sherwin allows
us to reach a different understanding of Michael's death through Mary's
story:

She didn't improve Tuesday. She began slumping back into lethargy.
She had been taken briefly off dialysis but was put back on. Her blood
numbers got even worse, with the hematocrit dropping below 18.... When the
red-blood count drops so low, the body instinctively tells the heart to pump
harder to distribute more blood to more places. Their little hearts can start
working so hard that heart failure, among other complications, becomes a
factor.

Only in reading this do we know how a two-year-old dies of heart
failure. The importance in this comparison lies in the fact that restraint
of journalist emotion expresses restraint; the emotion of care expresses
care. Emotion is not excluded after all. What really happens is that
objectivity pre-determines what kind of emotion can be engaged.

The level of engagement reached by Bob Sherwin is not
something on which to base a new approach to journalism; his
involvement, after all, was a coincidence. But it does show, quite
passionately, how subjectivity infuses an event with a meaning that
varies considerably from traditional coverage. The connections and
understanding Bob Sherwin shares are not substantiated by authoritative sources; these are connections evident to someone who is deeply involved in the events. But without the subjective, this insight is difficult to engage unless the issues are brought up by others. It is in consciously tapping the full spectrum of available insight that readers are provided with different--in fact, fuller--understanding.

By crashing the boundaries of objectivity, Bob Sherwin reaches beyond objectivity and relativism into the world of fuller understanding, achieving that which is in line with journalism's central goals. Sherwin provides us with powerful reasons to care about this issue; he brings it to life for us, and imbues it with meaning beyond objectivity. By articulating a silent perspective, he moves beyond relativism; he does not disregard truth nor does he argue for variable readings of his experience. He very clearly brings additional meaning to the events. He expands the boundaries of knowledge in a very specific way that allows us to recognize how contingent and incomplete the traditional coverage was.

Although Bob Sherwin's involvement in the events cannot be considered as stemming in any way from his affiliation with journalism, other types of subjective involvement for journalists are beginning to
receive attention in journalism studies. Within journalism literature, discussion of subjective involvement is limited and tempered with an overriding concern for its abuse, but there are indications that such an approach has its benefits.

**Experimenting with subjectivity**

Involving the journalist has been seen as putting "passion back in newspapers that have become arid, even sterile, under attenuated codes of objectivity and detachment, or worse, triviality" (Ureneck, 1992, p. 5). Others agree that the current mode of observational journalism displays an attitude of "journalistic laissez-faire" that does not fit a cultural reality in which social institutions traditionally envisioned as serving the public good have failed to do so (Pierce, 1992). In order to address these failings, Lou Ureneck (1992), executive editor of the Portland (Maine) Press Herald, undertook an experiment in subjectivity in hopes of developing a process for approaching complex social issues.

Concerned that "leaving the "best part of the story--the evaluation of the information" in the reporter's head results in "a newspaper dense with information but short on meaning" (p. 5), Ureneck decided to "empower a reporter to master a topic and write about it with authority"
through deep, subjective involvement in a news event. He recently reported to the American Society of Newspaper Editors the results of his experiment. The first step of the experiment, Ureneck writes, was to admit the failure of traditional, episodic news coverage of the decade-old problems in Maine's worker’s compensation system. Ureneck asked a business reporter to learn the complicated system "inside out" and to write a series of articles that gave conclusions about flaws, and reasons for problems.

We gave the reporter wide latitude to form his own judgments...we told him to get beyond the whipsaw of competing quotes that are...for "balance." We told him to avoid bogging down in excessive attribution, weasel words and hedging phrases. We told him to support his conclusions with facts and to write forcefully in plain language. Be courageous, we said. (Ureneck, 1992, p. 4)

The result was a four-part series of hard-hitting articles that was followed by a front-page editorial calling for reform. The coverage elicited strong response from the Maine Legislature to clean up the system, and appears to have resulted in positive changes for the state. Within a month, legislation adopting the newspaper's suggestions was introduced.

This type of evaluation and deep understanding cannot be engaged through proceduralized journalistic objectivity, as the main critics of Ureneck's efforts have pointed out. If objective journalism,
designed to correct the flaws of subjective excess, is not the criterion by which we judge journalism ethics, by what criteria do we judge? What level of risk is involved in opening passionate involvement to all, including the unscrupulous and arrogant? Who decides, on what basis, and from what value structure, what is good for the community? On conflicting issues, which interests should dominate? The major conflicts to rewriting a program of journalistic objectivity lie in these concerns.

Bracketing the troublesome question of whether or not it is a good idea for a newspaper to decide what changes are needed in a social system—a question that deserves its own thorough and thoughtful engagement—we still have some sense of what has been achieved differently by Bob Sherwin and Lou Ureneck's reporter through their deep subjective involvement.

These accounts seem to increase understanding of the events in specific and useful ways. In the first account, a deep emotional component engaged aspects of human tragedy and provided a route to empathetic engagement that was not present in other news coverage. As such, Sherwin's article worked to extend our understanding of the events from a political context to include a personal context. In Lou
Ureneck's experiment, his reporter set out as an active subject in developing a deep understanding of a complex problem in order to provide a democratic public with a better basis for decision-making.

Both alternatives to traditional coverage increase representational accuracy of the events. It would seem relevant to journalism practice to provide a route to operationalize these alternative evaluations of events in more than just coincidental or experimental coverage.

**Beyond Objectivity and Relativism**

As we saw in Chapter Three, the central concerns regarding exclusion of the subjective stem from a desire to avoid relativism. Interestingly, a close rhetorical reading of objectivity as operationalized in journalism reveals itself as relativistic in the sense that knowledge is based on an established order that privileges access to reality: source credibility is relative to the authority held. Ironically, objectivity that excludes subjective involvement does recognize the need for reporter judgements in many steps of the process: who to talk to, what themes to highlight, how to describe the scene. The intricate procedures of objective journalism guide each judgement with the goals of increased representational accuracy, but it is an uncritical, even unconscious, guidance that does not account for willful deception on the part of the
source. Rhetoric of inquiry for journalism reveals these otherwise invisible connections between established conventions within journalism and what counts as knowledge in the discourse. When rhetoric of inquiry allows us to recognize conventions of objective journalism as inventions, we are able to assess the conventions not as immutable paths to the truth, but as socially constructed tools to achieve certain goals.

The deep involvement of dialectic objectivity emphasizes a synthesis between the known and the knower in hopes of increasing understanding. Dialectic objectivity directs the journalist to take the next step to engage abstract issues of the events—not through observation of concrete material presented by public relations staff, but through the deep understanding possible only by an active, knowing subject; not through dispassionate observation, but through impassioned involvement; not disconnected from the society but thoroughly involved on its behalf.

Including subjective involvement of the journalist is not a suggestion to celebrate emotion over reason; rather, as journalists themselves have found to be necessary in the examples above, this is a call for tempering reason with emotion, and emotion with reason.
Interrelating the strengths of each is desirable based on the goals of journalism that call for informing a democratic public about issues of social consequence, which, in Ureneck's words, involve getting past "a newspaper dense with information but short on meaning." (p. 5) The goals for Fabian in improving interpretive sufficiency for anthropology are mirrored in Ureneck's experiment that is driven by a concern to improve journalism practice.

Given the goals of journalism, rhetoric of inquiry encourages us to move beyond objectivity and relativism in a very practical manner: By focusing on the interrelationship of context, discourse, and meaning, a rhetoric of journalism provides new understanding of representational accuracy. As this study indicates, in including the subjective, an important voice is added to the rhetorical environment. Rhetoric of journalism provides a way to tap and develop much-needed resources that might allow journalists to move beyond objectivity and relativism by including the subjective in ways that emphasize the communal nature of knowledge.

Understanding the interrelationships of textual voices

Central to much of the discussion in Chapter IV is a concern for how rhetorical practices within journalism contributed to creating
meaning through privileging and marginalizing different voices. Since the journalism text mediates the events for the audience, the concerns of language theorists are especially appropriate to a rhetorical perspective on journalism practice that extends our understanding of how objectivity limits and controls voice in mediated texts. This concept of voice, as delineated by Bakhtin (1990a, 1990b; Wertsch, 1991; Morson & Emerson, 1989; Booth, 1988), provides a theoretical basis for understanding how meaning is socially constructed. Bakhtin's view of mediated texts does not dissolve into relativism but rather provides a different criteria for assessing the sources of knowledge.

Especially important for projects developing subjective involvement, Bakhtin's theory of voice provides a sensitive understanding of how different voices are interdependent. Much of Bakhtin's work addresses how social voices interrelate and are how they might be appropriated to produce specific meaning within cultural contexts. Indeed, for Bakhtin, a particular point of view comes to have life only when it encounters other voices in social interaction such as in a dialogue, or in a mediated text, such as a newspaper. But, importantly, Bakhtin accounts for an active author while at the same
time recognizing an independent force of text. In other words, Bakhtin removes the concept of voice from control of authority—including journalistic authority—by placing voice in a dialogic category that relies on intersubjectivity. Again, without an active subject, journalism is manipulated by the voice of others rather than empowered by its own voice for others. Conversely, in developing a sense of subjectivity for journalism practice, voice directs journalists to an understanding of how voices combine to produce persuasive elements within the text. In understanding and illuminating what voices are being used, the journalist has a tool to understand to whom the voice is oriented, and what probable theme will be understood by the intended audience. Subjectivity, in this sense, provides a path to conscious engagement of an array of ideas, assumptions and values that are not available—indeed, not even necessary—in a removed, objective, observational journalism.

Additionally, concern for voice in the analysis of the rhetorical dimensions of journalism practice focuses both on the perspective from which the message is designed and to which the message is addressed. Bakhtin's view of the audience is very compatible with journalism's view of an audience that is active in interpreting the news.
report, but it holds additional significance from a rhetorical perspective by highlighting the importance of thematic development. Discerning themes is the way the audience understands meaning; indeed, theme and meaning are inseparable. Examining theme, especially when others with vested interests are allowed to dictate theme through rhetorical practice, has a new urgency from a rhetorical perspective that concerns itself with voice. An active journalist, deeply involved with the events, judging voice and theme, will be equipped to make better decisions in writing.

As Bakhtin might say, understanding journalism from a rhetorical perspective reveals how it is that standard rhetorical practices of journalism lead to "ventriloquating" the sociocultural context of business interests. As previously discussed, Bakhtin holds that the statements voiced by message writers are not the original or sole property of the writers; rather, Bakhtinian voices speak in recognizable situations that have social histories and economic forces connecting them to preceding and future events. Applying Bakhtin's language theory within a rhetoric of journalism provides a deeper understanding of the source of the "voice of business" that the journalist is directed to appropriate in telling an objective story. Subjective involvement, with
concern for voice, ultimately recognizes the importance of an active journalist, and encourages subjectivity to develop in a way that helps journalists to discern values and assumptions within different voices. In reporting news events with subjective engagement, Bakhtin’s theory of voice supports the need for developing journalists’ knowledge of the historical relationship among participants and the events.

The interdisciplinary focus provided by rhetoric of journalism directs journalism to consider these and other influences on rationality in terms of what counts as knowledge. Valuing business or government voices in the national coverage over the voice of human compassion, for example, influences what counts as rational in the *E. coli* events. As a rhetorical perspective on journalism highlights, the dominance of these voices over other voices is entrenched in journalism’s widespread view of what it means to be objective. Journalism pedagogy, itself a pattern of particular speech types, reifies the continuance of only certain views through subtle patterns of privileging that are revealed from a rhetorical perspective.

A rhetorical perspective on journalism points to the consequences of practices that are capable of reproducing only that which currently exists. Given that the protected position of the
American press on behalf of general interests—not vested interests—following directives that only reproduce the dominant authority seems to be counterindicated. Procedures that result in fewer voices and alternatives being heard are not sufficient. In the *E. coli* case, for example, the shortcomings can be seen in that some solutions—such as bacterial testing—were left undeveloped, and some—such as not eating hamburger specifically, or meat in general—were never aired.

**Connecting to ethical paradigms**

Rhetoric of inquiry for journalism opens journalism to changes in meaning for its texts as well as for its professional conceptions. As Simons (1990) points out, even when reality is socially constructed some constructions still are preferable to others, and even when rhetoric is inseparable from rationality, some reasons are superior to others. A rhetorical perspective that reveals the better reason as the better reason, helps us take seriously the ethical implications of objectivist epistemology.

Given that there is wide access to public relations professionals for corporations, politicians, and even hospital doctors, a rhetorical perspective provides the journalist with one way to address conflicts of public interest such finely-tuned discourse may present. This is not to
say that public relations never serves a reasonable function within the society in terms of offering central offices to manage increased information, especially during crisis situations. Indeed, at times, public relations counsel does act as a corporate conscience. However, whether it does so for moral or economic reasons is debatable, and that is where the concern arises. It is well recognized that public relations professionals participate heavily in the creation of viewpoints on particular, business-related, vested-interest public issues, in terms of lobbying, advertising, and press conferences that become media events. Thus, it becomes not only reasonable, but imperative, to modify journalistic practice toward methods that might be more compatible with these changes that have taken place in the greater context of public discourse. Rhetoric of inquiry for journalism provides some insight for these changes by its close examination of the role of discourse in creating public knowledge. A rhetorical perspective on journalism give journalism practice a way to critically--rather than mechanically--engage these changes. The difference is between empowerment and exploitation--both for the journalist and the audience.

The reflective stance of rhetoric of journalism highlights the implications of a wide array of choices available to the journalist in
telling the story, not to thwart representational accuracy, but to enhance it. And with the additional recognition of how representational accuracy can be enhanced comes additional recognition of the ethical implications of language choices.

Taking journalists into subjective territory dictates the need for a new ethic, one that moves beyond objectivist techniques designed to disengage the reporter from the event. In fact, ethics of technique provides a particularly poor model for subjective journalism in that it does not provide for connection of the journalist to others, only a connection of journalist to technique; it is an ethical theory directed inward rather than outward. Ethical obligations in social constructionism, on the other hand, direct the journalist to consider important and ever-changing variables within particular events in order to reach understanding.

Care for others, on which many alternative ethics systems are based (see, for example, Nel Noddings, 1984; Seyla Benhabib, 1992; or specifically for journalism, Clifford Christians et al., 1993) is needed in a paradigm that includes subjectivity; conversely, it is difficult to see how social ethics would work without subjectivity. Without subjectivity, there can be no intersubjectivity, which is implied by social ethics. An ethic
that interconnects the journalist, news organization, and the community—one that emphasizes a relationship of active participant, not disconnected observer—needs a new view of objectivity in order to succeed. Indeed, Christians et al., in proposing their program of communitarian ethics, call for a journalism that respects and celebrates the integration of the person and community ("We have a positive duty to create a social environment in which others can share the same rights equally" [p. xi]). The many cases they use to illustrate this version of social ethics rely on understanding the moral implications of specific, contextual, multi-faceted issues, much in the manner described herein for a rhetoric of journalism. In order to engage the level of involvement that Christians et al. advocate, journalism must recast objectivity in terms of subjective involvement so that fuller participation in the events is possible. Unless or until journalism embraces a wider understanding of objectivity, the seeds of these or any other alternative systems of ethical engagement will not land on fertile ground. But this is a mutual process in that unless the ethics of technique is replaced with a developing sense of social ethics, such as proposed by Christians et al., subjectivity will remain unattached to ethicality simply because it is not objective.
In sum, journalism cannot include subjectivity, with the passion and emotion of a fully-present reporter, from a position of positivism. But, from a rhetorical perspective on journalism, we find a way to include "subjective experience as a legitimate source of knowledge" (Makau, 1990). Dialectical objectivity in a rhetoric of inquiry for journalism does not abandon reason, but does recognize the role of an active knower in producing knowledge. Importantly, rhetoric of inquiry for journalism demonstrates that objective journalism, rather than being free of values and emotions, dictates its own set of values and emotions. A rhetoric of journalism directs conscious concern to how those values and emotions help or hinder journalism in the accomplishments of its goals.

Generalizability and Directions for Future Study

This study has highlighted the contribution rhetorical analysis can make for students of journalism. As part of the scholarship that problematicizes journalism practice, this study shows the benefit of rhetorical analysis as an additional tool in training practicing journalists who strive toward what Christians et al. (1993) call interpretive sufficiency. In this manner, the study is offered with the hope that it articulates an avenue of growth for rhetorical studies and rhetoric of
inquiry by identifying these fields as promising pathways of enrichment for rhetorical theory and for journalism education and practice.

Generalizability

A rhetorical perspective on journalism has served to reveal that proceduralized objectivity is limiting to a journalist's ability to reach the goal of a full representation of the events in a context that gives them meaning. We must recognize, however, that although the rhetorical elements identified in this study may be widespread, their function in these particular news stories may not be. The elements may require similar circumstances to function in a similar manner. The case study here is important, though, because its general characterizations are quite widespread in journalism practice: An event with multiple perspectives of business practices as antecedent to questions of public safety, combined with questions about the nature of human tragedy, political response, and the relationship between appropriate social policy decisions and individual actions.

Situations with these characterizations are common fodder for American print journalism. Complex social situations require developing an understanding of interrelationships in a way that relying on observed quotes cannot. The limited procedural standards of
objective journalism, which do not recognize the role of rhetoric in producing knowledge or account for the involvement of an active subject, provide more obvious grounds for the failure of these artifacts in relationship to journalism's goals in many distinct ways. Significantly, the social policy that ultimately arose from these events was directed to individual, personal action and did not engage the fast-food business, meat processing, or slaughterhouse reform. And, also significantly, the central precepts that guided this journalism coverage are not unique to these events but rather are used to guide professional journalists in general.

On its own, this study does not provide a definitive basis for incorporating a rhetorical perspective in journalism textbooks and practices. What it does do, however, is add to the list of concerns that have been presented to the practice of journalistic objectivity, and it does so in a manner that honors what journalism wants from its own practices.

There is no agenda imposed on this analysis other than that which journalism has set before itself. The goal of journalism in a democratic society is to bring issues of importance before democratic citizens to provide the basis for good decisions. The conflicts within this
coverage demonstrate an important need to continue development of a rhetorical perspective on journalism training and practice in several ways that relate to ethical issues and American print journalism.

Implications for future study

Combining the deep philosophical bases of journalism practice with rhetoric of inquiry studies establishes a promising framework for studies investigating questions of objectivity and its implications for social action; consequences of objectivity as a professional practice; narrative and its relationship to social perception; or agenda setting functions of the press, to name a few.

The emphasis in the present study has been on assessing the pragmatic effect of objectivity when it is viewed from a rhetorical perspective. The findings suggest that a rhetorical perspective on journalism may provide a way to engage many notable problems with objectivity in journalism practice while moving beyond the view that news distortion results from a calculated attempt to mislead. A general cultural wisdom tells us that there are good people and bad people found in all walks of life; the field of journalism is no exception. Objectivity was operationalized to contain the disreputable, but in the end rests its ethicality on a definitional foundation: objective journalists
are ethical, and ethical journalists are objective. The circularity of the
definition does not account for the many recognized and documented
ways bias can be brought to news coverage (Kahane, 1992; Stocking &
Gross, 1992). A rhetorical perspective on journalism shows the limits of
this ethical framework by aligning distortion with rhetorical elements
derived from existing practices of objectivity. Objectivity cannot be
equated with ethicality when it is objectivity that leads to bias.

Beyond this important observation, the interest herein lies in
presenting a rhetorical perspective on journalism as one way for
journalists to concentrate on how the rhetorical elements of objectivity
affect language choices that repress voices and distort representational
accuracy. Since a rhetoric of inquiry for journalism recognizes an active
knower participating in the creation of knowledge, developing a process
to approach dialectical objectivity would be beneficial to journalism
practice. It is the combination of ideas presented here that provide
directions for future study in several distinct areas.

Dialectical objectivity appears to retain the essence of
objectivity's goal of representational accuracy and thus seems
especially appropriate for what it actively brings to journalism--an active
knowing subject deeply involved in the events--rather than what it
restricts or takes away. Only further inquiry can assess how such a proposal could live up to its potential, and how best to meet any additional challenges it may present. Developing the process is the first step to developing some understanding of what it means to engage in dialectical objectivity, and in this regard insight from language theory such as is offered by Bakhtin seems especially promising.

Second, examining additional case studies that involve highly subjective news coverage--such as was offered in the Portland Press Herald--would be beneficial both in developing the process of dialectical objectivity and in assessing the utility of such an approach to complex issues of social consequences. A rhetoric of journalism approach to such texts would be useful in examining specific rhetorical elements in a journalism text offered from a subjective position--e.g., are the elements different? does narrative act in the same way? to what degree do reality claims within such a text rely on rhetorical technique for their credibility? what happens when a journalist tells a story in first person, acknowledging feelings and reasons? what does a synthesis of views rather than whipsaw of competing claims bring to public discussion of complex issues?
Applying this same set of questions to historic journalism texts may provide additional insight, especially in light of the fact that much of the criticism of new paradigms in journalism engage arguments based on the excesses of the pre-Lippmann, unfettered-by-objectivity, yellow journalism. Indeed, while many such texts have been analyzed as rhetorical artifacts for public address studies, specific inquiry based on a concern for the goals of journalism in a democratic society would offer additional insights.

Specific inquiry into these and other questions also may arise from the growing interest in the role of pathos in argument (McGee, 1995; Garrett, 1993; Waddell, 1990), and the well-documented concern for the relationship of reason and emotion. Addressing the essence of challenges to the inclusion of pathos in journalism lies in carefully explicating its use, and in moving beyond its present configuration "as the pain-killing remedy for an Enlightenment hangover" (McGee, 1995, p. 18). Journalism practice under a dialectical objectivity, even if only at an experimental level at various newspapers, would provide a distinct set of questions to scholars exploring this area. And, by suggesting a paradigm for journalism that rests on social constructionism with its
strong sense of intersubjectivity, discerning the role of *pathos* as a distinct form of proof acquires a new urgency.

Third, the study here affirms the pressing need to assess ethical implications of journalism practices beyond the level of technique. Each of the above programs of study would necessarily engage some of the many issues that surround journalism ethics if only for the reason that dialectical objectivity challenges the precepts of journalistic ethics as it is currently equated with objective technique. In developing a dialectical objectivity, we need further inquiry regarding the criteria by which we might assess involvement. Combining these concerns with alternative systems of ethics, questions of what responsibilities an ethic of care brings with it arise. Allowing journalists to judge and evaluate conflicting issues focuses ethical questions on which interests should dominate and by what criteria? Given the strong, closely-held belief that objective journalism inhibits unethical journalism, what level of risk is involved in opening passionate involvement to all, including the unscrupulous and arrogant?

Scholars arguing for alternative ethical paradigms within journalism--those based on care, on emotivism, on communitarian mutuality, for example--recognize the dominate paradigm in journalism
is objectivity. If we take the communitarian view of Christians et al. (1990) seriously, however, we cannot just turn to experts and authorities for construction of social knowledge. Alternative ethical paradigms that advocate a base of social good require the inclusion of the most voices in a society, but the preoccupation with authoritative voices under objective journalism forces journalists to neglect other voices.

The ethical implications found in rhetoric of journalism in which language is understood as playing a constitutive role in the production of knowledge thus become vastly different—as constitutive of reality, language contains different ethical imperatives for the journalist than are present under a received view. This study suggests that more discussion about the problems that the dominant paradigm presents to alternative projects is in order, a discussion that appropriately will influence journalism pedagogy. Addressing ethical theories as proposed by Nel Noddings, Sandra Scott, or Christians et al., could provide the basis for developing subjectivity in journalism as a mutually beneficial approach to the public press.

Implications for pedagogy

Patterson (1992) argues for "a concentration in the implications and values of journalism ...explored by broadly educated students
drawn from any discipline." He sees much benefit in journalism education that extends "academic tools of research and analysis to press professionals...to expand the intellectual infrastructure of the press." A rhetorical perspective on journalism answers this call with an emphasis on how journalism relies "not less but only differently on rhetoric than do the humanities" (Nelson & Megill, 1986, p. 35) As long as information transmittal is taught as a neutral act, however, the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach will not come to fruition.

Recognizing the role of language in social constructionism asks journalists to develop an awareness of their own roles in knowledge production, not to subjugate their participation but to celebrate it for what it can bring to public understanding. Remembering that the best part of the story is evaluation of the information, celebrating the journalist as an essential component of the story moves news coverage past the limitations created by adherence to the procedural objectivity. The basic epistemological changes rhetoric of journalism would bring moves objectivity beyond the mechanical reporting of accurate quotes that allow other interests to dictate the story to a deep involvement of an active knowing subject.
From a social constructionist perspective, understanding language—how it enables and disables, how it represses and celebrates, how it distorts and clarifies, how it argues for particular perspectives—becomes imperative. Rhetoric of journalism, as discussed in this study, recognizes that narrative serves a persuasive function in terms of its ability to privilege, sanction, and validate socially constructed knowledge. As the social voices authorized by objective reporting are blended, the narrative constructs the socio-historical reality of the events. Through narrative, the blending of voices in social discourse contributes to realignment of meaning, which in turn lends the discourse persuasive power (Condit, 1990).

A rhetoric of journalism appreciates news writing as rhetorical discourse, with persuasive power and influence from context and structure. When we disregard this, text-based expressions of a particular point of view are allowed to ride along in our narratives as stowaways, unrevealed and unintended. A rhetorical perspective on journalism supports the journalist in achievement of goals with a means to appraise, reveal, and consciously judge the appeals. Without a developed process of subjectivity for journalism practice, however, there are few ways for the journalist to tap these judgements.
The conclusions suggest that teaching journalism from a rhetorical perspective has much to bring to journalism students in terms of helping journalists express complex issues clearly. A rhetoric of journalism would teach journalism students about rhetorical analysis, stylistic usage, persuasive techniques and strategies, not so they are more employable as public relations writers, but to enable them to make better choices in their own news writing.

Understanding possible readings that can be given to metaphor, for example, would help reporters craft their language carefully, attentive to smugglers of argument and hitchhiking values. As the analysis suggests, asking questions of the text, such as Black (1978), Booth (1988), or Bakhtin (1990a, 1990b) might propose, offers a way to assess the choices made in writing the news stories by disclosing the implied audience and the probable theme that will be understood by that audience. Using Booth's literature-evaluation question, for example, the journalist would be directed to ask "What kind of friend is the article going to be to the audience?" Such a question, despite its literary roots, is in concert with Christians et al. (1992) proposal of communitarian ethics for journalism in which social good becomes the touchstone for journalism ethics.
A rhetoric of journalism curriculum could highlight critical reading skills and the basic questioning skills that extend a conversation to deeper issues. Journalism students schooled in rhetorical theory would be able to improve their ability to achieve the goals of journalism in a democratic society by being more sensitive to their own use of language and that of others. The more resources the students have, the better able they will be to make conscious language choices and to recognize vested arguments.

Changing the basic pedagogical practices of journalism will affect what counts as truth, knowledge and authority (Belenky et al., 1986). Belenky et al. describe alternatives to traditional pedagogical practices that are based on connecting the student and the teacher with each other and the subject. Translated briefly for journalism pedagogy and practice, Belenky et al.'s "connected knowing" speaks to the pedagogical challenge of teaching journalism practice based on a subjective involvement of the journalist with the public and the events. The interrelationships emphasize the active role a journalist and others have in creation of knowledge about public events. Developing a curriculum to teach a philosophical understanding as well as a
theoretical and practical application of this important difference would be essential.

Conclusion

Objectivity as a regulative ideal within journalism is operationalized in ways that hide the presence of persuasive appeals that disrupt the goals of journalism, especially as those goals pertain to providing understanding and informing a democratic public of issues of social consequence. A rhetorical perspective, such as is offered in rhetoric of inquiry studies, offers much promise in developing an interdisciplinary dialogue to direct attention to the role of rhetoric in producing knowledge. Rhetoric of inquiry further illustrates potential benefit that developing a process to engage subjectivity may have for journalism practice by focusing on the dynamics of rhetorical elements found in journalism practice and illuminating ethical impasses such practices hold which in turn affirms the need to engage ethical implications of journalism practice beyond the level of objective technique.

From a received view of knowledge, the philosophical understanding of the participation of alternative voices—including those of journalists—is not only unnecessary but down right dangerous to
finding Truth. Recognizing language as a socio-historical construction that relies on intersubjectivity for meaning requires the participation of many voices. But, there is, as Belenky et al. (1986) point out, an incredible element of risk involved in asking others to participate in knowledge creation. Yet engaging with the public in meaningful ways may provide the redemption that the much maligned institution of American journalism needs to see it into the next century and beyond.

The continued veneration of American journalism as democracy’s sentry, that grants a critically important Constitutionally protected freedom, relies for its very existence on providing more than just information: it relies on being a vehicle to reach understanding of government, industry, and society. Like the meat inspectors who cannot see the deadly bacteria, observation is not always enough.

Coda

In the spirit of the project, and in the spirit of my personal philosophy, I note that I am not, nor do I care to be considered, as Gergen (1994) puts it, "an impersonal integer in the one great machine" of scientific research. I do not possess a "Mechanical Self" and neither do the thousands and thousands of reporters who each day go forth to report on matters of public consequence. To pretend otherwise is to
shut off the element of humanity that connects us with ourselves, and ourselves with our communities.

I have, I believe, argued for the benefit this perspective might hold for journalism. At the same time, I am aware of Thomas Kuhn's caution that, in our exuberance to get away from the old, we may unwittingly subvert what is good in our public and private spheres; Richard Rorty similarly cautions that unchecked exhalation of rhetoric might lend it undue authority to rule our scholarly lives. I hope that this study will be interpreted as a supplement and not a supplantion for journalism scholarship, and that it will act as a source of enrichment for a growing interdisciplinary conversation.
1. Although I refer to procedural and disciplinary objectivity as being "operationalized," this is perhaps is too restricting a word. The strict and fast rules do not appear to have served journalism well in its current attempts to engage objectivity; I think it best to cast a developing sense of dialectical objectivity as a process.

3. Although many others have undertaken thoughtful discussions of alternative ethics systems for the press, these particular questions are beyond the scope of this project. My interest in ethical systems of journalism remains in the close link ethical reporting has to objective reporting. For further discussion of alternative systems, see Christians et al. (1993) on communitarian ethics, or Sandra Scott (1993) who develops empathetic engagement and extends an ethic of care to journalism as a basis for deciding what and how to cover an event.

4. Other journalists argue for similar involvement. For example, Bill Kovach, curator of journalism archives at Harvard University's Nieman Foundation, argues for a type of subjective involvement in what he calls "evaluative coverage" based on covering political issues with the same concern given sports coverage--careful evaluation of the performance probability of the leading scorer on a basketball team--is the stuff of sports coverage. Such reports infuse discussion with passion, intensity, and significance. Would careful evaluation of the performance probability of a social policy be appropriate as well? The analogy is surprisingly accurate and insightful.

5. "Ventriloquating" is a term Bakhtin uses to indicate repetition of others speech, much as is done in ventriloquism.

6. I thank Brian McGee, The Ohio State University, whose insights about emotion and reason in postmodern feminist epistemology have provided the focus for this discussion.
7. Condit & Selzer (1985) raise similar concerns with their analysis of objective reporting of a murder trial, and to them I owe a debt of gratitude for providing direction for the insights for this section.
APPENDIX A

Artifacts Used in Analysis
Fast-Food Chain Boosts Cooking Time After Poisonings: Jack in the Box restaurants in Washington state have increased the cooking time for their hamburgers after a wave of food poisoning cases linked to undercooked meat at the fast-food chain, state officials said.

Supermarket chain Vons Cos. of Arcadia processed the hamburger meat for Jack in the Box, which is operated by San Diego-based Foodmaker Inc. Officials linked 25 more cases of food poisoning caused by a strain of E. coli to Jack in the Box restaurants in Washington, bringing to 75 the total number of cases there. San Diego County has recorded four cases of E. coli infection in which patients had a history of eating at fast-food restaurants. A Washington health official said his office has received notification of two more cases in Boise, Ida.

Jack in the Box and Vons officials denied responsibility Thursday for an outbreak of food poisoning that has been linked to the death of a San Diego child and the hospitalization of more than 70 others in the western United States.

Most of the illnesses were reported earlier this month in Washington, where at least 72 people became infected with the potentially deadly E. coli bacterium after eating hamburgers at the fast-food restaurant chain.

Since then, two cases have been reported in Idaho and five in San Diego County.

A 6-year-old girl died from the infection in San Diego in December, but county public health officer Donald Ramras said Thursday it is unclear whether she was infected by contaminated meat sold by Jack in the Box. Ramras said it also was too early to say if the other local victims were infected after eating at the restaurant.

"You can still eat at restaurants. You can still eat at home," Ramras said. "Just be sure to have any meat cooked thoroughly."

Named for a bacterium found in the intestines and feces of cows, E. coli infection can cause bloody diarrhea and painful abdominal cramps in humans and can lead to kidney failure and death in severe cases.

Health experts said that any contamination of beef with E. coli usually occurs at the time a cow is slaughtered. However, cooking the hamburger at 155 degrees normally kills the bacteria, they said.

The batch of hamburger linked to the outbreak had been sold by Vons to Jack in the Box two months ago. However, government officials have not yet determined whether the meat was tainted upon arrival, or whether it was insufficiently cooked.

On Thursday, the fast-food outlet and its supplier denied that their companies were responsible for the contamination and illnesses. In a written statement, Jack in the Box President Robert
Nugent maintained that the burgers were contaminated before they reached restaurants. Meanwhile, Vons officials suggested that the problem may have originated with their meat suppliers.

Officials at Jack in the Box and its parent company, San Diego-based Foodmaker Inc., said the chain was alerted last week by Washington health officials that some of its customers were becoming "seriously ill."

But tests conducted by Washington health officials cleared the company of blame, said Foodmaker spokeswoman Sheree Zizzi.

"The tests were to determine if there was a thawing or partial thawing of the patties while in transit or in storage. They found there was none. The patties remained frozen from the time we received them," Zizzi said. Washington health officials could not be reached Thursday for comment on her contention.

Those findings, said Nugent, led the chain to conclude that "the problem is, in fact, due to contaminated hamburger."

But Vons officials disputed that. "We feel confident that we did not contaminate the patties in question," said Mary McAboy, a Vons spokeswoman.

She said she could not speculate on when the contamination took place, but another Vons spokeswoman, Julie Reynolds, suggested that it occurred when cows were slaughtered by one of three suppliers that provided beef for the patties.

Reynolds and McAboy said Vons routinely samples all its meat for contamination as required under government regulations. The Vons meat-processing facility in Arcadia also is continually monitored by U.S. Department of Agriculture inspectors, they said.

McAboy said each production run is sampled for testing, but not necessarily every lot within the production run. She added that Vons has consulted the Department of Agriculture about its meat-testing procedures, but has found no need to intensify or alter them.

The meat that has been linked to the Jack in the Box illnesses came from three suppliers, Vons officials said. Officials at the companies -- Montfort Beef of Greeley, Colo., Service Packing of Los Angeles and Orleans International of Detroit -- could not be reached for comment Thursday.

According to Reynolds, Foodmaker bought the raw meat outright from two of the suppliers and Vons bought meat from the third. All three batches of meat were processed by Vons according to Foodmaker specifications, she said, and shipped to the fast-food restaurants frozen. (Times staff writer Denise Gellene in Los Angeles contributed to this story. Reza reported from San Diego and Hubler from Los Angeles.)

SECTION: Part A; Page 1; Column 5; Metro Desk
LENGTH: 899 words
HEADLINE: RESTAURANT NOT TO BLAME FOR TAINTED MEAT, OFFICIALS SAY; HEALTH: BACTERIA THAT CAUSED ONE DEATH ARE BELIEVED TO BE FROM SLAUGHTERHOUSE, NOT JACK IN THE BOX OR VONS.
BYLINE: By TOM GORMAN and DOUG CONNER, Times, STAFF WRITERS
DATELINE: SEATTLE
BODY:
Food poisoning caused by contaminated hamburger patties -- which so far has stricken about 150 people in the Northwest and on Friday claimed its first victim, a 2-year-old boy -- probably had its roots in a slaughterhouse and not in the restaurant chain where the hamburgers were sold, Washington state health officials said.

But most of the bacteria could have been destroyed if the meat had been properly cooked, officials said.

State Health Department coliform tests of two contaminated meat samples taken from Jack in the Box showed levels of fecal matter so high that "it would be more difficult, though not
impossible, to kill all the bacteria through normal cooking procedures," officials announced Friday.

"The likely source (of the illnesses) is meat contaminated with feces at the time of slaughter," health officials said. "Other test results available today indicate there (were) no mishandling or refrigeration problems during manufacture or transportation of the beef."

Jack in the Box has reeled from bad publicity following the outbreak because 75% to 80% of the 149 cases in Washington involve customers who were afflicted with bloody diarrhea or severe stomach cramps after dining at the restaurant.

The state's investigation showed no evidence of refrigeration problems at either Vons Cos., which got the beef from slaughterhouses and manufactured and shipped the patties to Jack in the Box, or the restaurant. Proper refrigeration prohibits the bacteria's growth.

Although the restaurant could not be blamed for contaminating the meat, "the undercooking (of the hamburger patties) was a major factor in all these people getting sick," Washington Health Department spokesman Dean Owen said.

Most -- if not all -- of the bacteria would have been cooked out of the meat had it been prepared at 155 degrees Fahrenheit -- a Washington state cooking standard that is higher than those in other states, officials said. In California, the state standard for cooking meat is 145 degrees.

In the wake of the outbreak, Jack in the Box officials have ordered their cooks to grill hamburger patties for 2 minutes and 15 seconds -- 15 seconds longer than before -- to reach a higher temperature.

Jack in the Box President Bob Nugent said he felt betrayed by the sources of the tainted beef.

"Our responsibility as the people who cook and serve hamburgers is to put into place proper procedures and cautions to ensure the safety of our guests," Nugent said from the company's headquarters in San Diego. "We feel very responsible for anyone who eats in our restaurants. But we have to rely on our suppliers to hold up their end of the chain of events, to make sure they do the prudent procedures and take the necessary precautions (to process and deliver good meat). Yes, I feel like somebody let us down."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture said Friday it will help find the source of the contamination.

Unused meat patties from the contaminated lots have been recalled by the restaurant, and samples are being shipped to a government laboratory in Maryland for analysis, said USDA spokeswoman Jacque Lee Knight.

The USDA will also send investigators to the slaughterhouses where the cattle were butchered, Knight said.

Typically, the bacteria in this outbreak -- known as E. coli 0157:H7 -- is found in the intestines and feces of cattle and contaminates the meat during the butchering process, she said.

Dr. John Kobayashi, a Washington state epidemiologist, said Friday that it was established that 2-year-old Michael Nole had eaten at a Jack in the Box within a week before being hospitalized with severe abdominal cramps and bloody diarrhea. The youngster died Friday of severe kidney complications, he said.

Three more children remained in intensive care with hemolytic uremic syndrome, a potentially fatal kidney disease resulting from the bacterial infection, Dr. Ellis Avner said at a news conference at Seattle's Children's Hospital.

Meanwhile, San Diego County health officials said that although they have seen similar cases of E. coli infection -- and at least one death -- they have not linked the episodes to Jack in the Box. Five people in San Diego became ill, and a 6-year-old girl died of the bacterial infection last month.

San Diego County Public Health Officer Dr. Donald Ramras said: "At this point-- and our investigation is still continuing -- we can find no common linkage among our cases. One (of the victims) never even ate outside the home."

Vons Cos.' consumer affairs department has fielded few calls from concerned customers, said Mary McAboy, spokeswoman for the Arcadia-based company. Notices about the hamburger were sent to the chain's supermarkets and anyone wishing to return meat is welcome to do so, she said.
At a Jack in the Box in Northridge, many customers had heard about the contamination but came anyway, manager Julian Sanchez said. "They know about our procedures. They know about everything. They are not worried," Sanchez said.

Trading in shares of Foodmaker Inc., which owns Jack in the Box, was halted Friday on the New York Stock Exchange after heavy selling pushed the price down $2.50 to $9.50 a share.

(Times researcher Conner reported from Seattle; Times staff writer Gorman reported from Los Angeles. Also contributing to this story was staff writer Nancy Rivera Brooks in Los Angeles.)

Los Angeles Times, January 29, 1993, Friday, Home Edition Correction Appended

SECTION: Business; Part D; Page 2; Column 4; Financial Desk

LENGTH: 859 words

HEADLINE: CONSUMER AFFAIRS / DENISE GELLENE: BURGER SAFETY ON BACK BURNER IN STATE

BYLINE: By DENISE GELLENE

BODY:

Who decides whether a fast-food hamburger is safe to eat? In California, much of the decision is left up to the restaurant chains.

The lack of regulation is noteworthy in the wake of illnesses in Washington state linked to contaminated, undercooked burgers at Jack in the Box restaurants. More than 250 people suffered severe diarrhea or stomach cramps, and at least one child died.

Unlike most other states, California doesn't dictate how hamburger must be cooked to kill bacteria. Instead, each restaurant may choose a temperature that it believes is hot enough without rendering meat unpalatable.

A quick survey of fast-food restaurants reveals no universal agreement on which internal temperature (the temperature you get at home on a meat thermometer) is best. According to health officials and company sources, minimum internal temperatures of cooked burgers range from a low of 141 degrees at McDonald's to a high of 165 degrees at Wendy's.

Not every restaurant is willing to discuss cooking temperatures. In-N-Out Burgers Vice President of Quality, Friendliness and Cleanliness Carl Van Fleet declined to divulge cooking temperatures, saying that recipes are secret.

When it comes to killing E. coli 0157:H7, the bacteria that struck people in Washington state, a few degrees can be crucial. Health experts there say that at an internal temperature of 140 degrees, 90% of the bacteria is killed. At 155 degrees, 99.9999% of it is destroyed.

Washington state officials said Jack in the Box had cooked the suspect burgers to an internal temperature of 140 degrees or less. As the health crisis unfolded last week, Jack in the Box raised its minimum internal temperature to 155 degrees. This week, Carl's Jr. followed, raising its minimum temperature to 155 degrees from 145 degrees as a precaution.

On Wednesday, citing the outbreak in Washington state, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration revised its recommended minimum internal temperature to 155 degrees from 140 degrees. The agency can't force restaurants to comply, however.

Should California regulate cooking temperatures? Jim Barquest, supervisor of the Department of Health Services' food unit, said officials are studying the question. For now, the department can only recommend that restaurants follow the FDA's advice, he said.

[sidebar]

That's a rap: How do fast-food restaurants determine when hamburgers are cooked? Carl's Jr. and Burger King say burgers are moved over a grill on an electronically controlled conveyor belt. Grill temperature and cooking time are predetermined to achieve the correct internal temperature.

At Wendy's, where chefs cook by hand, the chain has set its cooking instructions to rap music. ("A grill set at two-five-oh with meat and cheese ready to go.") Chefs who recite the rap while they work will cook hamburgers correctly, said Wendy's vice president, Denny Lynch.

Representatives of fast-food chains acknowledge that no system is foolproof. Proper cooking
depends on the amount of fat in a burger, the ice accumulated on frozen burgers and the shape of a burger. Wendy's and Carl's Jr. said they set their average temperatures high to allow for error.

In their investigation of Jack in the Box, for example, Washington state officials found that the burgers were not frozen flat. When placed on a grill, the concave side did not cook thoroughly. Bart Bartelson, technical expert with the Washington state Health Department, said Jack in the Box was ordered to add an extra pat with the spatula to its formal cooking procedure.

What's Cooking

With contaminated, undercooked hamburgers blamed for illness in three western states, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has recommended raising the minimum internal temperature to kill bacteria to 155 degrees from 140 degrees. Here's what fast-food chains in California do now. Figures in degrees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chain</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Average</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McDonald's</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burger King</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>160</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wendy's</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl's Jr.</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>162 or 172*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jack/Box</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>NA**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-N-Out Burger</td>
<td>NA**</td>
<td>NA**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Carl's Jr. average temperature depends on size.
** Not available

Sources: Company representatives, Washington state health officials.

CORRECTION: FOR THE RECORD

McDonald's -- The Consumer Affairs column in Friday's editions reported that the minimum internal temperature for hamburgers cooked at McDonald's is 141 degrees, according to Washington state health officials. McDonald's spokeswoman Terri Capatosto said the chain's minimum temperature is 155 degrees.

GRAPHIC: Table, What's Cooking

Los Angeles Times, January 29, 1993, Friday, Home Edition

A virulent strain of bacteria mysteriously claimed the life of a second small child Thursday amid a spreading epidemic of food poisoning first traced to Jack in the Box restaurants.

Meanwhile, a suburban outlet of the restaurant chain was temporarily closed by state health inspectors who said that potentially dangerous undercooked meat was still being served despite widespread safety warnings and Jack in the Box's promises to alter its procedures. Later, the restaurant was allowed to reopen on the condition that employees check the temperature of each hamburger they cook over the next two weeks and log it in a report.

In yet another foreboding development, local health officials said an employee of the same suburban Seattle Jack in the Box was infected with an entirely different contagious viral disease, hepatitis A, and may have spread it to customers. They urged customers to get injections of immune globulin, which contains antibodies to the liver-damaging disease.

So far in the state of Washington, state health officials have tallied 250 cases, positive and
likely, of E. coli 0157:H7, a bacterial infection that strikes children especially hard. A 2-year-old boy died last Friday of complications associated with the infection. On Thursday a second child infected with the intestinal bacteria died suddenly, but health officials said they found "no obvious connection" to Jack in the Box. The 2 1/2-year-old girl was not known to have eaten at one of the restaurants, nor had any of her relatives, who could have spread the potent bacteria.

At Children's Hospital in Seattle, another 20 youngsters remain hospitalized with symptoms of E. coli poisoning. One is in grave condition, another in serious condition and six others are receiving dialysis. Infected individuals suffer strong cramps, vomiting and bloody diarrhea. Severe infections can result in kidney failure.

In Seattle, the recent outbreak was first reported Jan. 12 by a physician who had been studying the bacterium, some strains of which occur naturally in the human digestive system as well as in that of animals. Investigators began backtracking and found that some, but not all, victims said they had eaten a hamburger at Jack in the Box.

Investigators found high levels of the bacteria in meat samples taken from the restaurants. Typically, the bacteria is spread when meat comes in contact with fecal matter. Cooking at high temperatures kills the bacteria, but state officials said their tests showed that Jack in the Box did not always heat the meat to the state-required 155 degrees.

The federal standard is lower -- 140 degrees -- and may be inadequate to kill the bacteria.

After the initial outbreak, health officials warned of secondary transmission. This can occur in a variety of ways, a state official said, including something as simple as a brother touching a contaminated hamburger and then touching his sister's face.

Outbreaks of E. coli poisoning have recently occurred in San Diego and Las Vegas. In Nevada, officials said most of the 175 cases of unusual intestinal disease reported in the last month could be attributed to E. coli, and 100 of them were traced to Jack in the Box. Nevada authorities said there had been "some consultation" in November with Jack in the Box restaurants in Clark County "related to the question of the desired temperature" of their hamburgers. In Washington state, health officials cautioned that although there was no question some of the reported cases could be attributed to meat served at Jack in the Box, others may not be. Each year in Washington about 150 cases of this bacteria poisoning are reported from a variety of causes.

The chain said in a statement: "Although we understand that this child did not come in contact with the bacteria at a Jack in the Box restaurant, we are devastated by the news of this death."

The statement followed full-page newspaper advertisements Monday in which company Chairman Jack Goodall called the poisonings "a horrible event" and extended the firm's "deepest sympathies" to the family of the 2-year-old boy who died.

"Jack in the Box has taken every step possible to eliminate this problem from our restaurants," Goodall said in the ad. The advertisement said that cooking temperatures had been raised and that the company "has also retrained all food preparation staff."

On Wednesday, however, King County health inspectors checked a Jack in the Box on Mercer Island, just east of Seattle, and reported that hamburgers were being cooked to only 138 to 142 degrees -- far below the state standard to assure safe food. The outlet reopened Thursday after making written assurances that it would correct the problem.

Carl Osaki, acting chief of environmental health for the county, said the outlet was ordered closed "until they could give us some assurances in writing that this condition was not going to continue."

On Thursday, restaurant officials responded with written assurances and the outlet was reopened.

For the next two weeks, employees will have to check the temperature of every hamburger they cook and log it in a report. Health inspectors had entered the facility because one employee recently sought treatment for hepatitis A.

Osaki said the infected worker had handled food during four work shifts between Jan. 18 and 23 and may have passed on the disease. Customers who ate at this outlet during the four days
were advised to obtain an injection of immune globulin, which contains antibodies. Jack in the
Box officials said they would pay individuals up to $35 for the cost of the injections.

Los Angeles Times, January 30, 1993, Saturday, Home Edition
SECTION: Part A; Page 2; Column 1; National Desk
LENGTH: 622 words
HEADLINE: Tainted Meat Linked to California Cattle
BYLINE: From Times, Wire Services

Some of the tainted fast-food hamburger meat blamed for the death of at least one child and
the illnesses of more than 300 people in Washington state is believed to have come from cows
in California, a health official said Friday.

Dr. John Kobayashi, Washington state's chief epidemiologist, said federal health and agricultural
investigators haven't pinpointed a specific herd or slaughterhouse, and they don't know yet at
what point the contamination occurred.

"It appears most of the cattle for the implicated lot of hamburger meat we're looking at comes
from the Central Valley in California," he said.

The raw beef was supplied to the Vons Cos. of Arcadia, which processed it into frozen patties
for Jack in the Box restaurants in Southern California; Washington state; Boise, Ida.; Nevada;
Hawaii, Mexico and Hong Kong.

A 2-year-old Tacoma, Wash., boy died Jan. 22 and at least 300 people -- most of them children
-- have become sick in Washington state this month after eating contaminated and undercooked
hamburgers at Jack in the Box restaurants, officials say.

A 2 1/2-year-old girl died Thursday from infection with the same strain, E. coli 0157:H7, but
she didn't eat at Jack in the Box and officials weren't sure how she contracted the bacterium.

Outbreaks of E. coli poisoning also have occurred recently in San Diego and Las Vegas. In
Nevada, officials said, most of the 175 cases of unusual intestinal disease reported in the last
month could be attributed to E. coli, and 100 of them were traced to Jack in the Box.

Because of concern about possible contamination, all Vons ground-beef products are being
tested, a company official said. In some Vons stores in California, ground beef products were
pulled from the shelves Friday and stored in freezers because all the tests were not completed,
said spokeswoman Mary McAboy.

These products "are from one particular batch of ground beef, and we haven't finished testing
on this batch," she said. A majority of the Vons stores do not have this shipment of ground beef
in stock, she said.

"This is simply a precautionary measure," McAboy said. "Multiple tests have been done on our
ground beef and they've all come up negative. . . . We just don't have the final test on this
particular batch. We'll have fresh ground beef(today) to replace what was taken off the shelves."

Jim Greene, a spokesman with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and
Inspection Service, said inspectors were checking 13 slaughterhouses and processing plants that
probably supplied the meat to Vons.

Health officials believe that the meat became contaminated with the bacterium, found in the
intestines and feces of cows, during slaughter.

Humans become infected if they eat beef that has not been thoroughly cooked. Symptoms
include bloody diarrhea and severe abdominal cramps. Infection can lead to kidney failure,
seizures and neurological damage.

In another development, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy Friday defended the USDA's meat
inspections and blamed undercooking for the outbreak of poisoning caused by the bacterium.

At his first press conference, Espy said in Washington that he would travel to Washington state
Tuesday to meet with Gov. Mike Lowry and testify before the state Senate about the outbreak.

Reacting to the food-poisoning outbreak, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has warned
states that all ground beef should be thoroughly cooked, just as if it were contaminated with
dangerous bacteria.

The agency advised states to raise the minimum cooking temperature of ground beef to 155 degrees Fahrenheit from the former federal recommendation of 140 degrees. Washington state already requires 155 degrees.

Los Angeles Times January 30, 1993, Saturday, Southland Edition
SECTION: Part A; Page 2; Column 1; National Desk
LENGTH: 479 words
HEADLINE: U.S. ISSUES HAMBURGER COOKING WARNING
BYLINE: By DANIEL P. PUZO, TIMES STAFF WRITER

BODY:
Reacting to a food-poisoning outbreak that has caused hundreds of illnesses and two deaths in three Western states, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has warned states that all ground beef should be thoroughly cooked, just as if it were contaminated with dangerous bacteria. The agency advised states to raise the minimum cooking temperature of ground beef to 155 degrees Fahrenheit from the former federal recommendation of 140.

Washington state, where 250 cases of illness and two deaths occurred, already requires 155 degrees.

The statements came in two memos issued by the FDA’s acting director of the retail food protection branch and distributed this week.

In another development, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy Friday defended the agency’s meat inspections and blamed undercooking for the outbreak of poisoning caused by the E. coli 0157:H7 bacterium, which has sickened people in Seattle, Las Vegas and San Diego and killed two children in Seattle.

Many of the cases have been traced to undercooked hamburgers at Jack in the Box restaurants.

At his first press conference, Espy said in Washington that he would travel to Washington state Tuesday to meet with Gov. Mike Lowry and testify before the state Senate about the outbreak.

The beef is thought to have been contaminated during slaughter, apparently when it came in contact with fecal matter. Thorough cooking kills the bacteria. Espy called the bacteria “rare.”

Dr. Jill Hollingsworth, assistant to the administrator of the federal food inspection service, said Friday that the ground beef had been traced to a warehouse in Tukwila, Wash., owned by the distributor, Foodmaker Inc., and back to a processing plant, Von’s Cos. of El Monte, Calif.

But the department has been unable to trace the beef further back than that, she said. Jack in the Box said the tainted meat went to Washington, Idaho, California, Nevada, Hawaii, Hong Kong and Mexico.

Hollingsworth and Espy both urged consumers to cook raw meat thoroughly.

E. coli are a group of generally harmless bacteria found in the intestines of humans and animals. However, when eaten, certain strains of E. coli can cause illnesses ranging from cramps to bloody diarrhea. In severe cases, the infection can lead to kidney failure and death. Children and the elderly are at special risk.

So far in the state of Washington, health officials have tallied 250 cases. A 2-year-old boy died last week, and a second child, a 2 1/2-year-old girl, died Thursday. The first child had eaten at Jack in the Box; the second had not.

Outbreaks of E. coli poisoning also have occurred recently in San Diego and Las Vegas. In Nevada, officials said, most of the 175 cases of unusual intestinal disease reported in the last month could be attributed to E. coli, and 100 of them were traced to Jack in the Box.
BYLINE: By DOUG CONNER and DANIEL P. PUZO, TIMES STAFF WRITERS
DATELINE: OLYMPIA, Wash.

BODY:

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy announced Tuesday that the Clinton Administration is preparing new initiatives to prevent the kind of food-borne bacterial poisoning that has claimed two lives and left hundreds ill in the West.

Espy told government officials that he will present recommendations to a U.S. Senate subcommittee as early as Friday on ways to strengthen the department's food safety efforts, though he declined to specify what the recommendations would be.

He was responding to a still-spreading epidemic of E. coli 00157: H7 bacterial poisoning that has been traced in most cases to the sale of undercooked hamburgers at Jack in the Box restaurants in Washington state and other Western outlets. More than 350 people have been stricken with food poisoning symptoms, including more than 20 children who remain hospitalized and two who have died in Washington state.

Espy met with Washington Gov. Mike Lowry and testified before state lawmakers, defending the U.S. Department of Agriculture inspection system. But he added that simply following the letter of the law was "in my opinion, not enough."

Meat inspectors' visual inspections cannot detect bacteria contamination in ground meat, and the sale of such meat is legal because of the assumption that proper storage and handling will retard the growth of the organisms, and high enough cooking temperatures will kill them.

Traveling with Espy, Russell Cross, head of the department's Food Safety and Inspection Service, told reporters and state lawmakers that new Administration initiatives could be "fairly drastic . . . things unheard of six months ago."

Meanwhile, evidence mounted that the E. coli 00157: H7 is more prevalent than previously thought.

According to a U.S. Food and Drug Administration memorandum sent to the agency's regional offices last week, the bacteria is now said to be present in 3% of the raw ground beef collected at supermarket counters by researchers -- a rate six times higher than the estimate of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The memo recommended that all ground beef products be stored, handled and cooked as if contaminated with the virulent strain. This would mean a minimum cooking temperature of 155 degrees, resulting in well done hamburger.

The apparent disparity between the agencies' estimates could be explained by the fact that the 3% contamination rate was found at supermarkets and the 0.5% level was found at slaughter and processing plants. Once present in the meat, the bacteria can multiply.

Morris Potter, assistant director for food-borne disease at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, said that the extent of the illnesses caused by E. coli 0157:H7 is unknown and may range from 6,000 to 20,000 cases a year in this country. (Conner reported from Olympia and Puzo from Washington, D.C.)

Los Angeles Times, February 5, 1993, Friday, Home Edition
SECTION: Business; Part D; Page 1; Column 2; Financial Desk
LENGTH: 1145 words
HEADLINE: USDA MEAT INSPECTION SYSTEM UNDER FIRE; JACK IN THE BOX CASE BRINGS A RENEWED CALL FOR REFORMS
BYLINE: By DENISE GELLENE, TIMES STAFF WRITER

BODY:

Until his two young daughters became seriously ill after eating contaminated hamburgers at a nearby Jack in the Box restaurant, Joseph Dolan of Kent, Wash., never doubted that any meat was fit to eat.

Meat is inspected by the government, he knew, stamped with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's seal of approval.
"You just assume everything is safe," Dolan said.

But the alarming wave of illness that has touched the Dolan girls and hundreds of other Jack in the Box customers has shaken that assumption for countless Americans who have come to trust the USDA stamp.

With two children dead and dozens of other people hospitalized, the epidemic is riveting attention on a decades-old meat inspection program that critics say is set up to ensure quality more than safety.

Speaking before the Washington Senate last week, newly appointed U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy acknowledged flaws in a system that did not detect large amounts of bacteria-laden beef. He pledged to outline reforms before Congress today.

Espy is expected to announce a program to bolster the agency's ability to find and prevent bacterial contamination -- a step that critics of the USDA say is long overdue.

Meanwhile, in the finger-pointing that has followed the tragedy, several victims are suing Jack in the Box for not cooking hamburgers long enough to ensure that all bacteria were killed. And on Thursday, the company that owns Jack in the Box sued Vons Cos., which supplied ground meat to the restaurant chain.

A Vons spokeswoman said the lawsuit was expected, adding that the Arcadia-based company is confident that it was not responsible for the contamination. Health authorities, she noted, have said "proper cooking would have prevented this tragedy."

The task of checking for meat contamination falls to 5,000 USDA inspectors who patrol the nation's slaughterhouses. They are charged with examining animal carcasses for signs of disease or contamination, such as hair, wood chips or fecal matter, much as they have since the 1930s. The inspectors are not equipped to search for disease-causing bacteria, a process that requires expensive, time-consuming laboratory tests.

Elaine Dodge, a staff attorney with the Government Accountability Project, a Washington-based watchdog group that has long lobbied for reform at the USDA, said the lack of testing leaves meat supplies vulnerable to the sort of mass contamination that has now struck in Washington state, Iowa and Nevada.

"The entire system was an accident waiting to happen," said Jean Hutter, associate director of government affairs for the United Food and Commercial Workers union, which represents meat handlers in supermarkets and slaughterhouses. "And it did."

Calls for reform of the nation's meat inspection system are not new. Three times in the last eight years, the National Academy of Sciences has recommended tests for disease-causing bacteria. But the USDA's food safety and inspection system has resisted.

Jim Greene, a spokesman for the USDA, said the agency has been hampered by a lack of funding and technology. Existing tests for some harmful bacteria take several days to produce results, he said, making them impractical for checking meat.

In any event, the USDA maintains that the nation's meat supply is generally safe and that the threat from bacterial contamination is small. A random testing program for bacterial contamination, started last October, has not yet detected the harmful E. coli strain, although other studies have found that it may exist in up to 3.7% of all raw meat.

The agency believes the presence of other kinds of bacteria is also low.

Over the years, the USDA has maintained that the best defense against bacterial contamination is cooking meat until it is well done -- a message that hasn't reached the many thousands of Americans who prefer to eat beef when it is pink and juicy.

The advice also has failed to make an impression on some state governments, including California's, which do not regulate cooking temperatures for ground beef and other foods. In Washington, by contrast, Jack in the Box is alleged to have undercooked its meat in violation of a new state law.

Critics of the USDA view the emphasis on proper cooking as an attempt to shift responsibility for meat safety to consumers -- or to teen-age chefs working at the local fast-food restaurant.

"I don't hold teen-agers on their first job responsible for this problem," said Dodge of the
Government Accountability Project. "The contamination shouldn't be there in the first place."

No one is yet certain how the Jack in the Sox hamburgers became contaminated.

Investigators believe that fecal matter splattered on a carcass, probably at the slaughterhouse when the animal was disemboweled. That possibility has caused critics to call for reform of the traditional inspection process as well.

"Feces can't come in contact with the carcass unless there's a mistake at the slaughter facility," said Dodge. Government inspectors are supposed to check fecal contamination, she said, and cut away any meat in contact with it.

Some USDA inspectors assigned to slaughterhouses said they are not surprised by the problems.

Steve Cockerman, an inspector based in Nebraska who testified before the National Academy of Sciences, said carcasses dangling from hooks whiz by on assembly lines so quickly that inspectors have no time to perform thorough checks.

At high-speed processing plants, he said, beef carcasses move through at a rate of 312 an hour, giving an inspector just six seconds to check a split carcass for fecal contamination. While inspectors have the authority to stop the assembly line, most are reluctant to do so very often, he said.

In addition, Cockerman and other inspectors complain that the agency is understaffed, with around 600 vacancies. Espy last week ordered a hiring freeze at the department, so those posts may continue to go unfilled.

USDA spokesman Greene said that the "vast majority" of inspectors are satisfied with the way the system works, adding that the estimate of 600 inspector vacancies seemed high.

One person who is not satisfied is Joseph Dolan, whose daughters are still recovering from the effects of the E. coli 0157:H7 strain of bacteria that lurked in their Jack in the Box hamburgers on Jan. 3.

Mary, 4, suffered a stroke during a two-week hospitalization and was forced to briefly undergo dialysis when her kidneys failed. Now at home, Mary is trying to recover memory lost as a result of the stroke, her father said.

Her sister, 2-year-old Aundrea -- who fell asleep and did not finish her hamburger -- did not get as sick. But she is being watched for signs of permanent kidney damage.

"The whole inspection system is flawed from start to finish," said Dolan, 30, an engineer with Boeing. "The problem is massive."

Los Angeles Times, February 6, 1993, Saturday, Home Edition
SECTION: Part A; Page 16; Column 1; National Desk
LENGTH: 669 words
HEADLINE: ESPY CALLS FOR OVERHAUL OF MEAT INSPECTION SYSTEM; FOOD: AGRICULTURE SECRETARY TELLS SENATORS PROBING BACTERIA ILLNESSES THAT CONTAMINATION CAN BE REDUCED, BUT NOT TOTALLY PREVENTED.
BYLINE: By DANIEL P. PUZO, TIMES STAFF WRITER
DATELINE: WASHINGTON
BODY:
Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy on Friday said his department must embark on an overhaul of the nation's meat inspection system, saying the current $500-million program is "no longer adequate."

Testifying before a Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry subcommittee, Espy conceded that improvements in the program can reduce the likelihood of meat contamination but not prevent it. "No raw meat product is ever going to be 100% sterile," he said.

The hearing centered on the department's responsibility for detecting ground beef contaminated with E. coli 0157:H7 bacteria, which has so far resulted in nearly 400 illnesses and the deaths of two children in the Pacific Northwest. The illnesses were traced to hamburgers served at Jack in the Box restaurants.
Espy said that the current meat inspection practice, which depends on visual examination of carcasses, cannot detect bacterial contamination. He said H. Russell Cross, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, will prepare a "revolutionary" strategy to create a meat inspection program more capable of combating threats from a host of harmful bacteria.

Espy did not elaborate on specifics, but he outlined a number of short-term measures he plans to implement over the next two years:

* Label all raw meat and poultry product packaging with handling and cooking instructions.
* Accelerate federal approval of irradiation for use on beef.
* Improve record-keeping at all federally inspected meat plants.
* Fill 550 meat inspector vacancies nationwide.
* Use organic acid rinses on carcasses in slaughter plants.
* Develop rapid laboratory tests that can detect the presence of E. coli 0157:H7 within 24 hours.

Cross, who also testified Friday, said the USDA may never be able to identify the original source of the current bacteria outbreak.

The Agriculture Department was roundly criticized during the hearing. Consumer advocates claimed that the USDA is too close to the meat industry to implement the innovations needed in its system of 9,000 inspectors, veterinarians and administrators.

Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) charged that "the Department of Agriculture is using inspection techniques developed in the early 1900s; it's time to bring the inspection process into the 1990s."

Robert J. Nugent, president and chief executive officer of Jack in the Box restaurants, said that "the current USDA meat inspection system and federal food preparations standards are not providing the protection Americans deserve."

Separately, Washington state health officials said Friday that 55 of the 65 Jack in the Box restaurants in the state had been linked to the food poisoning outbreak.

Nugent, under questioning from Sen. Thomas A. Daschle (D-S.D.), said that he was unaware that Washington state required at least six months before the current outbreak that cooking temperatures for hamburgers be raised to levels that would destroy E. coli 0157:H7.

However, doubt was cast on the effectiveness of a recent federal recommendation that hamburgers be cooked to an internal temperature of 155 degrees, an increase from the previous level of 140 degrees.

"We can only assume that the (tainted) meat patties ... were somehow different, perhaps with higher levels of E. coli 0157:H7 than usual. Thus the normal cooking procedures were rendered ineffective," said Douglas L. Archer, deputy director of the federal Food and Drug Administration's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition.

"FDA has recommended raising the cooking temperature to 155 degrees to compensate for such higher levels of pathogens. But please be aware that even this higher temperature is insufficient to kill high numbers of E. coli 0157:H7."

Archer said any protective measures can be "defeated" if enough harmful bacteria are present in the food. "Cooking is not the total solution to this problem," he said, urging that precautions be implemented throughout food processing, beginning at the farm level.

GRAPHIC: Photo, Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy testifies before a Senate panel investigating cases of bacteria poisoning. (Associated Press)
However, the company said comparable-restaurant sales for Jack in the Box plunged 30% to 35% during the second and third week after media attention focused on the food poisonings. The company stopped product advertising during that time.

Foodmaker earned $10.9 million, or 28 cents a share, in the quarter ended Jan. 17, up from $2.4 million, or 10 cents, on 66% more shares outstanding.

Revenue increased 7.2% to $479.4 million from $447.1 million in the year-earlier period.

The company exceeded estimates by three analysts surveyed by Zacks Investment Research by 12%. They predicted earnings of 25 cents for the quarter.

More than 600 cases of food poisoning or secondary infection cases caused by the E. coli bacteria have been reported in Washington and Nevada, officials said, with two deaths linked to Jack in the Box.

At least 93% of the Washington cases and all the Nevada cases have been linked by officials to Jack in the Box.

"We are confident that our quick response, our financial resources and our insurance coverage are sufficient to protect the long-term viability of the company," said Jack Goodall, president, chairman and chief executive of Foodmaker.

Foodmaker took a $750,000-charge for the quarter to cover the deductible on its general liability insurance policy, the company said.

SECTION: Food; Part H; Page 2; Column 1
LENGTH: 1126 words
HEADLINE: NEWS ANALYSIS; MEAT INSPECTION: 'NO LONGER ADEQUATE'
BYLINE: By DANIEL P. PUZO, TIMES STAFF WRITER
DATELINE: WASHINGTON
BODY:

Much remains unknown about the events that preceded the hundreds of illnesses linked to contaminated hamburger in the past month, but what's been learned in the past four weeks may be even more unsettling for consumers than the still-lingering mysteries.

Federal officials now concede that the origin of the E. coli 0157:H7 contamination -- whether sick cows, unsanitary slaughter plants or human error -- may never be known despite the efforts of numerous government health agencies now tracking the problem.

More disturbing, however, is that the largest reported E. coli 0157:H7 outbreak to date has underscored how ill-equipped the federal meat inspection program is to handle the threat from harmful bacteria in the food supply.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, which oversees the nation's $500 million meat and poultry inspection program, tries to ensure safety and wholesomeness by looking for visual defects on carcasses, which is basically the same technique that has been in use for more than 50 years. But bacteria cannot be detected by sight, scent or touch.

Laboratory analysis is the only way to detect E. coli. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy estimates that it would cost $58 billion just to analyze 20% of the nation's beef supply for E. coli. Further, it takes about six days to get laboratory results, which is too long to hold fresh meat prior to its release into retail channels.

"From everything I've heard, seen and read, it is clear to me that improvements must be made in the way we inspect meat and poultry in the future," Espy says. "A visual inspection program is no longer sufficient to meet the food safety needs of today's consumers."

Yet, despite a long list of proposals announced by Espy last week, the public can expect little change in the condition of raw meat or poultry: The department does not even have the budget to fill its 550 meat inspector vacancies.

When USDA officials testified before a Senate Agriculture Subcommittee hearing last week, one official after another said the department's meat inspection program is "no longer adequate" to control harmful bacteria and cannot prevent similar outbreaks in the future.
Many in Congress and in the consumer advocacy community agree that it is irresponsible to shift all responsibility for food safety to consumers. "I know thorough cooking is an answer, but it is not the complete answer because errors are made," said Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.). "Children will continue to eat in restaurants. Children do not bring meat thermometers with them to restaurants. Parents make mistakes also, but the death penalty is too strong a penalty for a cooking error."

In some ways more frightening still, one U.S. Food and Drug Administration official testified that the government's revised cooking instructions for ground beef may not be enough to destroy this particularly powerful bacteria, especially if the organism is present in high numbers. "The FDA has recommended raising the cooking temperature to 155 degrees to compensate for . . . higher levels of pathogens," said Douglas L. Archer, deputy director of the FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. "Even this higher temperature is insufficient to kill high numbers of E. coli 0157:H7 . . . The emphasis should not be on changing cooking temperature times; the emphasis must be placed on improving raw ingredients."

And, in probably the system's most serious failing, federal inspectors would be helpless to keep contaminated raw meat off the market even if high levels of harmful bacteria were to be discovered during any round of testing. "We (the USDA) do not have the (regulatory) authority to detain or condemn raw meat product that is contaminated with bacteria," said H. Russell Cross, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, the agency responsible for meat and poultry inspection.

An analogy heard frequently during the current controversy is that the USDA already knows that as much as 60% of the nation's raw poultry tests positive for Salmonella. Yet sales of raw chicken go on uninterrupted. Salmonella causes an estimated 2 million or more cases of food poisoning each year in this country; E. coli 0157:H7 is responsible for between 6,000 and 20,000 illnesses. Meanwhile, USDA officials working to discover the origin of the E. coli 0157:H7-tainted beef are not having much success. Last week, the USDA released a list of 13 companies thought to be possible sources of the raw meat that was ground into the problematic shipment. Yet only one of the 13 acknowledged it could be a possible source; some on the USDA list do not even sell raw meat products. A USDA representative was at a loss to explain why the list was inaccurate and said the department is working on a new one.

The origin of the tainted beef is important because health officials believe that reforms need to be instituted at the farm level to reduce the presence of harmful bacteria in meat. Destroying harmful bacteria in food is much more difficult than preventing it from entering the system in the first place.

Government officials, industry analysts and consumer advocates agree that E. coli 0157:H7 most likely originates in mature dairy cattle that are sent to slaughter. "Dairy cattle constitute a major reservoir for the transmission of E. coli 0157:H7 to humans," said Paul Blake, chief of the enteric diseases branch of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. "However, we do not fully understand the ecology of the organism on dairy farms, its prevalence and geographic distribution, and why it is present on some dairy farms and not others."

There is no way for a consumer to discern whether beef is from a dairy cow or from a steer raised on a feed lot. In fact, as the food system becomes more globalized it is not uncommon for a single beef patty to contain meat from three or four different countries. In the current epidemic, officials are at odds over whether some of the implicated beef originated in Canada, Australia or in the northern United States.

Carol Tucker Foreman, a representative of the Washington-based Safe Food Coalition, told last week's Senate hearing: "We are spending a half billion dollars a year for a rickety, ineffectual, old system, bad science and poor leadership. The public deserves better."

Foreman said the USDA has been too cozy with the industry it regulates to make the tough decisions necessary to improve the meat supply. "We haven't found ways to determine that meat is contaminated, not because it is too difficult,"
she said, "but because the people who run the system and the people who are regulated by it are too comfortable with the status quo."

Los Angeles Times, February 12, 1993, Friday, Home Edition
SECTION: Part A; Page 14; Column 1; National Desk
LENGTH: 358 words
HEADLINE: ESPY VOWS TO HIRE MEAT INSPECTORS, CUT USDA STAFF
BYLINE: By CONSTANCE SOMMER, TIMES STAFF WRITER
DATELINE: WASHINGTON

Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy announced plans Thursday to increase the number of meat inspectors and cut staff at his department's headquarters here.

"I don't think there is a department in this entire government in more dire need of being reinvented than the USDA," Espy said. He said the department is scheduled to receive an additional $4 million in President Clinton's economic stimulus package to hire 160 additional meat and poultry inspectors.

The cry for more Agriculture Department inspectors stems from last month's food contamination case in Washington state, in which more than 400 people fell ill after eating tainted Jack-in-the-Box hamburgers. Two children died and several others remain in serious condition from what scientists said was a case of meat tainted with a virulent strain of the E. coli bacteria.

USDA inspectors examine meat through touch, smell and sight in a method largely unchanged in 60 years. Espy said he intends to make the department's meat inspection process more "scientific," besides hiring more inspectors.

He said changes at the USDA must begin at the agency's headquarters in Washington, where he first plans to streamline the office of public affairs.

The USDA now employs about 1,000 publicists and support personnel, both in the capital and at regional offices, at a cost of more than $40 million, he said. What's more, Espy said, the positions fall under the jurisdiction of two different offices, which often end up duplicating each other's efforts.

Espy said he will establish a smaller, more efficient Office of Communications.

The Agriculture Department has made few significant changes in the way it does business since the days of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who last revamped the agency. Although times and agricultural markets have changed, the USDA remains largely wedded to bureaucratic habits of the past.

The statistics are revealing. In 1932, 25% of the U.S. population lived on farms and the USDA employed about one worker for every 100 farm residents. Today, 2% of Americans live on farms and the department has one employee for every 45 farm residents.

Los Angeles Times, February 13, 1993, Saturday, Home Edition
SECTION: Business; Part D; Page 1; Column 2; Financial Desk
LENGTH: 442 words
HEADLINE: JACK IN THE BOX ADMITS NOT FOLLOWING RULE; FOOD: CHAIN'S PARENT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT STATE OFFICIALS TWICE SENT NOTICES OF NEW TEMPERATURE STANDARDS FOR HAMBURGERS, BUT APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS NEVER RECEIVED THEM.
BYLINE: By H.G. REZA, TIMES STAFF WRITER
DATELINE: SAN DIEGO

Foodmaker Inc. was notified that Washington state health officials had raised the required cooking temperature for hamburger as early as eight months before two children died in the state after eating tainted hamburgers at the firm's Jack in the Box restaurants, a company official said Friday.
However, no action was taken because appropriate company officials were not informed of the new rule, Jack in the Box President Robert J. Nugent told stunned shareholders attending the annual meeting here of Foodmaker, parent of the restaurant chain.

That newly required temperature of 155 degrees -- three degrees higher than the average temperature the restaurant chain was using -- would have been enough to kill the bacteria that led to the children's death from poisoning, health officials said.

Meanwhile, a decline in sales at Jack in the Box since the poisonings have begun to result in job losses.

Terry Herrick, president of Herrick/Socios Cos., a Los Angeles-based business that owns 52 Jack in the Box restaurants in California, Texas and Washington, said the impact has been "considerably harsher than the degree announced by Foodmaker." Foodmaker has said that sales had fallen 30% to 35% since the outbreak.

Herrick, who said he owns 18 restaurants in the Los Angeles area, said he has had to lay off about 200 employees because of a sharp drop in customers. But he refused to say just how much his restaurants' sales have dropped.

Discussing the Washington state regulation, Nugent told the annual meeting that Foodmaker was notified in May, 1992, of the new rule in a memo from the Bremerton-Kitsap County Health Department.

The same memo was mailed last September to a Jack in the Box restaurant in Tacoma, Wash., Nugent added. According to Nugent, the memos "were not brought to the attention of appropriate management" until earlier this week.

Nugent said Foodmaker has appointed a committee of board members to find out why the two memos were not brought to the attention of appropriate company officials.

"We have not yet decided what disciplinary action, if any, is appropriate or necessary," Nugent said.

Besides the two deaths, several dozen people in the Pacific Northwest and Las Vegas became ill.

Health authorities in Washington blamed the deaths and illnesses on hamburger tainted with a virulent strain of bacteria called E. coli 0157:H7. The bacteria breeds in beef contaminated by cow excrement.

Nugent said the federal standard for cooking hamburger is 140 degrees. However, he said Jack in the Box restaurants in Washington are cooking hamburger at temperatures that averaged about 152 degrees.

Los Angeles Times, February 16, 1993, Tuesday, Home Edition
SECTION: Metro; Part B; Page 4; Column 3; Metro Desk
LENGTH: 438 words
HEADLINE: TURNING UP HEAT ON MEAT INSPECTIONS; AGRICULTURE SECRETARY ESPY VOWS TO DEVELOP A MUCH-NEEDED FOOD SAFETY PROGRAM
BODY:
President Clinton has responded appropriately to an outbreak of illness linked to contaminated hamburger meat by ordering the Department of Agriculture to hire more meat and poultry inspectors. But, as with other regulatory agencies that have been neglected over the last 12 years, he and Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy must do a lot more to reinvigorate the USDA.

The department's beleaguered $500-million meat and poultry inspection program is a good place to start. Questions about the shortage of inspectors, and the effectiveness of inspection procedures themselves, have surfaced after an outbreak of food poisoning from contaminated hamburgers at Jack-in-the-Box restaurants in Washington, Nevada and Idaho. One boy died and at least 400 people became ill when they consumed meat that had been contaminated with E. coli bacteria.

To ease public fears, the Agriculture Department issued new food preparation standards requiring that cooking temperatures for hamburgers be raised from 140 degrees to at least 155
degrees to kill any bacteria that may be present in meat.

And on Thursday, the President demonstrated his commitment to the problem by authorizing the department to hire 160 new meat and poultry inspectors.

But continuing attention to this matter will be necessary.

More than a decade of budget cutting and deregulation has significantly reduced the number of agents responsible for inspecting the nation's more than 9,000 meat and poultry processing plants and slaughterhouses. The ranks of USDA inspectors have dwindled to 7,200, from 8,400 in 1978. Currently 550 positions remain unfilled, so the new hires, while very much needed, hardly begin to address the shortfall.

A dozen federal agencies are responsible for regulating food safety and quality. Together, these agencies spend about $1 billion to administer 35 separate laws. Not surprisingly, given this patchwork of regulations and the varying missions of these institutions, inspection procedures vary widely for products that pose virtually the same health risks to consumers. Meat and poultry, for example, receive better inspection than fish.

Secretary Espy has promised to develop a new food safety program. He should seriously entertain the idea of consolidating the various regulatory agencies. He should also consider modernizing inspections, which still rely on antiquated techniques -- like sight, smell and touch-- that have been in use for half a century.

Food safety is not the highest-profile issue the Clinton Administration faces, but it's one that people become all too painfully aware of if there's a problem.
the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control, is now focusing on nine suppliers to Service Packing -- eight in the United States and one in Canada.

In California, those suppliers include Coelho Meat Co. of Tulare, Orvis Bros. Inc. in Modesto, Alpine Packing in Stockton and Rancho Veal in Petaluma.

Service Packing buys cattle carcasses from USDA-inspected slaughterhouses.

The carcasses are deboned and then shipped to another processor, which in this case was Arcadia-based Vons Cos.

"Because technology is not available to rapidly identify and eliminate invisible bacteria, we are dependent upon the inspected slaughter plants and their cattle suppliers to provide meat that is as safe as possible," Waldman said.

Vons spokeswoman Julie Reynolds said the supermarket chain processed the Service Packing meat only for Jack in the Box and that Service Packing does not supply Vons supermarkets.

Foodmaker Inc., the San Diego-based parent of Jack in the Box, has sued Vons and dropped it as a supplier of beef.

Any evidence collected by the investigation is "very preliminary," said Steve Ostroff, acting assistant director for epidemiology at the CDC. For that reason, Ostroff declined Monday to confirm whether the USDA memo was accurate, adding that "we wouldn't want to unfairly implicate one company."

Officials have said they may never find the original source of the contaminated meat because carcasses from many different places are ground together to make hamburger.

Investigators tested hamburger patties that were produced for Jack in the Box on Nov. 19 by Vons Cos. and found contamination in eight lots of beef, which included meat from Service Packing and three other suppliers, according to the USDA memo.

Three additional lots processed that day showed no signs of contamination, and those lots did not contain meat from Service Packing, the memo says.

The other companies that supplied beef that day were Monfort of Greeley, Colo., and North Meats and AMH, both of Australia.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Los Angeles Times, March 4, 1993, Thursday, Home Edition
SECTION: Food; Part H; Page 28; Column 2
LENGTH: 697 words
HEADLINE: THE NATION'S MEAT SUPPLY; FOOD POISONING UNDER A MICROSCOPE
BYLINE: By DANIEL P. PUZO, TIMES STAFF WRITER
BODY:
The recent outbreak of Escherichia coli 0157:H7 in the Western United States perfectly illustrates the challenges involved in ensuring a safe and wholesome food supply. As recently as 1982 this bacterial strain was unknown to science.

Researchers and health officials agree that pathogenic bacteria are changing, much in the same way humans are evolving. The organisms are getting stronger and are constantly adapting to their environment. At the same time, Americans are living longer, and the percentage of the United States population that is at acute risk for infection from these organisms is increasing. The E. coli 0157:H7 incident, with most of the illnesses clustered among the young and the elderly, shows just how opportunistic these bacteria can be when introduced into the food supply. However, E. coli 0157:H7 is one of a number of food-borne illnesses that can infect normal, healthy adults and not just infants or the infirm. Some of the major problems, according to the National Academy of Sciences, include:

* Salmonella. There are thousands of strains of this bacteria, ranging in toxicity and including the variety that causes typhoid fever. Salmonella organisms are found throughout the environment and are considered ubiquitous by science. Nevertheless, harmful strains of Salmonella are frequently associated with raw foods. Once present, the bacteria multiply quickly if not destroyed by refrigeration, freezing or cooking. It is still not known how many salmonella need to be present
in food to infect adults and cause illness. An estimated 2 million cases of Salmonellosis occur in the United States each year. Symptoms include fever, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting and abdominal cramps.

* Campylobacter. The first case of food-borne Campylobacteriosis was reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1978. Since then, this pathogen is believed to rival Salmonella for the number of illnesses caused each year. Campylobacter may be easier to control than Salmonella but could still multiply if present in food that is improperly refrigerated or prepared. Symptoms are similar to Salmonellosis except that advanced cases can cause relapsing colitis.

* Listeria. Again, this bacteria may be present in a wide variety of foods but is most likely to cause illness in high-risk individuals, particularly pregnant women. The largest outbreak of Listeriosis occurred in Los Angeles County in 1985 and was linked to a Mexican-style soft cheese made from unpasteurized milk. Last year, health officials warned pregnant women to avoid consumption of deli foods, soft cheeses and undercooked chicken because of the likely presence of Listeriosis monocytogenes. Symptoms include meningitis, septicemia, brain abscess, pneumonia and hepatitis.

* Staphylococcus. The National Academy of Sciences described Staphylococcus as one of the "most frequent causes of food poisoning." Humans infected with the bacteria who then handle food are the most likely cause of illness. Unlike some of the other pathogens, Staphylococcus must be present in high levels for the food to cause illness. Symptoms are similar to Salmonellosis.

* Shigella. Humans are the most likely source of Shigella bacteria, small doses of which can cause illness. An estimated 300,000 cases of Shigellosis occur annually in this country. Most outbreaks of food-borne Shigellosis result from contamination of raw or previously cooked foods during preparation by an infected food handler with poor personal hygiene," the National Academy of Sciences reported. Symptoms are similar to Salmonellosis.

* Vibrio. There are numerous strains of this bacterial family, including the one that causes cholera. Since 1991, California has required that all retail outlets selling oysters from the Gulf of Mexico post warnings that the shellfish may contain Vibrio vulnificus, a bacteria with a high fatality rate in those infected. Most susceptible to V. vulnificus are people with liver diseases, cancer and other chronic illnesses such as diabetes or AIDS. Symptoms are similar to Salmonellosis but can lead to septicemia. Death has occurred within two days.
to be introduced into the modern food chain.

"The spread of E. coli 0157:H7 resulted from the fast-food revolution in this country," Cohen says, "much in the way Legionnaire's disease evolved from air conditioning, AIDS was spread as a result of sexual practices, and Lyme disease appeared because of some kind of change in the deer population."

The CDC's epidemiologists, physicians and veterinarians investigating the current incident, centered in Washington state, also believe that the number of people who became ill from eating contaminated ground beef in January far exceeds the 450 confirmed cases reported to date. Three deaths have also been linked to the E. coli 0157:H7 contamination.

Officials at the CDC, the lead federal agency in tracing the source of the contamination, concede that the ultimate cause of the outbreak may never be known. However, leads developed over the past month indicate that infected dairy cows were the source of the beef that caused the illnesses. At some point during slaughter, feces or other contaminated intestinal matter was mixed with the meat. The bacteria continued to multiply unchecked and were spread through 100,000 pounds of beef as it was ground and made into patties.

"People do not need much more convincing that the source of the outbreak is (meat from) dairy cows," says Dr. Robert V. Tauxe, a CDC medical epidemiologist. Particularly puzzling to health officials and meat industry representatives is that cows infected with E. coli 0157:H7 show no outward signs of illness.

"No one knows when ( E. coli 0157:H7) is present in cattle," Tauxe says, "and it can slide right through the entire food chain undetected like air through an open conduit."

What's more, according to a USDA spokesman in Washington, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has "no idea" what percentage of the nation's beef comes from dairy cows. There is no way a consumer could discern whether ground beef, or any other cut, was from feed-lot cattle or dairy cows. In fact, the spokesman says, a single beef patty may contain meat from "hundreds" of animals.

Tauxe says the current outbreak of E. coli 0157:H7 is "huge" and dwarfs all other reported incidents of this infection, which was first recorded in 1982.

An estimated 20,000 cases of E. coli 0157:H7 occur in this country each year, but CDC officials are now saying that the figure is only the "tip of the iceberg." A more reliable figure is unavailable because local health officials, hospitals and physicians are not looking for, nor are required to report, cases of E. coli 0157:H7 to the CDC. (They are required to report outbreaks of Salmonella, Listeria and several other food- or water-borne diseases.) The omission is likely to change in light of Washington state's dramatic outbreak.

Supporting the agency's view that such cases are underestimated is a recent report by Canadian health officials in the Journal of Infectious Diseases that found what it called "high" numbers of E. coli 0157:H7 infections in individuals suffering from diarrhea, who were tested for the bacteria. (Such testing is rarely conducted in the United States because such tests, if ordered by attending physicians, are usually designed to determine the presence of Salmonella or Shigella.) The Canadian study says that the number of illnesses caused by this pathogen are increasing by nearly 30% a year in Canada, according to the most recent available data.

The journal study, authored by Nicole Le Saux, John S. Spika and colleagues, went on to state that E. coli 0157:H7 infections are just as likely to happen in the home or at recreational settings such as picnics as they are in restaurants, which were the primary source of the Washington state outbreak.

"In informal settings, the cooking is usually done by non-professional food handlers who may not be correctly trained or have the proper equipment to process food for many people," the journal article states. "Guests may also be reluctant to judge the acceptability of their host's cooking standards in these situations and be willing to tolerate improper food handling techniques or to eat undercooked ground meat."

Another Canadian health official, Dr. Robert Moir, chief of the food-borne pathogen unit with Agriculture Canada in Ottawa, Ontario, says his nation's experience is no different from other
countries.

"It is total misinformation for people to say that Canada has a higher rate of E. coli 0157:H7 infections than North America altogether or than other countries of the world," says Moir.

The scope of the E. coli 0157:H7 problem was further underlined last week by a meat industry trade publication, which reported that the bacteria are also present in ground meats other than beef. Western States Meat Assn., citing a study in Applied Environmental Microbiology, says that this particular strain of E. coli is present in "1.5% of the ground pork, 1.5% of the ground poultry, 2% of the ground lamb and 3.7% of the ground beef" sampled from supermarket meat cases. While the cause of the recent outbreak remains a mystery despite the efforts of the CDC, the USDA and the FDA, the focus is shifting to containing the next one.

"Our previous regulations and guidelines had been adequate to control normal levels of E. coli 0157:H7 in the kitchen, but something has changed, and these measures are no longer able to destroy (the bacteria)," says Morris Potter DVM, with the CDC's Bacterial & Mycotic Diseases Division.

Also complicating the case, CDC officials say, is that just a few E. coli 0157:H7 organisms are sufficient to infect a person. Other food-borne illnesses, such as Salmonella, require thousands of organisms to cause illness in otherwise healthy adults.
Heavy discounting and renewed advertising have helped sales start to rebound for Jack in the Box, which in mid-January sold undercooked, tainted hamburgers that sparked a food-poisoning epidemic.

And while there is evidence that the food-poisoning scare affected some other fast-food operations, they too report that business is returning to normal.

Still, indications are that concern about meat safety is becoming something of a popular preoccupation:

- "Our Beef Is USDA Inspected and Charbroiled for Your Safety," reads a movie marquee-style sign at a Burger King in West Los Angeles.
- Rare hamburgers are a thing of the past at the Tapestiy restaurant, a hot spot among the skiing crowd in Park City, Utah. To comply with a new county ordinance, the restaurant has adopted a policy that all burgers must be cooked thoroughly, even if a customer requests otherwise.
- Alpha Beta supermarkets recently advertised that its butchers "take the time to sterilize our meat department every day."

Two children remain hospitalized in Seattle with the same type of E. coli bacterial infections that killed three children and sickened at least 500 other people since mid-January in a disease outbreak that was linked in large part to hamburgers sold by Jack in the Box in Washington and three other states.

Federal investigators have said that thorough cooking of the meat, which probably was contaminated by animal feces at the slaughterhouse, would have killed the bacteria.

Sales at Jack in the Box restaurants plummeted as news of the poisonings spread. But now, sales are inching back up with the help of the promotion program that resumed about three weeks ago, said Sheree Zizzi, spokeswoman for San Diego-based Foodmaker, the chain's parent company. The company still is not advertising in Washington, she said.

"We've seen some improvement from the 30% to 35% declines we were experiencing right after the outbreak," she said. Zizzi could not provide sales totals, but she noted that it would take several months to return to levels recorded before the incident.

Jack in the Box is still feeling the pinch. Foodmaker last week laid off 27 employees who plan and build new outlets as a result of its suspension of all expansion plans. In addition, the company sent a letter to about 400 landlords asking for a 25% break in rent rates for one year.

Woodland Hills-based Herrick/Socios Cos., which owns 52 Jack in the Box franchises, had laid off 200 employees in the Los Angeles area after sales dropped off. But business has improved, and the company has begun to rehire some of the employees, said Terry Herrick, a partner in the company.

"It looks like we've hit bottom and we're turning around, almost on a daily basis," he said.

Herrick said the chain is promoting its new, stricter quality control measures through displays near the cash registers. "It helps to get the message out."

The Jack in the Box episode appears to have created some fallout for others in the restaurant industry.

Officials of the Wendy's and Carf's Jr. restaurant chains declined to provide sales figures, but they said customers seemed to shift temporarily from burgers to other products. But product shifting was also because of the chains' heavy promotion of chicken products, which had been planned before the food-poisoning episode, officials from the two operations said.

"Sales were affected in Seattle, as I think every restaurant chain was affected in Seattle," said Denny Lynch, spokesman for Wendy's International. "The farther you moved away from there, the less the effect."

At McDonald's, the incident "has had absolutely no effect on business whatsoever," said spokeswoman Terri Capatosto.

But food safety is definitely on the minds of potential fast-food customers.
Westside resident Bonnie Steves found herself in fast-food restaurants during a recent weekend getaway and she said she was more concerned than usual about the food.

"I'm not a fast-food person per se," Steves said, adding that she ordered a chicken sandwich at one restaurant and a breakfast muffin with egg at another. "The last thing I was going to order was meat," she said.

The West Los Angeles Burger King put up the sign touting the safety of its beef to reassure customers immediately after the food-poisoning outbreak, said manager Elizabeth Taay.

"We put the sign up so people would not be scared about coming in," Taay said. "People were happy to see it and we maintained the same business and had even more."

Foodmaker Slips

Foodmaker, parent of Jack in the Box, saw its stock price plunge after the San Diego-based fast-food chain was linked to an outbreak of food poisoning primarily in the Pacific Northwest.

January 18, 1993 -- Washington state health authorities tied the food poisonings to hamburgers served at Jack in the Box restaurants. Jack in the Box recalled suspect beef patties. January 22, 1993 -- A 2-year-old Tacoma, Wash., boy died less than two weeks after eating a contaminated Jack in the Box hamburger.

Wednesday March 10, 1993 -- $8.75 (+37.5 cents)

GRAPHIC: Photo, COLOR, Popular concerns about meat safety prompted a Burger King in West Los Angeles to post this reassuring message. ANACLETO RAPPING / Los Angeles Times; Chart, COLOR, Foodmaker Slips. Los Angeles Times

Los Angeles Times, March 18, 1993, Thursday, Home Edition
SECTION: Metro; Part B; Page 6; Column 3; Metro Desk
LENGTH: 335 words

HEADLINE: THE BEEF WITH MEAT INSPECTION; CLINTON SAYS SYSTEM IS ANTIQUATED AND MUST BE UPDATED

BODY:
Efforts to overhaul the nation's suspect meat and poultry inspection program won't happen overnight and they won't be cheap. But President Clinton's commitment to make food safety a high priority at the Department of Agriculture is a needed change from the hands-off attitude of previous administrations.

In a significant move, announced by the Clinton Administration Monday, the USDA will dispatch federal inspectors and scientists to farms and feedlots around the country to study the levels of contaminants in animal herds and determine whether modern mass-production techniques contribute to meat and poultry contamination.

If inspectors find widespread problems, the government could require herd inspections on a permanent, regular basis. That's not all: Last month, the Agriculture Department was allowed to hire 160 new meat and poultry inspectors. That's still not enough, but it's closer to what is needed.

At slaughterhouses, antiquated inspection techniques will be supplemented with scientific testing methods that can better detect invisible microbial contamination. Such contamination was responsible for a deadly outbreak of food poisoning at Jack-in-the-Box restaurants in the Northwest. Two children died and hundreds became sick from E. coli bacteria in contaminated hamburgers.

Harmful bacteria have been showing up in food with increased frequency. In the last 10 years these pathogens have killed more than 100 people and caused more than 100,000 illnesses. At the turn of the century, reformers outraged by food poisoning outbreaks of epidemic proportions successfully pushed the federal government to create a meat inspection system. The system has undergone few major changes since then.

Food inspectors, for example, still rely on the old methods such as touch, smell and taste to determine whether meat is rotted or contaminated.

That's fine, as far as it goes. But it's not enough, and it must change. President Clinton, to his
The parent of Jack in the Box said Wednesday that it expects a second-quarter loss of $20 million to $30 million because of a food-poisoning epidemic that was linked to tainted hamburgers sold by the fast-food chain.

Foodmaker Inc., which owns the Jack in the Box and Chi-Chi's Mexican restaurant chains, also said sales at its fast-food operations have rebounded by half from lows reached shortly after the mid-January poisonings in Washington and three other states. Three children died and at least 500 people became ill after being infected with E. coli bacteria.

Foodmaker blamed the projected loss, which will amount to between 50 cents and 75 cents a share, on a sharp drop in sales, as well as financial assistance to franchisees and other one-time expenses. In the second quarter of 1992, Foodmaker reported net operating income of $3.04 million, or 10 cents a share, but an extraordinary charge to pay off debt resulted in a net loss of $57.4 million, or $1.93 a share.

"The past two months have clearly been the most traumatic in the company's 43-year history," Foodmaker Chief Executive Jack Goodall said. "We are confident that our business will fully recover. We believe our quick response to the crisis, our existing financial resources and our insurance coverage will be sufficient to protect the long-term viability of the company."

Foodmaker said sales have bounced back thanks to product advertising and heavy discounting. Sales last week were 19% below the same period a year ago, a "significant improvement" from the 37% drop recorded in the week ended Feb. 7, Goodall said.

Foodmaker's stock rose 12.5 cents to close at $8.50 a share on the New York Stock Exchange, after trading as high as $9.125 earlier in the day. Analyst Sheila O'Connell of Duff & Phelps said the size of the projected loss is not surprising and that the company is expected to recover eventually.

"The important thing is getting that core customer back," O'Connell said, even if that means cutting into earnings with big product discounts. "I don't think the company minds losing money as long as sales are increasing."

About $8 million of the loss for the quarter ending April 11 is the result of special financial assistance given to Jack in the Box franchisees as a result of lost revenue due to the poisonings, with another $10 million in write-offs from the postponement of expansion plans, attorney and public relations fees, increases in workers' compensation reserves and other costs.

Foodmaker said it has drawn about $17 million on its bank credit agreement, leaving about $30 million in unused credit, which the company said it hopes to leave untouched during fiscal 1993.

Agriculture Department officials concede that the current meat inspection system is seriously flawed, scientifically outdated and may not be modernized for years.

In testimony before a joint hearing of two House Agriculture subcommittees last week, officials
outlined plans to prevent a recurrence of January's deadly outbreak linked to contaminated beef. Unfortunately, the changes proposed by USDA in the $500-million program require additional federal funding, Congressional approval and new breakthroughs in scientific research.

The current system's failings, as outlined include:

* No rapid, on-site tests are available to detect the presence of any harmful bacteria that may be present in meat and poultry in slaughter or processing plants. For instance, it takes at least six days for an independent laboratory to determine whether E. coli 0157:H7, the bacteria that caused the recent food poisoning incident, is present in beef. Fresh meat cannot be held that long before entering retail channels. There are also no tests to determine the existence of infection on animals prior to slaughter.

* There is little or no scientific information on how many bacterium are necessary to cause illness in healthy adults. Even less is known about the infectious doses of organisms for high risk groups.

* No records are required to identify the origin of animal carcasses. This omission is the principal reason that the farm or ranch source of the E. coli 0157:H7 outbreak may never be known.

* Prior to a March 4 memorandum from USDA's Washington headquarters, inspectors were permitted to allow noticeable amounts of fecal contamination on beef carcasses shipped from plants. The department now says that it will maintain a zero tolerance for fecal, ingesta or milk contamination of carcasses.

* A "special review" of beef slaughter plants is needed to identify those "plants that may be failing to consistently produce clean, unadulterated products." The review is unusual considering that there are already more than 7,000 USDA meat inspectors in place in slaughter and processing plants throughout the nation.

While the USDA's proposals received praise from a number of groups, the Safe Food Coalition, an alliance of several other advocacy organizations such as Consumers Union, called the department's plan "seriously flawed." The coalition said the USDA failed to solicit input from the public and was being too attentive to meat industry needs. "If the agency insists on hearing only from the industry groups that have controlled inspection policy for the last 12 years, it is unlikely that meat and poultry inspection will be revised in a way that addresses the basic flaws that led to the Washington state E. coli 0157:H7 outbreak," coalition members wrote in a letter sent Monday to USDA Secretary Mike Espy.

H. Russell Cross, administrator of the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, said: "We cannot just abruptly stop operating our current inspection system because we know it must be improved. Perhaps radical changes will be developed over the next several years. But in the meantime we have to be sure the current system does what it can do well."

The coalition was also critical of the fact that the government has yet to address the issue of how animals become infected with pathogens in the first place.

The difficulties in improving the meat inspection system were made clear in a recent study by an association of food scientists. A special report issued earlier this month by the Institute of Food Technologists found a glaring need for more comprehensive scientific data about food-borne illnesses and estimated that $100 million was needed over five years to modernize the federal government's approach to food safety. The study concedes that no new governmental funding is forthcoming.

The report estimates that the annual cost of food-borne illnesses to the United States economy, in terms of medical care, lost productivity and wages, is $5 billion or more a year.

Los Angeles Times, April 15, 1993, Thursday, Home Edition
SECTION: Food; Part H; Page 32; Column 1
LENGTH: 546 words
HEADLINE: SCIENTISTS SOUGHT TO REVERSE "DETERIORATION OF FOOD SAFETY"
BYLINE: By DANIEL P. PUZO, TIMES STAFF WRITER
The nation's largest association of public health officials is calling on the Clinton Administration to appoint a panel of scientists to review and reverse what it calls "the deterioration of our food safety."

The Washington-based American Public Health Assn. recently petitioned President Clinton to completely examine the meat and poultry inspection process in light of the 500 illnesses and two deaths related to an outbreak of E. coli 0157:H7 on the Pacific Coast.

It's the position of the APHA, comprised of about 50,000 members in all health disciplines -- nurses, physicians, social workers, environmental specialists and educators -- that the E. coli 0157:H7 outbreak could have been prevented.

"We find it totally unacceptable that, according to a recent study, the E. coli bacteria contaminates over 3% of the raw ground beef sold at supermarket counters," William H. McBeath MD, APHA executive director, wrote in a letter to President Clinton. "It is imperative that the health of our nation's citizens should be protected from these avoidable perils."

APHA also questions whether the U.S. Department of Agriculture is the proper agency to be entrusted with meat inspection. At its annual meeting in October, the group will consider a resolution that describes what it calls a philosophical "conflict of interest" within USDA because the department is chartered with the sometimes contradictory aims of promoting agriculture as well as ensuring consumer food protection. APHA says any review of meat inspection must consider which federal agency is best equipped to operate such a program.

Consumer groups and many in Congress have also questioned whether USDA should have a role in public health issues such as food safety. But previous efforts to transfer programs, such as meat inspection, from the Agriculture Department have been unsuccessful.

"We have a continuing concern about the issues and the capacities of the agencies, such as USDA, involved in food safety," says Katherine McCarter, APHA associate executive director. "In developing future standards, the federal government needs more public health expertise and perspective on these regulations."

USDA officials say they are now working on major reforms of the meat inspection program and are open to "any and all suggestions," according to Steve Kinsella, press secretary for USDA Secretary Mike Espy. For instance, he says, $8 million have been added to USDA's budget to begin a pathogen reduction strategy.

Kinsella also announced that Espy intends to shortly convene a round-table discussion in Washington on food safety issues similar to the Clinton Administration's recent summit on Pacific Coast lumber policies.

The continuing criticism of the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service has led numerous sources, who have requested anonymity, to state that H. Russell Cross, the agency's administrator, will be replaced. While Cross has been in his position only a little more than a year, he is a holdover from the Bush Administration and is likely to shoulder the blame for the agency's handling of the E. coli 0157:H7 outbreak linked to ground beef.

Kinsella, however, says that he had not heard of any specific plans to change the FSIS administrator.

Los Angeles Times, April 22, 1993, Thursday, Home Edition
SECTION: Food; Part H; Page 29; Column 5
LENGTH: 542 words
HEADLINE: HOW MUCH MORE TAINTED HAMBURGER MEAT?
BYLINE: By DANIEL P. PUZO, TIMES STAFF WRITER

The deadly bacteria linked to undercooked hamburgers on the Pacific Coast is responsible for more illnesses in the general population than previously believed, according to a new report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

In the current issue of the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, the agency provides
the most comprehensive information to date on the January outbreak of E. coli 0157:H7 that caused more than 500 illnesses and four deaths in Washington, California, Idaho and Nevada. Virtually all the confirmed cases reported eating hamburgers at Jack in the Box restaurants or were later infected by someone who did eat at the fast food chain.

The latest CDC report contradicts the position of food industry groups who have claimed that E. coli 0157:H7 is a "rare" organism and that the recent outbreak was an aberration.

Physicians and other medical personnel often fail to recognize E. coli 0157:H7 because most hospitals do not routinely test for the organism. Also, when stool cultures are analyzed it is often done with an inappropriate method for detecting E. coli 0157:H7. During the recent outbreak in Nevada, for instance, health officials used the wrong laboratory test.

Similar mistakes may preclude the federal government from quickly detecting the next such outbreak. In fact, the CDC report stated that health officials in California, Nevada and Idaho might have failed to detect the E. coli 0157:H7 incident had not Washington state health officials acted especially quickly in making the link to undercooked hamburger.

CDC officials believe that the number of people who became sick from eating the undercooked hamburger far exceeded the confirmed number of 500 cases. A total of 1.3 million beef patties comprised the implicated shipment and only 272,672, or 20%, were recalled after the outbreak was discovered. In other words, more than 1 million potentially contaminated hamburgers were sold to consumers and distributed throughout the four states where illness occurred.

The CDC says that the actual farm or slaughter plant that was the source of the outbreak will never be known. The report stated that the meat came from animals originating from farms throughout six Western states and from one of six slaughter plants. "No one slaughter plant or farm was identified as the source," the CDC stated.

U.S. Department of Agriculture officials, who operate the nation's meat inspection program, have conceded in recent weeks that inadequate record keeping at slaughter facilities, and elsewhere along the processing chain, is partially to blame for the government's failure to pinpoint the source of contamination.

E. coli 0157:H7 lives in the intestines of otherwise healthy cattle and can contaminate meat during slaughter. The process of grinding beef may transfer pathogens from the surface of the meat to the interior where the bacteria can multiply under proper conditions. The CDC reports that "undercooking of hamburger patties likely played an important role" in the January outbreak.

The article recommends that consumers cook ground beef until the interior is no longer pink, or to at least 155 degrees, and the meat's juices run clear.
The federal government's meat inspection program is insufficient to protect the public from harmful bacteria and a new system must be developed "from scratch," Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy said yesterday.

"Although I've only been on the job a couple of weeks, from everything I've heard, seen and read, it is clear to me that improvements must be made in the way we inspect meat and poultry," Espy told a Senate Agriculture subcommittee.

The hearing was prompted by the foodborne disease outbreak identified last month in the Northwest, in which more than 300 people became ill and one child died. The illnesses were traced to Jack in the Box restaurants that sold hamburgers containing highly virulent bacteria called E. coli 0157:H7. A toxin produced by the bacterium can lead to acute kidney failure, seizures and coma.

Espy said that current meat inspection practice, which depends on visual examination of carcasses, cannot detect enough bacterial contamination.

The new program -- which would exploit modern scientific methods and use "risk-assessment" techniques -- could take two or three years to develop, Espy said. He did not elaborate on specifics, saying only that "everything will be on the table for consideration" and that the new program will be "revolutionary."

But Espy outlined a number of short-term measures he plans to implement during the next 14 months. He pledged to hire at least 160 more meat inspectors, to encourage wider use of organic sprays to reduce bacteria on the surface of beef carcasses, and to promote safe handling instructions on all raw meat and poultry products destined for food service establishments and supermarkets.

In addition, he said he would issue regulations to strengthen requirements that meat plants maintain complete and accurate records, press for the approval of irradiation for raw beef and talk to meat inspector whistle-blowers about their concerns and suggestions.

Espy said he did not know whether President Clinton's economic package could accommodate the cost of these measures, but estimated it could cost billions to sample 20 percent of the meat and poultry in slaughterhouses for E. coli 0157:H7 alone.

Espy cautioned, however, that raw meat contains pathogens and that "no meat can ever be 100 percent sterile." Improvements in the program can reduce the likelihood of other outbreaks but not prevent them, he said.

Former assistant secretary of agriculture Carol Tucker Foreman, speaking on behalf of the Safe Food Coalition, a group of public interest and labor organizations, said Espy's plans were "composed of the same old recommendations, suggested by the same old groups, trotted out to meet another crisis."

In related news, Foodmaker Inc., owner of Jack in the Box, filed suit late yesterday against Vons Companies Inc., the supplier of the hamburger patties involved in the outbreak. Several personal injury suits have already been filed against Jack in the Box, including two more yesterday.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, MIKE ESPY.
People in a town in the Pacific Northwest eat hamburgers at a particular fast-food restaurant. Within days, some of them develop abdominal cramps and -- alarmingly -- bloody diarrhea. Though few have fevers, most are ill enough to be admitted to the hospital, some for as long as a week.

Last week's news?
No, news from Feb. 5, 1982.

The recent epidemic linked to Jack in the Box hamburgers in western Washington is a haunting recapitulation of one 11 years before. In the earlier outbreak, scientists first learned that a microbe called Escherichia coli O157:H7 could cause severe intestinal illness that occasionally led to kidney failure and death.

In the intervening years, researchers have sketched a striking, if incomplete, portrait of the bacterium, which is sometimes abbreviated ECO157.

Like all living things, it is a creature of both habits and mysteries.

It is found in South America, Europe and Asia, but seems to cause most trouble in the northern United States. Many outbreaks involve beef and milk, though the largest to date was caused by contaminated water that had no known contact with cattle. Though the microbe is not "new," it nevertheless seems to be causing an increasing amount of illness.

Bacterium's Humble Origins

ECO157 comes from the commonest and humblest of origins. It is one of hundreds of strains of E. coli, a species that inhabits the large intestines of all mammals. A gram of human feces -- about one-twenty-eighth of an ounce -- contains more than a billion E. coli. This and other species of "normal flora" help protect the intestine, and often actually aid digestion.

Occasionally, however, disease-causing microbes can take up temporary residence, causing diarrhea, vomiting and cramps. One of the few that results in bloody diarrhea is Shigella, the bacterium that causes dysentery.

In February 1982, when 26 people near Medford, Ore., became ill, doctors originally suspected Shigella. But E. coli grew on their culture plates -- in particular an obscure strain eventually identified as ECO157. Like Shigella, it produced a toxin lethal to certain kinds of cells used in laboratory testing. In a process scientists still don't fully understand, either the bacteria or their toxin erodes the lining of the large intestine, causing it to bleed.

Twenty-one of the Oregon patients had eaten hamburgers at a local McDonald's restaurant. The fast-food connection was seen several months later when a second outbreak occurred in Michigan. That time, ECO157 was found in one of the chain's hamburgers. Although not conclusive, all clues pointed to ground beef as the source of infection.

Between that case and the latest incident in Washington, epidemiologists studied 10 other outbreaks in which people who became ill reported eating ground beef, roast beef or unpasteurized milk. There seemed to be a particular link with dairy cows, which, when culled from a herd, are often slaughtered for hamburger.

A working hypothesis emerged:

Some cattle carry ECO157 in their digestive tracts, where it is tolerated and doesn't cause disease. Carcasses of these animals (or others with them in the slaughterhouse) become contaminated with feces containing the bacterium. The meat is made into hamburger, a substance that -- because it is made up of many small pieces -- has a large surface area to hold bacteria. Some of this hamburger is cooked for too short a time, or at too low a temperature, to
kill all the bacteria. In a few cases, there's enough still alive to cause illness.

The existence of bacteria in hamburger meat is normal and unavoidable. Virtually all unsterilized surfaces have bacteria on them. A U.S. Department of Agriculture survey published in 1975 reported that fresh hamburger averages about 1 million microorganisms per gram, fewer than 100 of them E. coli.

There's no good antibiotic treatment for ECO157 infection. People with symptoms are warned not to use over-the-counter anti-diarrhea medications, which can worsen the illness.

Many questions, however, remain unanswered.

"In the United States, for reasons that remain to be clarified, outbreaks have tended to occur in northern states (seven of the 12 outbreaks occurred in states bordering Canada), in the last two-thirds of the year (11 of 12 outbreaks), and in even-numbered years (10 of 12 outbreaks)," Patricia M. Griffin and Robert V. Tauxe, scientists with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, wrote in a recent article about the microbe.

These are the kind of "associations" epidemiologists routinely gather in order to get hints about the logic behind epidemics. Many are just the product of chance and coincidence. Even where the links are "real," more than one reason is possible.

For example, if ECO157 outbreaks occur more frequently in northern states, one possible explanation is that cattle herds there more often carry the microbe as part of their "normal flora" than herds elsewhere. Another is that slaughtering practices are different. A third is that people may eat their meat rarer. A fourth is that doctors and public health departments in those places are more vigilant in tracking down cases of bloody diarrhea.

So far, no conclusive evidence exists for any of those theories.

One thing that does seem clear is that ECO157 is rare in both cattle and the meat made from them. Recently, the USDA surveyed 6,694 heifers from about 1,100 different herds nationwide and found only 25 animals carrying the microbe. (There was no detectable geographic clustering.) A different survey of 1,668 beef products found two samples containing ECO157 -- hamburger in one case and veal breast in the other.

There are many cases, as well, that have no known connection with meat, or even food.

Contaminated Water

The largest outbreak of ECO157 infection occurred in the southern Missouri town of Cabool from mid-December 1989 to mid-January 1990. The infection was apparently caused by public drinking water that became contaminated when two water mains burst during a cold snap. In all, 243 people got sick, and four died. Chlorine, which might have disinfected the water, was not added until after large numbers of residents became ill.

The Missouri outbreak suggested that ECO157, though rare, was unusually virulent. Large volumes of water would normally dilute bacteria to harmless concentrations. A few microbial species -- notably the one causing cholera -- can sicken a person even if he or she consumes fewer than 100 organisms. ECO157 may be similarly potent, though researchers are not certain.

But if ECO157 has raised a lot of questions, it has also answered one large one.

As recently as a decade ago, physicians were puzzled by a rare, occasionally fatal, condition called "hemolytic uremic syndrome," first described in 1955.

More common in children than adults, it's characterized by the rupture of red blood cells and the spontaneous formation of blood clots in the kidney. Often, doctors had noticed, diarrhea preceded it.

Hemolytic uremic syndrome showed up occasionally in outbreaks of ECO157 diarrhea. (Several cases developed among the more than 300 persons who became ill in the Washington epidemic.) Medical scientists now know that ECO157 infection is the major cause of the syndrome.

The incidence of illness caused by ECO157 (as well as cases of hemolytic uremic syndrome) has risen slowly in recent years. The symptoms are hard to overlook, and epidemiologists doubt the increase is simply the result of doctors and patients noticing them.

But what could be causing a real increase remains -- like much about ECO157 -- a mystery.
When it comes to killing bacteria in food, it's all a matter of degree. If the burgers at Jack in the Box had been cooked to 155 degrees, investigators believe the E. coli bacteria that poisoned hundreds in Washington state would have been destroyed.

Jack in the Box spokeswoman Sheree Zizzi said the chain was following Food and Drug Administration guidelines, which recommended that any potentially hazardous food, which includes ground beef, be cooked to 140 degrees. And company officials said that their lab studies showed their cooking method brought the hamburgers to an average temperature of 154 degrees.

"We know we received contaminated beef," Zizzi said. "We know that our cooking procedures were based on federal guidelines. We have cooked millions of hamburgers for millions of people and never had a problem."

The American Meat Institute believes 140 degrees is "far too low" to kill that specific E. coli bacteria. The FDA issued an interim guideline last month to at least 155 degrees after the Jack in the Box episode. And the U.S. Department of Agriculture has long recommended that consumers cook ground beef to 160 degrees.

Ironically, while most states in the nation had been following the 140-degree recommendation, in May, Washington state officials set a higher standard of 155 degrees -- a change that Zizzi said Jack in the Box was unaware of. Why all the discrepancies?

Devising recommendations for cooking temperatures to kill bacteria is tricky. For one, there is the perennial debate between proponents of pure safety vs. those who put taste on top. In other words, food can be cooked until it's risk-free, but do people want to eat hockey pucks?

For another, some types of bacteria are more heat resistant than others, and the amount of bacteria on a piece of food may vary. Plus, destroying bacteria not only depends on the cooking temperature but also how long the heat is applied.

For example, according to the FDA, in laboratory tests, the strain of bacteria involved in the West Coast food poisonings -- E. coli 0157:H7 bacteria -- can be killed at 140 degrees, so long as the entire food reaches that temperature and the temperature is held for slightly more than eight minutes. The same bacteria are killed in 0.13 seconds if the temperature is 155 degrees. But in practice, ground beef patties are usually too thin to expect them to be held at the final temperature for more than a few seconds.

In addition, what makes hamburger riskier than steaks, roasts or other whole slabs of meat is that when meat is ground into burgers, it can spread disease-causing bacteria throughout, according to Bob Harrington, director of technical services at the National Restaurant Association. "If an organism is on the surface of a nice T-bone steak," said Harrington, "it will be readily destroyed during the cooking process.

As for the USDA's recommendation of 160 degrees (which translates visually into no pink in the meat and juices that run clear), margins of safety are added for consumers because it is assumed that home cooks have less control over cooking temperatures than commercial establishments.

At restaurants, however, there is a wide range of how they cook their burgers, with fast-food chains having perhaps more control. That's because standardization is the hallmark of fast food, and cooking equipment is often built to achieve a particular temperature or specification. Of course, none of these techniques eliminates the possibility for human error.
Robert Nugent, president of Jack in the Box, said that a buzzer sounds on the grill after a burger has been cooked for a minute and 15 seconds, alerting the grill cook to flip the patty. After another 75 seconds, the burger is flipped again and cooked until a visual inspection shows that it is finished. The cooking time and temperature of the grill were designed to produce a burger with an internal temperature that exceeded federal guidelines of 140 degrees.

Nevertheless, Washington state health officials found some contaminated patties that were cooked to less than 130 degrees, according to Douglas Archer, deputy director of the FDA’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. Zizzi agreed, but said officials measured the temperature of the patties immediately after they came off the grill without allowing the cooks to probe for doneness. (Since the outbreak, Jack in the Box has set 163 degrees as its minimum internal burger temperature, Nugent said.)

McDonald’s uses clam shell-shaped grills that open automatically when the meat is cooked to an internal temperature of 160 degrees, and burgers sold at Burger King travel along a conveyor belt under a flame broiler that cooks the meat to 160 degrees.

There are no timers, bells or whistles in the kitchens of Wendy’s, said chain spokesman Denny Lynch, but grill operators are trained to pay "constant attention" to the fresh burgers, which cook for four minutes to a minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees on a 250-degree grill. Wendy’s created a four-minute "Grill Rap" to train grill cooks on the cooking method. The music and rap lyrics start with "First you start your grill at 2,5,0 . . . make sure your grill is ready to go," according to Lynch.

Guidelines sent to the nation’s schools suggest that cafeterias cook their burgers to 160 degrees, according to Phil Shanholzer, spokesperson for the USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service.

And what about burger saloons, or bars, where juicy-red burgers are the selling point? Harrington of the restaurant association said that the association’s newsletter alerted members that customers who insist on rare burgers do so at their own risk.

"I like my beef with a little color in it," Harrington said. "I'm also making an educated risk decision when I choose that."

"You’re taking some risk when eating a rare hamburger," agreed James Marsden, vice president for science and technical affairs at the American Meat Institute. "But to put things in perspective, you’re taking a smaller risk than if you eat raw oysters or sushi."

For children, the elderly or others with weakened immune systems, such as HIV-infected individuals or people with diabetes, Marsden said, he "absolutely recommends that they cook their burgers to medium or well done."

The Washington Post, February 9, 1993, Tuesday, Final Edition
SECTION: HEALTH; PAGE Z9
LENGTH: 1383 words
HEADLINE: U.S. Meat Inspections Come Under Scrutiny
SERIES: Occasional
BYLINE: Carole Sugarman, Washington Post Staff Writer
BODY:

A meat inspector can’t see it, or smell it, or feel it. Neither can a short-order chef or someone flipping burgers on a backyard barbecue. Microbiological contamination -- the most serious public health threat to the nation’s food supply -- can’t be detected by human senses.

But the recent food poisoning outbreak on the West Coast, in which hundreds of people became ill and two children died after highly virulent bacteria infected hamburgers at Jack in the Box restaurants has called into question the nation’s meat inspection system.

The entire system is based on a faulty premise, said James Marsden, vice president of scientific and technical affairs at the American Meat Institute, a trade association that represents meat packers and processors. "The inspection system was designed in 1906 to prevent diseased animals from entering the food chain. For that, it works beautifully," he said. But that was never the threat, he added. "It’s microorganisms that cause human disease."
"All the inspectors in the world wouldn't have made any difference" in the recent poisonings, added Marsden. "Visual inspections have nothing to do with detecting microbial contamination."

The deadly outbreak last month has been tied to E. coli bacteria, which lives in the intestinal tract of warm-blooded animals, including humans. But the version involved in these poisonings was identified as E. coli 0157:H7, which is not tolerated by humans. In cattle, this strain of E. coli has been found more often in dairy cows, which are often retired into hamburgers, since their meat is tough and not palatable enough for steaks or roasts.

Officials believe the infection was spread during the slaughtering process when bacteria from the intestines can come in contact with other parts of the carcass. An animal with E. coli 0157:H7 doesn't look sick or have symptoms of illness. A genetic probe that takes 48 hours to detect the bacteria and another four days to confirm its presence was used to analyze the meat shipped to Jack in the Box after the outbreak was identified. But this test and other more rapid ones currently being developed are not part of slaughterhouse inspections.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture runs the country's meat and poultry inspection program, with a staff of 7,200 inspectors monitoring 6,000 slaughtering and processing plants. Inspectors need a high school diploma and receive two to six weeks training, depending on the what species they will be inspecting and the nature of their assignment.

In the slaughterhouse, it's a meat inspector's job to look at the carcasses moving down the processing line and feel for signs of disease, such as inflammation, large tumors or hard nodules, according to Ed Menning, executive vice president of the National Association of Federal Veterinarians. If an abnormality is detected, the carcass is examined by the federal veterinarian assigned to the plant, Menning said.

Since 1985, three reports from the National Academy of Sciences have called for reforms of the nation's meat inspection system. The reports criticized the current system because it has not taken into account recent scientific research on meat contamination and has remained largely unchanged since the early 1900s. None of the inspection systems in use or being tested are "designed to detect or eliminate microbial or chemical hazards presented by meat products," according to a 1990 NAS report.

Last week, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy, appearing before a congressional subcommittee looking into the food poisonings, said that "it is time everyone stopped blaming someone else for this E. coli 0157:H7 outbreak." Espy added, "We all must share the responsibility for ensuring the safety of food. No one producer, consumer, meat processor, agency or government official can do it alone." Nonetheless, he called for overhauling the meat inspection program.

Developing a new system "from scratch," will take two or three years, he said. In the short term, Espy outlined dozens of plans, including hiring more meat inspectors and encouraging the use of organic sprays to reduce bacteria on the surface of beef carcasses. He also recommended the use of explicit instructions for safe handling on the labels of raw meat and poultry and he pressed for approval of irradiation for raw beef.

Irradiation is a technology that exposes food to gamma rays from radioactive sources to kill bacteria, extend ripening or control insects. The process, which does not make food radioactive, has been approved for use on raw poultry, pork, flour and fruits and vegetables.

The Agriculture Department has "been moving toward a science-based system for several years," said Jim Greene, spokesman for the Agriculture Department's Food Safety and Inspection Service. Last October, he noted, the department began sampling carcasses from 110 beef slaughter plants for seven microorganisms, including E. coli 0157:H7. The plants account for 90 percent of all federally inspected meat, and federal officials hope to establish a baseline so that any subsequent changes in the inspection program could be measured against the past to see if the efforts reduce the level of contamination by microorganisms.

As the extent of the West Coast outbreak has become known, many critics question why it has taken so long to get changes in the meat inspection system.

Some industry groups contend that overhauling the meat inspection system has been stalled
because of a powerful meat inspectors' union that fears loss of jobs if a more science-based system is adopted.

"Inspectors are very effective in organizing resistance to change," said AMI's Marsden. "They don't know where they'll fit. They're not microbiologists."

"I take offense to that," said Dave Carney, president of the North Central Council of Food Inspection Locals, the meat inspectors' union. "This is not a labor issue. This is a consumer issue."

Carney said that the union is "not against technology, and we're not against moving forward. What we have a problem with is removing inspectors from their traditional mode and replacing them with a scientific-based system. We need to maintain traditional inspection and enhance it with a scientific program."

Nevertheless, Carney believes that the training conducted for inspectors by the Agriculture Department is too focused on supervisory and managerial skills, and doesn't include continuing education for inspectors, such as teaching them about bacterial hazards in the meat supply.

Other critics of the system such as Rod Leonard, director of the Washington-based advocacy group the Community Nutrition Institute and a former USDA official during the Johnson administration, said that the past 12 years of Republican administrations have tried to deregulate meat and poultry inspection while restricting the authority of inspectors in the field.

In addition to the political and bureaucratic difficulties in revamping the inspection system, the Agriculture Department is also faced with what some see as an almost impossible task of ensuring the safety of food.

For example, Carol Tucker Foreman, former assistant secretary of agriculture for food and consumer services under President Jimmy Carter, said that little is known about the amount of bacteria it takes to make people sick. That's why there aren't standards for how much disease-causing bacteria can remain in meat and poultry. AMI's Marsden believes such standards are impossible, given the fact that individuals respond so differently to different types and amounts of bacteria. Neither are there rapid on-line diagnostic tests for bacterial contamination that could be used in meat plants, Foreman added.

From the farm to the table, the food chain is long, with many opportunities for improper handling and contamination.

AMI's Marsden said he believes that even if USDA greatly increased its microbiological sampling program, or even if meat arrived at food service establishments in sterile form, there is still no guarantee that pathogens couldn't be reintroduced.

"I don't think we'll ever be able to entirely eliminate it [bacterial contamination]," said the Agriculture Department's Greene. "...But if we can lower the bacteria level, that's to everyone's advantage."
years, comes in the wake of a food poisoning outbreak identified last month and linked to Jack
in the Box restaurants in the Northwest. More than 400 people have become ill and one child
died from eating hamburgers contaminated with a highly virulent bacterium called E. coli
0157:H7.

Espy acknowledged that adding more inspectors will not eliminate the limitations of the current
meat inspection system, which is based on visual examination of carcasses, and does not detect
enough bacterial contamination.

Nevertheless, meat plants "need more eyes" and that "all that can be seen will be seen,"
Espy said.

Pledging an open-door policy to all USDA employees and all Americans, Espy said he wanted
to set a "personal meeting record" as agriculture secretary.

After the news conference, Espy said he was meeting with a group of meat inspection
whistle-blowers, and added that a consumer group that filed a lawsuit against the Agriculture
Department on Wednesday should have come to him instead.

The Beyond Beef Coalition filed suit to compel USDA to require warning labels on all raw
ground-meat products. Espy said that he has already promoted the idea of putting cooking and
safe handling instructions on the labels of all raw meat and poultry products destined for
food-service establishments and supermarkets.

Espy also called for "massive yet constructive changes" in reorganizing the department, but
did not detail his plans beyond announcing the consolidation of the agency's public affairs
operations. The public affairs office currently has approximately 1,000 employees with annual
salaries totaling more than $40 million. He said his restructuring plan would start with
headquarters in Washington first. Before he left office, Espy's predecessor, Edward R. Madigan,
had proposed eliminating 1,200 nonessential USDA field offices across the country, a measure
that Espy said is under review.

In keeping with Clinton's promises to eliminate perks for senior level officials, Espy said that
although the agency does not have an executive dining room, it does have a "white tablecloth"
restaurant that is open to all employees, and where he has a reserved table. "I figure if others can
give up their dining rooms," Espy said, "I can give up my table."
APPENDIX B

Editorial Material
Other cases of E. coli 0157:H7:

The Washington Post, March 2, 1993:
Although most of the E. coli O157:H7 infections have been reported in the northern and northwestern states ["Hamburger Hazard," Cover, Feb. 9], I know other states are vulnerable. In February 1992, my 1-year-old son and 5-year-old daughter shared a hamburger from a Maryland fast-food restaurant. Both children became ill from E. coli O157:H7 bacteria. My daughter was mildly ill with diarrhea. My son became dehydrated, had bloody diarrhea, colitis and developed the complication known as hemolytic uremic syndrome. He was placed on dialysis after kidney failure and given blood transfusions to replace red blood cells destroyed as a result of the disease. All this occurred, in addition to other complications, over a period of three weeks. Fortunately, my son recovered, much to the surprise of many doctors.
Linda Kirker
Germantown

Solution of not eating meat:

The Washington Post, March 2, 1993:
"In your cover story on E. coli O157:H7, one solution not mentioned for reducing the chances of future epidemics is for fast-food restaurants to feature a vegetarian burger on their menus. The likelihood of such food-poisoning outbreaks are substantially decreased when eating lower down on the food chain.
Maxine M. Stahler
Vegetarian Society of D.C. Silver Spring

Los Angeles Times, January 27, 1993
Letters Desk
"Many people in Washington state (and almost definitely elsewhere) are victims of E. Coli bacterial food poisoning from fast-food hamburgers (Jan. 23). One child is dead and others are in intensive care, but this represents only the "tip of the iceberg" of this major problem in American eating habits. A good physician should tell you that it is unhealthy to eat meat. It is unhealthy, illogical and irresponsible to feed cheap meat to children. We must change the way we feed our children."
JAY N. GORDON MD

The New York Times, March 2, 1993
Editorial Desk
To the Editor:
Your Feb. 9 Science Times article seeking lessons in the outbreak of illness from tainted meat in Washington State misses the most important lesson: avoid meat entirely.
The facts speak for themselves. Salmonella infects one in three poultry products bought in this country's supermarkets, and millions of flu-like maladies are the result. Salmonella is hardly the only hazardous bacterium that finds its way into meat. Campylobacter, yersinia and listeria are all common, and produce many infections a year.
More important, the rates of cancer, heart disease, stroke and diabetes practically drop off the chart in cultures that eat little or no meat. A national meat-free diet would save more in health care costs than any reform plan being considered.
The E. coli bacterium, which caused two confirmed deaths and hundreds of illnesses in Washington last month, is nothing new. Contaminants like this have been around since our ancestors first developed the meat-eating habit in the Stone Age. However, we now know that the costs to society of meat eating are far greater than the few illnesses.
We should all heed the lessons of modern medicine, and kick the meat habit.
DAVID B. WASSER
Communications Director
Physicians' Committee for Responsible Medicine
Washington, Feb. 16, 1993
Solution of Irradiation:

The New York Times, March 10, 1993
Editorial Desk

To the Editor:

"Time for irradiation" (letter, Feb. 19) by James Steele exploits a human tragedy -- the E. coli poisoning deaths in Washington State -- to promote food irradiation, a questionable technology. The sale of undercooked, disease-ridden hamburgers from Jack-in-the-Box is another disgraceful chapter in the history of meat slaughtering and packing.

Professor Steele promotes a techno-cure for that persistent health problem: zap deadly bacteria with doses of radiation, and, Poof!, the effect of filthy packing houses, improper food preparation and ineffective Department of Agriculture inspections magically vanishes. Irradiation will only mask the problems.

Mr. Steele fails to mention that irradiation causes chemical alterations in food leading to formation of radiolytic products. Radiation biologists say some of these new substances are known carcinogens, such as formaldehyde and benzene, while others are totally unknown. Food irradiation has not been proved safe in long-term animal feeding studies.

Other problems include excessive vitamin loss in food and the environmental implications of transporting and storing radioactive waste at irradiation facilities. Moreover, the Food and Drug Administration does not require the labeling of irradiated processed foods -- the majority of food sold in supermarket.

The solution to poisonings like Jack-in-the-Box is prevention: more inspectors, improved consumer education and cleaner animal habitation and slaughtering practices.

Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Australia and New Zealand, New York, Maine and Cleveland have banned the sale of irradiated foods. Many major food corporations -- McDonald's, Pizza Hut, A & P supermarkets, General Foods and the top 13 poultry companies in the United States -- indicate they do not plan to use food irradiation. Why? Because food irradiation is a dubious technology that shows little evidence of benefiting consumers and plenty of evidence of causing harm.

CHRISTINE KLAHN
Director, Food Irradiation Project
N.Y. Public Interest Research Group
Albany, Feb. 24, 1993

Los Angeles Times, February 3, 1993
OP-ED DESK

HEADLINE: PERSPECTIVE ON FOOD SAFETY; BACTERIA IN THE MEAT? JUST TURN UP THE HEAT; THERE'S NO WAY THAT FEDERAL INSPECTION CAN PROTECT US FROM HARMFUL BACTERIA; IRRADIATION, HOWEVER, WOULD DO IT.

BYLINE: By ELIZABETH M. WHELAN, Dr. Elizabeth M. Whelan is president of the American Council on Science and Health, New York.

BODY:

Last month food safety once again was in the headlines. This time, however, the concern was not about manufactured chemicals like Alar in apples or PCBs in fish. Rather, the "toxin of the month" was a natural one -- a food-borne pathogen, E. coli (specifically E. coli 0157:H7), in hamburger patties -- which caused the death of at least one child and made another 100 or more people sick with severe abdominal cramps, watery diarrhea, vomiting and nausea.

Those who believe the primary causes of our nation's ills are the irresponsibility of industry and the inadequacy of federal regulation immediately pointed the finger of blame at the meat industry and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, calling for increased government intervention to assure that the meat supply was "safe."

The realities, however, are:

* There is no way under our current system that we are going to eliminate bacteria, even potentially life-threatening ones, from our meat supply.
* The primary responsibility for avoiding food-borne illness lies with the consumer and commercial food preparer, not the "government."
* Our technophobic society must take part of the blame for the continued threat posed by natural food pathogens, because we have not yet embraced the most cost-effective way of keeping our meat supply free of all pathogens, including E. coli: irradiation of fresh meat and poultry products.
The bad news is that raw meat is flesh and tissue and all tissue contains bacteria. Bacteria like E. coli comes from the intestines of animals and contaminates the surface of meat as the carcasses are being processed. With every new knife cut into meat, new bacteria appear and when meat is ground, more new surface is created -- and that means more contamination.

While the Department of Agriculture has more than 7,000 inspectors visually examining the carcasses of more than 120 million animals each year in an effort to keep obviously diseased meat from going to market, it is impractical to perform routine laboratory analysis of all raw meat to identify bacteria that we already know are there. (It is estimated that 3.5% of beef contains the strain E. coli, which is particularly virulent and can survive both refrigeration and freezing).

The good news is that proper preparation and handling eliminates the health risk of food-borne bacteria, including the virulent E. coli. Those who became ill eating at Jack-in-the-Box outlets in Washington state (and 6,000 other Americans reported infected with E. coli last year) got sick because the meat they consumed was not sufficiently cooked. Cooking the burgers to 155 or 160 degrees Fahrenheit rather than 140 would have made all the difference.

Now both consumers and food vendors should have sufficient incentive to cook meat until the centers are gray or brown and juices run clear with no trace of pink -- and to avoid transferring, by utensils or hands, the bacteria on raw meat to foods that will not be cooked, like salads. If these precautions are observed, there will be no problem.

Yet many in search of a risk-free society are now demanding that the burden of destroying bacteria be lifted from the food preparer and transferred to industry and the Department of Agriculture by requiring the increased inspection and microbial testing of meat before it goes to market. Such action, however, will only add to the cost of meat without promoting public health, because no matter what the level of federal expenditure might be, we will not be able to eliminate naturally occurring pathogens through inspection.

On the other hand, irradiation -- the use of ionizing energy on foods -- is a proved safe and effective means of breaking the cycle of food-borne disease, currently used for this purpose in more than 30 countries around the world.

Indeed, once the meat is irradiated, not only are life-threatening bacteria like E. coli eliminated, but the meat can be eaten rare and no longer even needs refrigeration. (The sophisticated, highly scientific irradiation process does not make the food radioactive or change its taste or quality in any way -- it just kills the germs that cause disease.)

The U.S. government has approved the use of irradiation for pork, to control life-threatening trichina, and for poultry, to curb salmonella. The meat industry will soon be submitting a petition requesting regulatory approval for irradiating beef.

But progress toward implementing the approved use of irradiation has been slow because anti-technology advocates are circulating the unfounded claim that food irradiation is a health hazard and that producers fear a consumer rejection of treated products. If we are serious, however, about avoiding future cases of food-borne illness and death, it is time for at-risk consumers -- all of us, in other words -- to stop responding to the scaremongers and start listening to scientists who are unanimous in their conclusion that food irradiation would make an already incredibly safe food supply even safer.

GRAPHIC: Photo, ELIZABETH M. WHELAN

SECTION: Opinion; Part M; Page 4; Column 4; Letters Desk
LENGTH: 119 words
HEADLINE: FOOD SAFETY AND IRRADIATION
BODY:
In response to "Bacteria in the Meat? Just Turn Up the Heat," Commentary, Feb. 3:
Elizabeth Whelan is correct in her assessment of the problems of contaminated meat. Unfortunately, our society is not just technophobic, as she states, but also techno-illiterate. On the news recently, I heard reference to food poisoning due to the "E. coli virus."

Many people in the country truly don't know the difference between a bacterium and a virus, therefore, how can we expect people to understand that radiating food doesn't make food radioactive? Our (lack of) science education is entirely to blame for the public's fear of food irradiation.

JANET TOWNSLEY
Los Angeles
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