THE 24-HOUR NEWS CYCLE AND THE QUALITY OF TELEVISION NEWS
IN THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract

The 24-hour news cycle is not a significant factor affecting the overall quality of television news in the United States. Nine journalists and former journalists were interviewed to determine if the 24-hour news cycle has had an effect on the quality of television news. They did not agree that the 24-hour news cycle is degrading the quality of news; they did agree that the quality of television news in the United States is degrading. The journalists also agreed that television news within the 24-hour news cycle can be of high quality if the organizations and the journalists working within those organizations make a commitment to doing high quality television news.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the problem

Due to increased availability and overwhelming access to television news, news consumers are now faced with a unique challenge: what news should they consume, and which media outlets can they trust? Much of the accuracy of television news can be disputed. Much of the trustworthiness of television news can be disputed. Much of the overall quality of television news can be disputed. The only thing about television news that cannot be disputed is that there are more hours of television news programming today than at any time in the past.

In 2004, local television news stations produced an average of 3.7 hours of content each weekday (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2004). A dozen 24-hour networks are dedicated to news, weather, or sports (NewsDirectory.com, 2004), and the Internet has an ever-increasing number of web sites competing with television news organizations for news consumers. All of this leads to the current state of news: the 24-hour news cycle, a never-ending flow of information available to any news consumer at any time. The 24-hour news cycle provides a news consumer with opportunities to get up to the second information about nearly any subject whenever and wherever they want it. On the surface, this sounds like a great situation, providing the public with as many opportunities to be informed as possible. And this may be the case, but it also may not. How has the 24-hour news cycle affected the quality of the news? Does having more news provide the consumer with better news?
Overview of Research Objectives

The primary objective of the study is to examine the extent to which journalists believe the 24-hour news cycle has affected the quality of television news in the United States. Secondary objectives include examining how journalists define the 24-hour news cycle, and determining what, if any, changes to television news were brought about by the 24-hour news cycle.

Journalists, and former journalists, were asked to answer a series of open-ended questions concerning the quality of television news. These journalists, with a minimum of 15 years experience in the television news profession, were the subjects used to examine the overall effects of the 24-hour news cycle on the quality of the news. This examination entailed looking at changes to quality, newsworthiness, gatekeeping, and agenda setting to examine to what extent the overall quality of television news in the United States has changed since the introduction of the 24-hour news cycle.

The 24-hour news cycle has provided more access to television news (Farnsworth & Lichter, 2003). This access to more news more often may provide more information and better information. This access to information may make the news consumer better-informed. However, with the emphasis on speed of news delivery and filling the time and space that needs to be filled, the 24-hour news cycle may actually be hurting the quality of the news. There may be more errors in reporting because television news in the 24-hour news cycle must be broadcast before another organization can air the same story. It is also possible that all of the above phenomena are occurring creating neither positive nor negative change, but simply change.
The common perception of a 24-hour news cycle is that of never-ending news cycle where breaking news can be provided at any time (Fortunato, 2005). This is considered different from the days when a news cycle began and ended with the publication of a newspaper, or the broadcast of news on television or radio. In today's society, with the Internet and the 24-hour news networks, there is no beginning or end of the news cycle. The purpose of the secondary objective, to examine how journalists define the 24-hour news cycle, is to determine whether journalists define the 24-hour news cycle in the same way as the general public does.

The final objective, to examine the changes television journalists believe to have been brought about by the 24-hour news cycle, is designed to determine whether many of the changes that television news has experienced are due to the 24-hour news cycle. It is clear that television journalism has changed since the advent of the 24-hour news cycle. But are those changes due to the 24-hour news cycle, or are they due to other circumstances.

*Importance of this problem*

The declining quality of the media seems to get blamed for everything. Specifically, the quality of news on television seems to get blamed for everything. Not a day goes by without politicians blaming the media for their losses (Barton Bullies TV News, 2004), or athletes blaming the media for their controversies (Schilling, 2007), even the media blaming itself for its shortcomings (McCarthy, 2003; TV News at its Best and Worst, 2003). With all the blame for all the country's ills falling to the quality of the media, there is a perception that there must be something wrong with the quality of the media, and therefore, something wrong with the quality of television news.
What exactly is wrong, if anything, with the quality of the media is not clear. However, Richard Harwood (2004) used a series of forums to attempt to determine what the public felt was wrong with the media. Harwood found that scandals and inaccuracies were not the biggest problems facing the media, rather a perception that the media is no longer held accountable to the public. Several forum members expressed feelings of being held hostage by the media. In other words, the public no longer feels it can impact media market forces or public policy.

Many people are resigned to the idea that news media are permanently and completely captured by the drive for profits, a hunger for sensationalism, and a lack of connection to how people live their lives and the challenges they and their communities face (Harwood, 2004, p13).

The media may, or may not, be to blame for many of the country’s problems. This study attempts to clarify whether the 24-hour news cycle is a factor in the perceived decrease in the quality of television news in the United States. The results also point out changes, positive or negative, that have occurred due to the 24-hour news cycle. This subject is worthy of research because the majority of news consumers get their news from television (Gough & Bond, 2006). Seventy one percent of the population relies on network, cable and satellite TV as primary or secondary sources of national news. Only 33 percent choose their local newspapers, and only 11 percent of consumers rely regularly on their local daily newspapers’ Web sites (Schwartz, 2006). However, teenagers and adults under the age of 36 are continuing to move toward the Internet, and away from traditional media outlets such as local television news (Whitney, 2006). With this most recent trend of young people heading online, television news continues to try to
appeal to a younger audience (Johnson, 2005). The potential contribution to the field of communication is to pinpoint a cause of the perceived decrease in the quality of television news.

The 24-hour news cycle is a term that has been used for several years. However, the definitions of the 24-hour news cycle have always come from academics (Mansbridge, 2004), pollsters (PEW, 1999), or media executives (Tsubata, 2001). An objective of this research is to see how journalists define the 24-hour news cycle. Knowing how journalists define the 24-hour news cycle would help other researchers as well as media owners to fully understand the phenomenon of the 24-hour news cycle.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Criticism of television news is everywhere we look; criticism of television news is found in local and national newspapers (Carter, 2003; McCarthy, 2003), on the Internet (TV News at its Best and Worst, 2003), on local television stations, on 24-hour cable networks (McClintock, 2003), and on broadcast networks (Schroth, 2002; Tsubata, 2001). Criticism of television news will never go away, mainly because if a journalist is covering the news properly it is impossible to please everyone. A journalist is supposed to cover all sides of every story, not both sides, but all sides. By doing so, there is often one perspective, if not several perspectives whose proponents feel their side was treated unfairly. Therefore, balanced reporting of the news leads to criticism of the news (Dominick, 2006). The challenge then becomes determining how much of the criticism of journalists is warranted. Is the overall quality of television news so bad that citizens can no longer trust the television news media? A Gallup Poll from December of 2006 suggests that the answer to that question is yes. The poll shows that only 26 percent of the population feels that the news industry and the journalists working within the news industry rank as highly trustworthy or very highly trustworthy. In 1959, 29 percent of the population trusted television news, that percentage grew steadily, reaching a high of 44 percent in 1968 (Erskine, 1970). Gunter (2005) found that public trust in journalism, particularly 24-hour cable news, has significantly eroded during the past decade. Trust has eroded due to sensational reporting, inaccurate reporting, and biased reporting, all indicators of poor quality television news.
One possible cause of the perceived decline in the quality of television news that has been discussed at length is the 24-hour news cycle. Books have been written (Anderson, 2004; McChesney, 2004; and Fenton, 2005), magazine articles published (Atkinson & Johnson, 2005; Robins, 2005; and King 2006), and political pundits (O’Reilly, 2003) have spoken and even yelled their opinions about the current state of the quality of television news. Much of the criticism is adamant, and the critic states that television news has slipped into such a deep abyss that the quality of television news will never be able to recover (Carter, 2003). At the other end of the spectrum are those who say the quality of journalism remains high, some go so far as to say the quality of journalism on television today is better than at any time in the past (Parker, 2000).

**Historical context**

Regularly scheduled television made its American debut in New York during the World’s Fair in April of 1939; NBC was the first network to offer regular television programming, with CBS following closely behind (Sterling, 2002). American television programming did not grow as quickly as many people may have expected because of World War II. During the war, many of the supplies needed to produce television were not available, because those supplies were needed for the war effort. In addition, many people, television actors included, were skeptical of the new medium because of its poor quality (Dominick, 2006). However, after the war, television improved greatly in terms of quality, and the explosion of the new medium began. NBC and CBS both produced daily 15-minute newscasts during the early post-war era of programming. NBC had John Cameron Swayze narrating clips on *Camel News Caravan*, and CBS News had *Douglas*...
Edwards with the News. Swayze stayed on the air until 1956, and Edwards remained on CBS until 1962 (Sterling, 2002).

Television brought the news into the living rooms of viewers, although early television news was not that different from radio news. The one significant difference was that the audience could see the person reading the news, however there was very little video of the events being reported (Dominick, 2006). The fact that very little video was shown did not slow the growth of television in the post-war era. In January of 1949, there were 49 television stations located in 28 markets around the country. By 1950, those numbers had increased to 98 stations in 58 markets (Fellow, 2005).

While the number of television stations, and the number of televisions grew, so did the popularity of television news. Renowned radio newsmen Edward R. Murrow and producer Fred Friendly took their radio program Hear it Now and moved it to television, renaming the program See it Now. Murrow was not particularly a fan of television and very much disliked the entertainment aspects of television news. Even after CBS chairman William Paley told Murrow that “the future belonged to television,” Murrow was suspicious of television (Fellow, 2005). In 1949, less than two years before he made the move to television, Murrow wrote an article to be published in the New York Times where he was very critical of the new medium:

The interesting area of speculation is not whether TV news is here to stay, but rather what form it is likely to take after the shakedown cruise.... Is it to be a medium of entertainment or education? Do bathing girls on surfboards get preference over a first class but simple chart of the Middle East?... So far... there has been a tendency to tailor the news to fit the pictorial and animation
possibilities rather than to give the news, as such, priority, and try to tailor up such pictorial support as may be possible.... If the editorial selection is based upon largely visual values, TV news will become an animated picture magazine or a newsreel (Fellow, 2005, p. 291).

The article was never published, but Murrow was clear that he did not appreciate the superficial way news was portrayed on television. It also appears Murrow accurately forecast the course of television news over the next five decades.

Despite Murrow’s grim view of the television news industry, the popularity of television news continued to grow. In 1962, Walter Cronkite replaced Edwards at CBS. While hosted by Cronkite, the program became CBS News with Walter Cronkite. CBS News with Walter Cronkite became the most watched network newscast, and Cronkite earned the nickname, “the most trusted man in America” (Alter, 1999). Time magazine (2005) took a look back at how the American public viewed Cronkite in 1966.

Cronkite has constructed an on-screen personality that makes him the single most convincing and authoritative figure in TV news – no mean rank in a medium where competition is uncompromising, where the three nationwide networks scrutinize one another’s shows and crib from one another’s operations in a desperate drive for the top of the ratings. As a better-informed public has demanded more and more information about current events, TV news programs have changed from loss leaders and have begun to start paying their way. And as the networks have made the most of them, news shows like Cronkite’s have become one of the most important and influential molders of public opinion in the
U.S. Some 58% of the U.S. public get most of their news from television, reported an Elmo Roper poll last year (39 Years Ago in Time, 2005, p. 26).

By 1963, the growth and popularity of television news, thanks in part to Cronkite's success, was such that CBS, and one week later NBC, made the change to a half hour daily newscast, up from the 15-minute daily broadcasts that had been aired to that point (Fellow, 2005).

Also in 1963, television news reporters covered their first "mega-story." President John F. Kennedy's assassination prompted four days of nearly nonstop news coverage, including the subsequent shooting of Kennedy's assailant, Lee Harvey Oswald, by Jack Ruby. Ruby's shooting of Oswald was carried live around the country (Sterling, 2002). Nine out of 10 Americans tuned in to one of the three major networks (CBS, NBC, and ABC) during those four days. In addition, millions of viewers in Europe, Asia, Australia, and Africa watched via satellite (Murray, 1998). The extensive coverage given to the Kennedy assassination and the public's response to it helped bring television news into the mainstream. Television coverage had become the dominant popular medium and showed that no other medium could come close to covering news in the moment (Conboy, 2004).

While television had no peer in presenting timely news, the news presented on television was not as in-depth as news in the newspaper (Dominick, 2006). In an attempt to increase the depth of information provided on television news, while still keeping the interest of the viewer, another CBS up-and-comer developed the program 60 Minutes. Don Hewitt, the creator and executive producer of 60 Minutes, originally envisioned a program that would package 60 minutes of news as attractively as the entertainment
industry packaged 60 minutes of fiction (Fellow, 2005). In its early days, 60 Minutes was not a highly rated program and was in danger of being dropped several times during the first six years it was broadcast (Murray, 1998). However, 60 Minutes remained on the air, and has subsequently consistently ranked among America’s top ten rated television programs, sometimes ranking number one (Fellow, 2005). 60 Minutes was the first news magazine program on television and featured only three or four stories each week. The correspondents who covered these stories were able to cover the stories with greater depth. The success of 60 Minutes created the demand for other news magazine programs, such as ABC’s 20/20 (Sterling, 2002) and NBC’s Dateline (Fellow). In addition to being a highly rated news program, 60 Minutes was a money making news program. This aspect of 60 Minutes may have been the most attractive to the management at CBS and the other networks. News in the 1960s was not expected to make large profits, and sometimes it was not expected to make any profit for the network. However, by 1976 many senior managers at television networks were wondering why news couldn’t make a larger profit. The logic seemed to be: if 60 Minutes can make a large profit, why can’t the rest of the news division make a larger profit? (Fellow, 2005).

The main reason for the large profits that 60 Minutes brought in was the production costs. While 60 Minutes was not an inexpensive program to produce, it was inexpensive in relation to the entertainment programming of the 1970s and 1980s (Murray, 1998). During the mid-1980s, a single hour of entertainment programming cost an average of $1 million. The cost of news programming was roughly half that, and 60 Minutes was produced by the news division (Fellow, 2005).
Cronkite continued his reign as “the most trusted man in America” from the late ‘60s, well into the 1970s. Only five weeks after Cronkite returned from Vietnam in 1968, where he was reporting on the war, and declared that the U.S. could not win the war, President Lyndon Johnson announced he would not seek reelection (Frank, 2005). Johnson told his press secretary, George Christian that if he had lost Cronkite, he had lost the average citizen (Fellow, 2005). The 1970s saw tremendous growth in the television industry, and in television news (Murray, 1998). Three of the most prominent names to emerge from this era are Tom Brokaw, Dan Rather, and Peter Jennings. All three were well known correspondents who respectively rose through the ranks of NBC, CBS, and ABC. All three were named solo anchors for their networks by the early 1980s, and the competition between the three remained strong for more than 20 years (Sterling, 2002). While none were as popular or as trusted as Cronkite, the three prime time news anchors gave stability to network news, and each developed a high level of trust among their viewers (Fellow).

Cable television was another byproduct of the 1970s which paved the way for the development of 24-hour news networks, and in turn, the 24-hour news cycle (Jankowski, 1998). June 1, 1980 was the day the Cable News Network (CNN) officially launched (Whittemore, 1990). CNN is the oldest of all 24-hour news networks but was not taken very seriously during the first few years of operation (Frank, 2001). Ted Turner, the visionary behind CNN and the network’s first CEO (Auletta, 2004), wanted a network that would provide news until the world ended (Whittemore). Regardless of Turner’s vision, print and broadcast journalists alike initially dubbed CNN “Chicken Noodle News” (Frank).
CNN struggled during the early years of operation, but stayed afloat by keeping operating expenses to a minimum. A few of Turner’s ideas to keep costs down were basing CNN in Atlanta, rather than New York City, using non-union workers, and hiring workers who were dedicated to news (Murray, 1998). While CNN provided news 24-hours a day, seven days a week, the network did not become a significant factor in the everyday life of Americans until the Gulf War of 1991-92 (Hack, 2003). Coverage of the Gulf War put CNN on par with the highly respected news organizations of the past. Gilboa (2005) compared the significance of CNN’s coverage to that of newspaper coverage during the civil war, newspapers first went to daily publication during the civil war, and broadcast network news coverage of the Kennedy assassination, the event that showed television to be the preeminent medium for reporting breaking news. CNN’s coverage of the 42-day Gulf War not only established 24-hour cable news as a legitimate entity in the business of news, but it also far exceeded the coverage of broadcast news networks, sent CNN’s ratings soaring, and increased cable news subscriptions (Prato, 1996).

Competition for 24-hour news coverage started before the Gulf War – CNN Headline news (originally known at CNN2) debuted in January of 1982 (All, 2002). CNBC in April of 1989 (Sterling, 2002) – but it was the CNN Gulf War coverage that prompted the development of true competition for CNN in the world of 24-hour news (Frank, 2005). MSNBC made its debut in July of 1996, and in October of that same year FOX News took to the airwaves (Collins, 2004). The competition between CNN and FOX News has been the subject of much debate ever since, with MSNBC competing, but often falling far short of CNN and FOX News (Frank, 2003). In terms of ratings, FOX...
News has overtaken CNN, and remains the highest rated 24-hour news network on a daily basis (Hack, 2003). However, that does not necessarily mean FOX News is better known than CNN for doing quality news. Ted Turner said in the beginning that news should be the star, and many at CNN still believe that mantra (Auletta, 2004). An example of how FOX News has higher daily ratings, but is still not seen as the premier cable news network was the coverage of the Columbia space shuttle explosion. While FOX News was getting and still gets higher ratings on a daily basis, when the Columbia exploded, news viewers tuned in to CNN in much higher numbers than FOX News (Frank). When a significant news event occurs, CNN falls back on Turner’s vision of the news being the star, and the ratings follow as the viewers around the country tune in to find out what is happening (Auletta).

24-hour New Cycle

The 24-hour news cycle is such a significant factor in how we live our lives that before the war in Iraq started in 2003, the White House designed a new operation just to deal with the media demands of the 24-hour news cycle (Seib, 2006). Before determining to what extent the quality of news has been affected by the 24-hour news cycle, we must first understand a news cycle, and then the 24-hour news cycle.

A news cycle was traditionally defined as the time a news organization spent preparing the content and delivery of the news between publications or broadcasts (Fortunato, 2005). That concept has been adjusted to meet the standard of current news practices. Baron (2003) states that the current news cycle is based on how long it takes to post information on a web site. After that is done, an organization can begin the process of the slower methods of distribution. Television news and the Internet are very similar in
that both mediums present news very quickly and sort out the details as the story is being broadcast or posted, which has led to the 24-hour news cycle.

The 24-hour news cycle has been defined in a number of ways, including; news coverage anywhere and anytime it is happening (Whitaker, 2004), news that is reported around the clock (Iorio, 2003), never-ending news (Perry, 2001), and real-time reporting of the news (Scott, 2005). There are a number of positives and negatives based on the 24-hour news cycle. Starting on the positive side, viewers can get news at any time of the day (Shepard, 1998). According to Shepard, this is seen as better than the time before the 24-hour news cycle when people had to wait for a newscast to be aired or a newspaper to be published to get their news. Now there are the 24-hour networks and the Internet, which allow for a more timely distribution of the news. In other words, news viewing is no longer an appointment (Brokaw, 2002). Another perceived positive is the decentralization of the news sources. In the past the news came from only a few sources. Now, with the 24-hour news cycle and the abundance of news outlets, there are more opportunities for news consumers to hear from a wide range of sources (Scott, 2005). Decentralization takes the power away from the media elite and puts it back in the hands of the news consumers. If a viewer does not trust the message from one media outlet, he or she can choose another outlet (Scott). The abundance of outlets is considered another positive. Because of the amount of profit being made by the current 24-hour news networks, executives at ABC (via parent company Disney) considered entering the market in 2004 (Grover, 2004). More networks attempting to enter the 24-hour cable news market shows strong growth in the industry.
These positives, however, are not only changing the television news industry, but they are changing the overall news industry. The 24-hour cable news networks have put enormous pressure on newspapers to innovate, speed up the process for reporting breaking news, and develop Web sites (William, 2005). Newspapers that do not keep the reader’s attention are losing circulation every day. As circulation decreases, profits decrease. Magazines have been affected by the competition from the 24-hour news networks as well. To better compete for advertising dollars, Time magazine moved its publication day to Friday in 2006. By publishing on Friday, executives at Time, and the companies that advertise in Time, hope to catch reader’s attention the day before most people go shopping (Ives, 2006). Executives at Time felt a move like this, to change the publication day solely to increase advertising revenue, was possible because readers were using Time’s Web site to get news throughout the week (Ives).

Competition per se is not a negative; rather it is the way competition may be affecting the content of the news that is seen as the negative. Television news is fast, visual, and often reports on events that are considered sensational. Newspapers have copied this model, “blurring the lines between real news and empty, artificial fluff” (Williams). This can be illustrated by the 2007 coverage of the death of Anna Nicole Smith. According to The Project for Excellence in Journalism (2007), for two days, the cable news networks dedicated nearly half of their broadcasting time to covering Smith. For the week after she died, Smith made up 21% of the cable news coverage. This extensive coverage on the death of one person has only been rivaled in the past by the passing of Princess Diana and John F. Kennedy, Jr.
“Blurring the lines between real news and empty, artificial fluff” is certainly a negative. Other negatives include reporting on rumor, broadcasting without fact-checking, and reporting without context. Thussu (2003) indicates that all three of these negatives can be attributed to the speed with which the 24-hour news cycle operates. In an effort to get the information on the air first, reporters are often using any new information that may be connected to the story they are covering (TV News at its Best and Worst, 2003). This seems to be a bit of a contradiction, because seeing news as it happens is also considered a positive aspect of the 24-hour news cycle. However, seeing news as it happens allows for more mistakes in information, more speculation by journalists and viewers, and more false information to be disseminated (Thussu). Hachten (2005) uses one of five points made by Kovach and Rosensteil to illustrate the point very clearly,

In the 24-hour news cycle, the press is increasingly reporting allegations, rather than digging out the truth. Stories begin as bits of evidence or speculation, to be filled in and sorted out in public as the news cycle continues. And then journalists vamp and speculate until a response is issued. So stories come out less complete and reporting takes on a chaotic and unsettled quality. This makes it difficult to separate fact from spin, argument, or innuendo (p. 114).

The focus on speed, and the abundance of news sources, has also changed the process journalists follow when preparing for a broadcast (Kovach, 2001). Journalists now spend much more time finding information to add to the already existing news, rather than trying to independently discover and verify information. When this happens, it is even more likely that errors or incorrect information will be broadcast. Since
journalists are not working independently nor verifying information, but instead counting on other journalists to get them started on a story, it is more likely that incorrect information will be repeated on multiple news outlets (Kovach).

The 24-hour news cycle has no beginning or end. One objective of this research is to see if journalists agree with that definition of the 24-hour news cycle. In addition, it is important to understand the 24-hour new cycle and to keep the above definition in mind while reading the following section that will define quality television news.

**Quality**

The primary objective of this research is to determine to what extent the 24-hour news cycle has had an effect on the quality of television news. Defining the word quality as it relates to television news is challenging since quality is personally defined. What is of high quality to one person may be of low quality to another. Numerous researchers have worked to determine what exactly constitutes quality television news.

News that matters (Mansbridge, 2004), getting the facts right, covering both sides of every story, and refusing to publish rumors (PEW, 1999) are all ways to define quality news. Other aspects defining quality news include news that is socially, economically or politically significant, or “news you can use” (Zaller, 1999).

In 2003, Bob Papper conducted an extensive survey for the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation (RTNDF). Papper researched the quality of news through the eyes of the general public and of television news directors. He then compared the two. What Papper did not do was clearly define quality news.

In 1999, the Pew Research Center for People and the Press conducted a survey of journalists to see how those in the field of journalism viewed the quality of news. The
Pew Research Center allowed the respondents of the survey to define quality news. The journalists were near unanimous in their agreement on the core principles of journalism. Pew then defined quality news as, “getting the facts right, covering all sides, and refusing to publish rumors” (PEW, 1999). In addition, many of the journalists who were surveyed agreed that quality news contributes to society and provides the public with information it needs (PEW).

Both of these research projects provide interesting information and help provide a basis for defining quality news. However, the definitions used are more commonly accepted practices than clear definitions of quality.

The Project for Excellence in Journalism (2003) provides a much more extensive and clearly specified set of criteria to describe quality journalism. Using survey questionnaires and long-form open-ended interviews, the Project developed six criteria for defining quality in local television news:

1) Cover the whole community;
2) Be significant and informative;
3) Demonstrate enterprise and courage;
4) Be fair, balanced, and accurate;
5) Be authoritative;
6) Be highly local

The Project was specifically researching the quality of local television news and therefore focused its criteria on local news. Criteria numbered one and six are very specific to local television news, and do not apply to the overall quality of television news within the 24-hour news cycle. Because this study is looking at the 24-hour news
cycle and its possible effect on the quality of television news, including several national networks and worldwide news organizations, it will focus on the criteria numbered two, three, four, and five. These four criteria, although originally developed to research local news, provide a clear definition of quality television news within the 24-hour news cycle.

Many of the terms used in the Project’s criteria have different meanings to different people. The next four sections will take an in-depth look at each term and each criterion to better understand the terms used by the Project for Excellence in Journalism.

**Significant and Informative**

For news to be significant, and therefore considered quality, it must matter to the audience. Journalism is storytelling with a purpose (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 1997). The purpose of any form of journalism is to inform the public about matters that interest or affect it. Story topic matters more than treatment. A journalist cannot make a story significant, the topic and content of the story must be significant. The treatment of the topic can only decrease the significance of the story, not increase it (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 1997).

For a journalist to determine whether a story topic is potentially significant requires the journalist to ask what information would have the most value to the audience. This requires the journalist to balance what the audience wants with what the audience cannot anticipate. This also requires a journalist to look beyond typical stories of crime, government, and public safety, and look at other subjects that will also affect the lives of the audience (Sayers, 2004). Only after achieving all of these goals will a journalist produce a story that is considered significant (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 1997).
The success of CNN not only created a lasting institution that certainly had a role in the development of the 24-hour news cycle, but the success of CNN has also created a reason for other networks to get involved in the 24-hour news cycle (Mindich, 2005). Competition is a staple of business life in America, as is evidenced by ABC's consideration of entering the 24-hour news market (Grover, 2004). It is tried and true, if you are successful, someone will copy your business model hoping to capitalize on that success (Mindich). As far as news goes, competition could be even more challenging. Not only do television news organizations compete with each other for viewers, but they also compete with newspapers, magazines, and the Internet. In addition, each medium competes against itself to get a profitable number of users and a profitable number of users who are composed of the right demographic (Sayres, 2004). In the current world of advertising, younger viewers are considered better viewers (Mindich). Competition may be the thing that is hurting news the most. The executives at each organization are so concerned with success, that they have forgotten what it means to be a news organization (Kung-Shankleman, 2000). Many have sacrificed fully fulfilling their basic functions, and some have sacrificed fulfilling their basic functions at all. A high level of competition is going to bring about a large amount of change. Change is inevitable, but competition is forcing change at such a rate that some wonder if television news is about information at all anymore, or if it is solely about making a profit (Kung-Shankleman).

The age of competition in television news will most likely be known as beginning in the early 1990s. But the age of competition may have started much earlier. Ted Koppel (2004) told the Radio Television News Directors Association that Edward R. Murrow, accepted by many as the father of broadcast journalism, never liked doing news
that had anything to do with entertainment. Koppel added that Murrow felt that news was news and that entertainment was entertainment; there should be no mixing. However, Murrow was very good at personal interviews and not only pioneered broadcast news, but he also set the standard for interviewing celebrities on his show Person to Person.

Murrow didn’t like doing the show and made it clear he only did the show to bring in enough money for CBS so that the news department could continue its news focus even though news programming lost money on an annual basis (Koppel). Koppel added that in the 1950s, and into the 1960s the only TV programming that didn’t make money was the news. In 1962 NBC News lost $12 million and CBS News lost $15 million (Anderson, 2004). During this time, news programming was seen as a loss leader so the network could advertise its social conscience, claiming that the profits were justified because they were offset by the loss incurred by the network news division dedicated to informing the public. The network news chiefs were even proud of the way they lost money. To them it proved that news and information came first, which was a matter of honor (Anderson). Informing the public was what Murrow loved to do, but he saw that the free ride for television news would not last for long, so he begrudgingly agreed to continue with Person to Person (Koppel, 2004). One week in 1956 Murrow’s news program, See it Now, received an 11.3 rating, while Person to Person received a 23.4 rating. Person to Person was one of the top ten most popular programs in 1957 with a 45 percent viewer share of all homes in the United States (Fellow, 2005). Once TV executives saw that a newsman doing a pseudo-news program could make money, they asked why all news couldn’t make money. Murrow saw this way of thinking as the beginning of the end for
television news. Now there is no question, television news programs make money, or they are taken off the air. Information provided is secondary to ratings (Koppel).

Not everyone agrees that the Murrow years of broadcast journalism were the golden years. According to Danielle Parker (2000), John Cochran, White House Correspondent for ABC, and Brian Williams, NBC Nightly News anchor, believe that the quality of news is better than it has ever been.

“I just don’t buy the gloom-and-doom scenario that some people do, that the age of Edward R. Murrow was the golden age,” Mr. Cochran said. “Go to the Freedom Forum and look at some of the newscasts from that period. They’re perfectly fine newscasts, but I think ours are better-produced and quite possibly a bit less elitist.”

NBC Nightly News anchor Brian Williams agrees.

“The old days, it was half ‘press release’ journalism and half civic lesson,” Mr. Williams said. “It was what the white, male executives thought you ought to know about your country. What’s changed is news executives are giving in a little bit on what people might like to see, as opposed to what they need to know.” (Parker, 2003, p20)

Former NBC Nightly News Anchor Tom Brokaw (2002) agreed, stating that because of technology and competition, there are more encouraging developments on television news than there are shortcomings.

Fenton (2005) states that one method used by television news organizations to ensure they make money is by packaging news rather than gathering news. Gathering news is time-consuming and expensive. Packaging news allows for minimal involvement
by the reporter who simply adds the finishing touches to a story that was researched and compiled by one or several other news organizations. Much of this packaged news is more infotainment (a mix of information and entertainment) than it is news (Blum, 2003). Many of the reporter stand-ups (on camera presentations by the reporter) seen today are the sole contribution made to the story by the reporter (Fenton). The rest of the story comes from news services, and the video from a stringer (an independent videographer who provides video to news organizations for a fee). The journalist on the scene and the stringer often don’t even know their contributions are being combined to make a story for another organization (Fenton). This allows TV networks to employ a much smaller staff and cut the amount of staff stationed near the news event but increases the likelihood of errors or omissions (Fenton). While this does save the network money, it is not the best way to inform the public (Applegate, 1996). By getting different elements of the story from unrelated sources, there is less verification work. When a story is the work of one person, or even one team, that person, or team, takes great pride and care in the details. When a story is compiled by a number of people who work for different organizations, there is much less pride taken in the final product (Fenton). Reporters have almost no control over most of their product, which can lead to video or information being used out of context (Fenton). According to Kung-Shankleman (2000), executives at CNN defended the cost cutting, saying:

Viewers pay the bills; if they aren’t watching, we aren’t in business.

Of course we want to do a good journalistic job, but keeping advertisers and viewers happy is part of that.
Serving the public does not mean getting high-handed and deciding what they need—at CNN viewers dictate, not producers.

It's not our job to tell people what they should think.

Money doesn’t grow on trees and we don’t throw it around. We spend—a lot if necessary—but only on things that increase value for our viewers (p. 155).

There is another form of packaging, and that is packaging entire newscasts. Rather than selecting all of the most important news stories for the day, producers are often selecting the stories that go together the best, creating a tight and tidy newscast (Fenton, 2005). In this case, the “flow” of the program is as important as the content (Shaul, 2005). The news is not tidy and should not be forced to relate to itself. Newscasts that put more of a focus on packaging than on newsgathering are doing a significant disservice to their viewers (Fenton).

Presenting a television newscast is the act of informing the public. In other words, a television news journalist must provide his or her audience with reliable facts in a meaningful context. This is the essence of a story being informative. There is no absolute truth in journalism, but a large compilation of facts that make up the closest version of the truth a journalist can find. By gathering, verifying, and disseminating facts, a journalist is informing his or her audience of those facts. It is not enough to simply gather, confirming a fact is equally important (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 1997).

Once a news story has been deemed significant and informative, it is more likely that the story will be covered by a television journalist. However, to meet the Project for
Excellence in Journalism’s criteria for quality news, the journalist, and the journalist’s organization must also demonstrate enterprise and courage.

*Demonstrate enterprise and courage*

Demonstrating enterprise and courage are two more ways the Project for Excellence in Journalism defined quality news. It is not only journalists, who must demonstrate enterprise and courage, but everyone involved in the news collection and dissemination process must demonstrate enterprise and courage.

To demonstrate enterprise, a journalist must look beyond the basic stories of the day. Demonstrating enterprise includes developing unique stories, original investigations, and questioning all information received (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2001). It is simple for a journalist to cover the same stories that every other journalist is covering. What is difficult is finding the stories that no one else has reported, asking the questions that no one else has asked, and speaking with sources with whom no one else has spoken (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2001).

Using news service information or satellite downloads is the opposite of enterprise reporting. To demonstrate enterprise, a television news journalist must produce original work that has been researched, verified, and reported to his or her audience (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2001).

To demonstrate courage is to research, verify, and disseminate stories even in the face of controversy, or in contrast to public opinion (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2001). Part of the role of a journalist in a democratic society is to act as a watchdog of the government, businesses, and other powerful institutions. Often these institutions pay the journalist’s expenses through advertising, and the institutions sometimes have great
influence over the content of the news. To demonstrate courage is to serve as an
independent analyst of power (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2001).

In addition, a journalist must demonstrate courage by utilizing his/her own
conscience (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 1997). If a journalist feels ethically
wrong about pursuing a story, source, or interview, he or she should not act – even if not
acting defies management or more often, advertising influence. Diversity is a key
component to quality journalism, and each journalist’s unique perspective is what brings
that diversity to journalism. The journalists must demonstrate courage by exercising their
conscience, which will provide increased diversity (Project for Excellence in Journalism,
1997).

Economics, technology, reporter involvement, infotainment, and other reasons
have been given for the perceived change in the quality of television news. What about
story selection? The choices journalists and their bosses make when deciding which
stories to cover, and for how long will they be covered can also affect the overall quality
of television news (Dvorkin & Jurkowitz, 2004). The key to discussing a “mega story” is
not whether the story will be covered, but for how long it will be covered. The key lies in
deciding whether any story should become a “mega story,” and then deciding how well
journalists are doing in choosing for how long to cover a “mega story” (Dvorkin &
Jurkowitz). Excessive coverage of “mega stories” is blurring the lines between news and
entertainment (Shales, 2003).

The coverage of the O.J. Simpson trial, the Kobe Bryant rape accusation, and
President Bill Clinton’s affair with Monica Lewinsky would be considered “mega
stories.” It is hard to argue that these events, Simpson being tried for murder, Bryant
being charged with rape, and President Clinton having an affair with Lewinsky and then lying about it under oath, are not news. But it is also hard to justify the extensive coverage given to each event (Dvorkin & Jurkowitz, 2004). Many people feel the coverage of each of these events was too extensive and that the stories were only kept alive because the programming was cheap, easy, and garnered high ratings (Anderson, 2004). High ratings often mean high interest: but no one knows if people were watching because they were interested, or if they were watching because it was the only news available (Anderson). The television news organizations will argue that “mega stories” often only get the amount of coverage they do because of a lack of other events happening at the time (Dvorkin & Jurkowitz, 2004). A clear example of this concerns the Washington, D.C. area sniper case from 2002. There had been no shootings for two days, no arrests, no suspects, and no new information, save a note that may or may not have been left by the shooter. However, The Big Story with John Gibson, a news magazine program on FOX News, led the show with an update on the sniper shootings, and spent the majority of the show interviewing experts who were speculating about what might have happened so far, and what might happen in the future (Powers, 2002). Another example concerns the coverage of Michael Jackson’s deposition in 2003. Jackson had not been charged with any crime, and the only video television news had was of an SUV driving up and down the main drag in Las Vegas, waiting to pick him up after the deposition. The coverage and subsequent analysis of this event rivaled that of a political convention (Shales, 2003). While 24-hour news networks get the most criticism for over-covering stories, more and more local television stations are being accused of only covering one event, and giving that event too much coverage (Gottlieb, 2000).
Because of a decline in the number of international correspondents, it is too expensive to extensively cover events around the world. So coverage stays close to home, and there isn’t always a wealth of stories with high levels of significance close to home (Dvorkin & Jurkowitz). However, that argument does not hold true, especially when talking about the Monica Lewinsky scandal (Anderson, 2004). In January of 1998, just before news of the Lewinsky story broke, the world’s media was focused on another event. This event was not covered as a “mega story,” but it had the potential to be one. Hundreds of reporters were sent to Cuba because Pope John Paul II was visiting the island nation. The broadcast networks, cable networks, and local affiliates spent several million dollars planning their coverage, with the major networks chartering a huge ship to transport equipment to Cuba. CNN alone spent $1.2 million and used more than one hundred people. Journalists who were in Cuba compared the coverage of the visit to coverage usually reserved for political conventions. Pope John Paul II criticized Fidel Castro for hanging on to Communist ways and urged him to change. The Pope also criticized the United States for its embargo of the small island (Anderson).

Then reports that Monica Lewinsky was claiming to have had an affair with President Bill Clinton started coming in. Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings, Dan Rather, Ted Koppel, and nearly every other well-known anchor who had been in Cuba came home immediately to cover the claims of an intern about sex in the White House. There are nearly sixty million Roman Catholics in the United States, and almost all of them are guaranteed to know more about Monica Lewinsky than they are about Pope John Paul II’s trip to Cuba and subsequent scolding of Fidel Castro and the United States government (Anderson). This is not to say that the Lewinsky scandal should have been
ignored, but only to say that the news networks could have covered Lewinsky and the Pope’s visit to Cuba instead of dropping one in favor of the other (Anderson).

The above example shows not only that television news organizations are willing to drop one “mega story” in favor of another, but that covering stories at home is much cheaper than covering them abroad (Dvorkin & Jurkowitz, 2004). Throughout the course of the 1990s and culminating with the Lewinsky scandal, more and more news networks expanded the amount of news they were providing. Simultaneously, the same networks cut staff at an alarming rate, closed bureaus, and widely ignored expensive and hard to cover international news in favor of cheap and sensational domestic news (Consoli, 2000).

In 1993, CBS had 38 foreign correspondents in 28 cities; in 2004 CBS had five correspondents in four cities (Dvorkin & Jurkowitz, 2004). Now CBS and the other networks get much of their international news from organizations like the Associated Press, Reuters, or the BBC. In network news, the number of correspondents has been cut by a third since the 1980s (Bianco, 2004). It is much cheaper to pay for the rights to use another organization’s reporting than it is to send a team, or even a correspondent, to cover a story overseas (Dvorkin & Jurkowitz).

Maybe the reason all of the journalists seem to be running the same stories over and over is that they are all getting their information from the same place (Fenton, 2005). With the closure of the foreign bureaus, domestic news organizations have had to use news services to fill the space. Because of this, much of the foreign news you see in the U.S., no matter which network you see it on, is coming from a very small number of sources, most commonly the Associate Press or Reuters (Fenton). Another reason for the
decrease in original stories has been the increase in corporate ownership. In 2003, five media conglomerates, AOL Time Warner, Viacom, GE, News Corp, and Disney were responsible for more than two-thirds of all prime-time television programming, including most major news channels and programs (Fighting Media Monopolies, 2003). With the control of the majority of television news programming based within five conglomerates, more and more stories are being shared around the country by TV stations and networks that are owned by the conglomerates.

In addition to demonstrating enterprise and courage while continuing to present high quality television news, a reporter must also present information that is fair, balanced, and accurate.

*Fair, balanced, and accurate*

Trust in the news and in those who present the news is a long-held ideal among journalists. To maintain that trust, and in turn present quality news, journalists and journalism organizations must be fair, balanced, and accurate. News coverage should not be subjective, news coverage should not be biased, and news coverage should not be false or misleading (Harwood, 2004) (Gunter, 2005).

To be fair often means to remain independent from those who are being reported on by journalists (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 1997). In addition, to be fair means to search for the truth without an agenda. Journalists must research and verify all information; they must not include or exclude any information because of outside influence (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 1997). To remain fair, journalists must treat every source – victim, accused, or observer – the same (Dominick, 2006). Journalism is not a profession where one should carry out an agenda or attempt to present
a certain message. Journalists should report only information that they can gather and verify (Dominick).

To be balanced is to cover all sides of the story (Dominick, 2006). There is an old cliché in journalism: “cover both sides of the story.” To be truly balanced, that cliché should be altered to “cover all sides of the story.” It is rare that there are only two sides to any story.

To be truly balanced, a journalist must look at all aspects of a story equally. The story should not be limited to two sides, or even worse, one side (Dominick).

To achieve quality journalism, journalists must utilize all sources available to them (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2001). It is not enough to simply find the most outspoken source on each side of an issue. A journalist should find these sources, but also those sources that are in the middle, undecided, or oblivious. It is only after looking at all aspects of a story that a journalist can call that story balanced (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2001).

Many of the recent complaints about television news have developed over the past two decades. Specific events that have spurred these complaints include the extensive coverage of Princess Diana’s death, Jon Benet Ramsey’s disappearance, and O.J. Simpson’s murder trial (Lafayette, 1997). The number of complaints has increased, and the severity of the complaints has increased. One problem some people have with the quality of the news however seems to have popped up on a specific date. Ever since September 11, 2001, many news organizations have worked with and supported U.S. interests more than ever before (Robinson, 2003). After 9/11, there was a significant increase in so-called “patriotic” reporters and anchors. Reporters and anchors all over the
country wore American flag pins while on the air, and the stories about international events often took on an “us vs. them” mentality (Robinson). Aaron Barnhart’s (2001) response to this, “I miss ‘unpatriotic’ journalism.” Barnhart went on to say there should be contrary opinions and views shown, no matter how unpopular or unpatriotic those opinions and views may be.

As an anchor and reporter for KNDU-TV in Kennewick, Washington, at the time of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, I also wore an American flag pin, as did all of my on-air colleagues. We were not ordered to wear them by management, but by early afternoon on September 11, we were all given pins and strongly urged to wear them. It was not the news director of KNDU who gave us the pins and suggested we wear the pins; rather the general manager of the station brought them in. This was clearly not a news decision, but a public relations decision, and it didn’t matter if we felt wearing the pins was ethically wrong, it was clear to all on-air talent that they should be wearing their pins until told otherwise.

Objectivity is a long-standing and highly important aspect of quality news. Some Americans feel the wearing of an American flag pin by a reporter creates the impression that the reporter is not objectively covering the news. How can a reporter claim to be objective when covering an international event while wearing an American flag? That would be like a reporter covering a Firestone tire recall while wearing a Goodyear pin (Robinson). This created a case of reporter involvement on a scale never before seen in this country as television news reporters and anchors alike draped themselves in the flag and then claimed to be unbiased presenters of the news (Anderson, 2004).
The second war in Iraq, beginning in 2003, has offered ample opportunity for journalists to get involved in the story. One of the new developments included the embedding of reporters, or reporters who travel with military units (Embedded in Iraq, 2003). These reporters imply they are merely along for the ride and are still acting as objective observers. However, it is now known that many of the embedded reporters were restricted in what they could observe, report, and videotape (Anderson, 2004). Los Angeles Times reporter David Zucchino was embedded for seven weeks and dependent on his military hosts for food, transportation, protection, and access. Having access allowed him to write detailed stories about the battles in Iraq and the performance of American soldiers in combat. But he didn’t have full access, he was not allowed to interview survivors of Iraqi civilians killed by U.S. soldiers. Zucchino also stated that he had no idea what ordinary Iraqis were experiencing (Four Star TV News, 2003). In addition, it was common to hear an embedded television news reporter say things like “our troops,” and “our unit.” It doesn’t take long to understand why these reporters are no longer being considered objective observers (Anderson).

It does seem to get worse than wearing a flag pin and considering themselves part of the unit. Some reporters have been accused of getting involved with the action to increase the “Wow!” factor of their stories (Anderson). One such incident involved veteran CNN correspondent Walter Rodgers in 2003. Rodgers’ crew was traveling with the Army’s 7th Cavalry and saw a wounded Iraqi. Rodgers’ crew included a former soldier who was trained in first aid. The crew worked together to stabilize the Iraqi soldier until medical personal could take over (Anderson). This act alone is not a breach of journalistic ethics; no one could blame the journalists for saving a dying man’s life. It
was how CNN "covered" the story afterward that garnered criticism. Rodgers was used as a guest on Anderson Cooper's program. He was introduced as a reporter but acted like a source. CNN spent several minutes making sure the world knew that one of their reporters had a heart. Cooper went on to interview several members of Rodgers' crew about their involvement. This was not only a case of reporter involvement, but also a case of network involvement. Very few people who stop to help a dying man get the opportunity to tell the world what they did. The only reason Rodgers was interviewed was because he worked for the company that wanted his story (Anderson).

What's more, Tom Fenton (2005) has argued that the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, may never have happened if more television journalists had been doing the job they were supposed to be doing. In the interest of the bottom line, many foreign bureaus have been closed, and many regional networks have been unable to compete because of the cost of reporting foreign news (Breznick, 2004). This has lead to a significant decrease in the number of foreign stories that have been reported to Americans. Even when international stories are covered, they are not fully explained and almost never put into the proper context (Fenton). Take the buildup to 9/11: Islamic militants did not appear out of nowhere as many television news organizations reported; they had been in the news several times. Many television news organizations simply never connected the dots (Fenton). Prior to 9/11, the World Trade Center was first bombed in 1993, next an Air Force apartment complex in Saudi Arabia was bombed in 1996, then two U.S. embassies were bombed in Africa in 1998, and in 2000 the U.S.S. Cole was in port in Yemen when a boat loaded with explosives pulled up next to the Cole and detonated the explosives. These events were all reported on television news but were
rarely put in the context that Islamic militants didn’t like the foreign policy of the United States. Each event was generally described by television news organizations as conducted by a small group of crazy Muslims (Fenton). However, taken as a whole the events seem like a pretty clear indication that at least part of the Muslim world was determined to attack American interests. These events, and the fact that Islamic militants wanted to attack the United States, were reported in print (Engelberg, 2001). However, with television being the place where the majority of people in the U.S. get their news (Gough & Bond, 2006), more in-depth reporting on television would have provided for a better informed population (Fenton).

It was a failure of government to connect the events and to protect its citizens, but it was also a failure of the television news organizations to fully inform the citizens of the U.S. that they may have been in danger (Fenton). If the television news organizations had better informed the citizens, the citizens could have demanded action by their government. Instead, very few American citizens were fully informed, and on 9/11, the attacks came to American soil. Would more foreign correspondents have allowed for this information to have been gathered and processed? According to Fenton (2005), we’ll never know because the foreign bureaus were closed to help the news organizations increase their profits. The mass media, including television news networks, have been decreasing their investment in newsgathering for years in an attempt to maintain or increase profit margins while the size of the audience shrinks. In network news, the number of correspondents has been cut by a third since the 1980s (Bianco & Lowry, 2004)
Without well-trained journalists or journalists who are allowed to go to the scene, Americans will continue to be under-informed by television news organizations (Anderson, 2004). The news networks today, especially the 24-hour cable networks, touch on a lot of subjects. They cover hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of stories every day, but they cover none of them with the depth required to understand the greater implications of the news event (Anderson).

Accuracy is simply providing news consumers with factually correct information (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 1997). However, there is nothing simple about the process of independently verifying information. Peter Johnson of USA Today (2005) states that “journalism of verification” has given way to “journalism of assertion.” To be accurate means to verify. Any source can spout what he or she claims to be “facts,” but if those “facts” are not independently verified, there is little chance that they are accurate (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 1997). “Journalism of assertion,” on the other hand, does not require reporters to verify, but only to report (Johnson).

Accuracy can be affected by a number of things but most commonly time is what challenges accuracy (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2001). The demand for journalists to finish their stories first often trumps the need for them to take time to verify information. Also because of time constraints, correcting mistakes often gets overlooked in television news (Graham, 2004). Using more journalists and giving them more time are two ways to increase accuracy. In short, to be accurate means to report only verified fact. If an organization must report unverified information, it should admit to its audience that the information has not yet been verified (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2001). As I sit writing this, CNN and MSNBC are reporting on the London and Glasgow terrorism
attempts in June of 2007. Correspondents for both CNN and MSNBC are reporting what the British media are reporting. The American correspondents have said several times that they have not been able to independently verify the information.

Another concern that may affect the accuracy of television news is the constant pressure to be innovative (Collins, 2004). Competition has created a frantic race for ratings. When CNN first went on the air in 1980 there was no competition, and the network was able to focus solely on the news (Collins). Since that time, CNN has seen the development of more than 20 all-news networks (not all are still operating), not to mention the increased development and usage of the Internet. This level of competition drives the need to innovate (Downie, 2003). Every time a competitor develops a new way of increasing ratings, every other competitor clamors to match, and improve, the innovation for his or her organization (Kung-Shankleman, 2000). These organizations also understand the reality of their business. Advertising pays the bills, it requires money to produce a news program, and ratings are needed to keep advertising dollars flowing in (Kung-Shankleman). Today’s news consumer wants to be entertained as well as informed (Collins, 2004). This may have been what allowed FOX News to overtake CNN as the most watched cable news network (Collins).

In terms of quality, this form of infotainment as news creates a potential problem for television news organizations. Journalists who are new to the field of television news have often been told they need to write for their entire audience, which sometimes leads to “dumbing down the script” (Parker, 2000). I was taught as a broadcast journalism student at the University of Montana in 1998 that if I wrote for an eighth grade audience, then everyone could understand what I was writing, from the high school dropout to the
person with a Ph.D. However, writing for an eighth grade audience can turn off the person with a Ph.D. and can lead to content that is considered less important.

Infotainment takes the idea of writing to all audiences to the extreme. Because of the increase in infotainment, there is an increased level in perceived low-browism. In addition, this dumbing down of the content is believed to be due to the increase of flashy news over the substance of the news (Kung-Shankleman, 2000). Dumbed down content is not all that is occurring based on the flash and showmanship of the news (Anderson, 2004). Now journalists are regularly accused of covering stories longer than necessary, creating "mega-stories." If a story is broadcast by a television news organization and gets high ratings, the organization continues to pursue the story. If the ratings continue, the coverage continues. This cycle goes on until the lines between reporting a news event and creating a news event become very blurred (Anderson). The television news organizations justify the continued coverage by saying that if the ratings are high then the audience feels the event is important, and it is the job of the organization to report on important events (Bernstein & Kissell, 2001). Critics of the continued coverage maintain that if an organization spends upwards of 10 hours in one day on one story, then the majority of news viewers are being done a disservice because they are not hearing about the other newsworthy events that have occurred during the day (Anderson).

Once a television journalist has met the first three criteria for quality television news set forth by the Project for Excellence in Journalism — significant and informative, demonstrate enterprise and courage, and be fair, balanced and accurate — he or she must also meet the fourth and final criteria, which is for the journalist and his/her organization to be authoritative.
It is the role of a television journalist to provide information to which the public would not otherwise have access. The American people rely on journalists to gather, verify, and disseminate information that non-journalists do not have the time to gather and verify. To do this credibly, the stories must be authoritative. The stories must have sources and information that the viewing public will trust and believe (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 1997). Information contained in a news story is best if it comes directly from the source (Dominick, 2006). Reporters are the link between sources and the public, allowing the public to learn about events from the sources themselves.

Credentialed experts who provide impartial data are the most authoritative sources. Not every story needs an expert, but each source should be chosen for his or her ability to comment with authority and without bias (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 1997).

Television news organizations have received so much criticism in recent years that journalists are now having a difficult time finding legitimate sources. Instead, the majority of people who are now used as sources are seeking out the media coverage as much as journalists are seeking out sources (Mindich, 2005). In fact, many of the people you now see being interviewed on television news programs are in their company-owned or privately-owned studio (Anderson, 2004). In the past, sources were interviewed in their offices, or on location. If they were wanted for live analysis, they went to the studio and sat with the anchor or on a network-owned set. Now, many businesses that are often used as sources for news programs or news analysis have built private studios in their offices. Many of the interviews are scheduled by public relations specialists, not news reporters (Sayres, 2004). These sources are not going on the air because they feel it is
their civic duty to inform the public, they are going on the air so they can get several minutes of free advertising (Anderson). In the 24-hour news cycle, this makes it easier for networks and journalists to fill the never-ending news cycle. It is also easier on the source, who does not have to leave his or her office to participate. The only people who seem to be missing out are the viewing public who must be subjected to three-minute ads for commercial businesses rather than three minutes of news analysis by an objective observer (Anderson).

Newsworthiness

The previous 23 pages described and explained the criteria for producing quality television news. However, before an event can be included in the news, and therefore be determined to be either high or low quality news, it must be deemed newsworthy by a journalist or a journalist’s superior (Knight, 1982). While the audience ultimately decides whether a story is newsworthy, without a television news journalist choosing to cover an event, or being assigned to cover an event, it will never become news, and thus, could never be considered quality television news.

One of the major challenges with a term like newsworthiness is its fluidity. Over time the newsworthiness of similar events changes. Some journalists who currently work for 24-hour cable news networks will admit that what they are airing would not have been considered newsworthy in the past (Paskowski, 2006). These same journalists claim that their producers want coverage that will entertain as well as inform the audience. This often leads to stories such as the “Runaway Bride” getting more coverage on 24-hour cable news than the Saddam Hussein trial. Very few journalists would argue that the “Runaway Bride” story was more newsworthy than the Saddam Hussein trial. But
because of time, money, and audience preferences the “Runaway Bride” story got more coverage (Paskowski).

Defining newsworthiness is much more problematic than describing quality news. McMaster University’s Graham Knight defined newsworthiness in terms of “deviance, disorder, and conflict” (Knight, 1982). Knight used an example to show how deviance, disorder, and conflict create a newsworthy event by showing that coverage of an employment dispute is framed primarily in terms of how disruptive the dispute is to the surrounding society.

Kerstin Forsberg (2002) of the Viktoria Institute found that most journalists do not have clear definitions of newsworthiness, but instead, base their coverage on news values such as relevance, proximity, and personalization (Forsberg). Garrett Asay’s (2005) research shows similar findings, that stories that appear in the news often share common characteristics. Asay collected his data by observing multiple media events. Newsworthiness can change depending on the market and audience (Forsberg). Each audience determines what is newsworthy, and news coverage should be based on the audience’s demands (Knight, 1982). Richard Lundman states that newsworthiness changes from day to day based on relatively well-understood and articulated criteria such as relative frequency, and less well-understood criteria, such as race and gender stereotypes.

Knight, Forsberg, Asay, and Lundman agree that a clear, unbiased, and lasting definition of newsworthiness may not exist. Instead, the four use two more terms that need defining in order to understand how a journalist deems an event newsworthy; those terms are gatekeeping and agenda setting.
Gatekeeping

Gatekeeping is the process any news story must go through before publication or broadcast, and gatekeepers can include public relations specialists, reporters, producers, editors, directors, videographers, news directors, and more, depending on the organization (Dominick, 2006; Perry, 2001; Shoemaker, 1991; and Lewin, 1948). Philip Taylor (1997) describes gatekeeping as the filtration process news goes through before being disseminated to the public. A “gate” in the gatekeeping process is any person who contributes to the process of developing the event into a news story. Each gate has at least a limited ability to allow the story to proceed, alter the story, or stop the story from proceeding (Dominick). The purpose of the process is to winnow the amount of potential news stories down to a manageable number of news stories for a particular organization. Each news organization treats gatekeeping differently because each organization’s news consumers demand different subjects of news (Donohew, 1967). Most news organizations have the potential of covering hundreds of news events each day. However, not many organizations have enough staff to cover hundreds of stories each day. In addition, many of the potential news events are not considered significant enough to the news consuming public. It is the role of a gatekeeper to select the news events that are manageable and significant to the public (Barzilai-Nahon, 2004).

Karine Barzilai-Nahon (2004) and John Fortunato (2005) describe gatekeeping as the process of cutting billions of available news stories in the world down to the few hundred stories most relevant to a particular news organization’s audience. However, the most comprehensive set of criteria used to describe gatekeeping comes from Steven
Livingston and Lance W. Bennett (2003) in their collaborative effort to research event-driven news. Livingston and Bennett used the following criteria to define gatekeeping:

1) The reporter’s personal and professional news judgment;
2) Organizational news-gathering routines that establish the working relations between reporters and sources;
3) Economic constraints on news production;
4) Information and communication technologies that define the limits of time and space in news gathering.

The above criteria will be used to define gatekeeping throughout the course of the study. The main reason for selecting this definition is that it accepts those outside of traditional journalists as gatekeepers. It accepts that owners, general managers, salespeople, consultants, and many others who have no role in gathering or presenting the news still play a very active role in deciding what will be gathered and presented (Livingston & Bennet).

Gatekeeping is not solely reliant on journalists. Many of the factors that determine whether a news story is broadcast have nothing to do with news. Gatekeeping does include journalist’s personal and professional news judgment, as well as each journalist’s employer’s news-gathering routines. However, gatekeeping also includes limits on expenses, time, space, and available information (Livingston & Bennet, 2003; Perry, 2001). In addition, journalists must rely on politicians, public relations specialists, and law enforcement leaders to get information. This brings another group of non-journalists into the gatekeeping process (McKain, 2005)
Within the 24-hour news cycle news organizations must operate at a speed that is a current concern for gatekeepers (Fortunato, 2005). When the news cycle had several start and stop points throughout the day, gatekeepers had more time to deliberate about the inclusion of a story, the inclusion of the elements of that story, and where that story should be placed within the newscast (White, 1950). Working within the 24-hour news cycle has decreased the amount of time for debate regarding television news content (Fortunato, 2005). According to Michael Salwen (2004), this is not necessarily a negative aspect to the 24-hour news cycle. In the current news culture, viewers expect to be given news as it is happening. This free flow of information forces gatekeepers to be just as concerned with the steady flow of information as they are with the controlled flow of information (Salwen). Because information flows more freely in a 24-hour news cycle, television journalists must be quick to disseminate information but careful not to disseminate information that is not yet understood (Fortunato). Fortunato further explains that it should be more important for a gatekeeper to ensure accuracy first and emphasize speed second.

Gatekeepers are not only news producers but also news consumers (Scott, 1999). This, along with the 24-hour news cycle, has led to the increase in news magazine and news analysis programming on cable news networks (Mindich, 2005). There is a time and a place for new analysis; the concern starts when the viewers are confused as to whether they are watching news or news analysis (Westin, 2004). In an effort to fill all 24 hours when the daily news is slow, and in an effort to increase ratings among young people, the gatekeepers at many of the 24-hour cable networks have used pre-made news magazine programs and live news analysis (Mindich). Both types of programming are
much cheaper and easier to produce than up-to-the-minute live news. These types of programs also appear to be what the audience and today’s news producers want to put on the air (Scott). Tom Brokaw, former NBC Nightly News anchor, may have said it best, Curiously, the people who are coming to us (to work at NBC) are smarter than they’ve ever been, well educated... They’re children of television, and they really want to come to work here. And a lot of them, unfortunately, don’t give a shit about the news. They want to do magazines, or they want to do talk shows” (Mindich p. 101).

The networks defend their decisions by saying that higher ratings show that the audience demands this type of programming and that news magazines and news analysis programming are regularly preempted in favor of breaking news (Mindich). This type of television news programming is often referred to today as tabloid news programming. While Scott (1999) claims that this is the type of programming the consumers want, Four Star TV News (1999) states that while tabloid news can gather high ratings, traditional news programming can gather equally high ratings. In fact, the study published in Wilson Quarterly shows that the television news organizations that are performing the worst in terms of ratings are the organizations that air a hybrid of traditional news and tabloid news. FOX News anchor Greta Van Susteren agrees with this sentiment, saying that reporters and anchors should lose their egos and attitudes and report just the facts with straightforward video (Bedard, Fang, & Gilgoff, 2006).

*60 Minutes* was the first successful news magazine and it brought out the best in Don Hewitt, its creator (Barkin, 2003). Hewitt brought energy, imagination, and an unrelenting ego to the show. Hewitt constantly showed that he knew what would make
good television, and he wasn’t afraid to step on a few toes to make that good television (Barkin). This may have been the precursor to what is seen on many television news broadcasts today: energy and imagination, but also a lack of useful information. The news magazine programs often seem to be much more about the ego and showmanship of the host than about the subject at hand. The producers of these programs are also much more concerned about ratings than they are concerned about presenting information that is useful to the public (Barkin). This isn’t to say that in-depth programming cannot be found, it just may not be on traditional news networks. PBS and the Discovery Channel provide a number of high quality, in-depth journalistic films each year on programs such as Frontline, Wide Angle, and Discovery Channel Spotlight (Schiller, 2004). Because there remains an audience for traditional news, Randall Rothenberg (2005) suggests (with a strong hint of sarcasm) combining the three broadcast news networks and airing the traditional news they still produce on PBS.

In addition to many television news programs focusing on infotainment and journalists focusing on their egos, many of the executives who run news organizations have no news background, and even the ones who do are changing their opinions about what the public wants to see in television news (Fenton, 2005).

Our big corporate owners, infected with the greed that marks the end of the 20th century, stretch constantly for ever-increasing profit, condemning quality to take the hindmost. If they understood the nature of this public service and treated their investment in it accordingly, we would be saved from compromising journalistic integrity in the mad scramble for ratings and circulation. (Walter Cronkite quoted by Lafayette, 1997, p1A).
The executives who make many of the final news content decisions feel that tabloid news sells. If it sells, they will continue to put it on the news (Fenton). One of the more significant developments to affect the television news industry was the debut of FOX News. Many organizations were leaning in this direction already, but FOX was the first to be very successful using non-news executives to make many of the news decisions (Collins, 2004). News executives, who used to work in more traditional business settings, are now making the television news content decisions based on bottom-line business factors rather than traditional news factors (Collins). FOX has not only succeeded by using this method, but FOX is also now the top rated cable news network (Greppi, 2006), and its success has encouraged CNN to try some of the same techniques (Collins). CNN has used more talking heads, more speculation, more opinion, and more entertainment news since FOX started challenging CNN in the ratings (Anderson, 2004). For example, on February 2, 2004, at 11 p.m., CNN Headline News topped its new hour with “Breast gate,” a 26-hour old story about Janet Jackson’s breast being shown during the halftime show of the Super Bowl (Anderson). The second story of that news hour: a breaking news story that the deadly toxin Ricin had forced an evacuation of the Senate Office Building after the toxin was found in the Senate Majority Leader’s mailroom. This event also prompted increased security at the Pentagon in fear of a potential terrorist attack (Anderson).

This change in news philosophy, which includes a greater focus on feature news, celebrity news, and infotainment rather than on public affairs, politics, and information, may be attributed to the television news executives, but it may also be attributed to the audience those news executives are trying to attract. The average age of an American
watching prime time entertainment television in 2005 was 42 years (Mindich, 2005). The average age for a viewer of CNN in 2005 ranged from 59-64, depending on the time of day, and this was after a significant change of programming geared toward attracting younger viewers (Mindich). The changes geared toward the younger audience included “FOXing” it up a little bit, a term used to describe the presentation of more sensational news that is based more on speculation and argument than it is on actual fact (Anderson, 2004). CNN’s Lou Dobbs Moneyline in 2003 used the headline “Target Scumbag” to describe dangerous people in Iraq. Dobbs stated that he had no reason to apologize for the headline. This type of headline is considered sensational at best, flat out racist at worst, and is considered to be a direct reaction to the popularity of FOX News and the way FOX News openly admits its allegiance to the American government (McClintock, 2003). Television news organizations have been jazzing stories up or sexing stories up before this sensational form of television news is nothing new. But as the current news consumers grow older, the news executives are doing everything they can to attract younger viewers, including taking sensational reporting to a new level (Anderson).

Agenda Setting

Agenda setting can be defined as the way a news organization interprets a news event, and therefore reports on that news event (Mccluskey, 2005; McCombs, 1981). Agenda setting is often described as the news media’s portrayal of an event (Miljan, 2003). Portrayal can take on many meanings; including what types of events to cover, where to place them when presenting the news, which types of questions sources are asked, and how much coverage is assigned to an event (Mccluskey).
Bernard Cohen's 1963 description of agenda setting is the most commonly used (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Hill, 1985; Kok and Holaday, 1999; and Miljan, 2003). It states that while the media cannot tell the public what to think, it is very successful in telling the public what to think about. By placing importance on a subject, a media organization can play a powerful role in shaping public opinion (Harrington, 1989).

Maureen E. McCluskey (2005) agrees with Cohen's definition but adds that the mass media's portrayal of events can affect the public's perception of events. In other words, if the news media deems an event - such as the 2006 conflict between Israel and Lebanon - to be critical, then it is highly likely that the public will feel that the event is critical.

Agenda setting happens on the scale of a single story (Hill, 1985), on the scale of popular discussion (McCombs and Shaw, 1972), and on the scale of an organizational goal (Dominick, 2006).

Hill (1985) showed the correlation between media coverage and public opinion. Hill's research shows that people tend to agree with the mass media about which stories are the most important. Simply put, if a story is in the news, then it must be important.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) maintain that the media not only facilitates the popular discussion of the day, the media is capable of, and often very successful at, leading the popular discussion of the day. Emphasis on certain topics within the news will lead to the news-consuming public believing that the topics emphasized are the most important topics of the day.

Dominick (2006) states that each news media organization brings a distinct and individual perspective to each news event. In an attempt to develop their own identities, some news media organizations take this perspective to a higher level than others. Simply
put, agenda setting describes how a journalist or an organization determines what to cover, what to include in their coverage, what to leave out of their coverage, and in what order to present their coverage. All of these elements allow an organization to influence public opinion, or at the very least, to influence what the public is thinking about and talking about (Dominick).

For instance, the executives at a particular television news organization may decide they want that organization to be known as the “crime” station or the “education” station. In this case, the executives make a top-down decision to focus the organization’s efforts on crime stories or education stories. This shows the public that the station’s management feels that crime or education are the important subjects in that market, and therefore, the viewing public may start to view crime or education as important issues (Dominick).

Summary of literature review

The 24-hour news cycle is not the only factor that has had an effect on the quality of news, and to overlook the numerous other possibilities would be short-sighted. For instance, technology has certainly has some effect on the quality of news. Digital cameras allow for quicker editing and a clearer picture, satellites allow for live coverage around the world, and small mobile satellite trucks allow for real-time war coverage (The Media’s Iraq War, 2003). Improvements and updates to almost all forms of media technology have changed the news in ways that are measurable and ways that are not. Technology has allowed for the development of the 24-hour news cycle but is not the sole reason for the advent and adoption of the 24-hour news cycle. Therefore, technology is another factor that clearly has had an effect on the quality of news. To determine to
what extent the quality of news has been affected by technology is beyond the scope of this study. Still, it must be kept in mind that many of the changes that allowed for the creation of a 24-hour news cycle happened simultaneously with a rapidly changing technological industry.

Another aspect of journalism that could be a factor in the changing quality of the news is the experience of newscasters. Again, this would require a full study in and of itself to see if age or experience has had any effect on the quality of the news. For the purposes of this study it is once again important to keep this possibility in mind, not so it can be studied, but so the researcher can be aware of other variables while gathering, analyzing, and presenting data.

It is not the researcher's intent to study every factor or event that may have affected the quality of news, but only to study the extent to which the 24-hour news cycle has affected the quality of television news. Including technology and experience, there are a number of ways the quality of news could have changed: education level of journalists, education level of the population, political landscape of journalists, political landscape of the population, cost of presenting the news, cost of gathering the news, cost of access to the news, corporate ownership changes, levels of patriotism, religious beliefs, etc. The point of presenting the above list is not to show variables of this study but to show that there are a number of possible causes for any change in the quality of the news. All of the above variables are potentially valid and should be investigated as part of some future study. This research is limited to the specific objectives of determining to what extent journalists perceive the 24-hour news cycle has had an effect on the quality of
television news, defining the meaning of the 24-hour news cycle, and examining the changes journalists perceive to have been brought about by the 24-hour news cycle.
Chapter 3: Method

Sample

Four initial interview subjects were selected based on their experience and expertise. The participants were drawn from a sample of convenience. Participants for this study had a minimum of 15 years experience as journalists, 10 years experience teaching or studying journalism in an academic setting, or 20 years of combined experience as journalists, professors, or academic researchers. Using a snowball sample, each of the initial four subjects was asked to suggest two more interview candidates who could be of help to the research. Each subsequent subject was then asked to suggest two additional candidates.

Based on suggestions, experience, and expertise, nine participants were interviewed. This is a relatively small sample, and it is not meant to be a representative of all journalists in the country. Instead, this sample is designed to give a glimpse into the thoughts of journalists and to examine to what extent they perceive the 24-hour news cycle to have changed the quality of television news. The results of this sample do not provide, nor should they imply, generality concerning journalists' perceptions.

Procedure

Data collection for this study was conducted using semi-structured interviews. The interviews were designed to allow the participants to provide information in an open-ended manner. The initial interview was based on an interview checklist (see Appendix A) to ensure that all research objectives were discussed. The results of the initial interview were then reviewed for clarity and completeness and a follow-up interview conducted. The follow-up interview was less structured and allowed the respondent to
expand on the subject. The initial interview checklist was either sent to the interviewee or conducted via telephone. The follow-up interview was conducted in person if possible and on the telephone if necessary. All questions on the interview checklist were open-ended to allow the respondents an opportunity to fully explain their positions. The checklist focused on four criteria that define the quality of the news that are the focus of this research. All interviews, in person or on the telephone, were recorded and transcribed, and the transcripts provided to the interview subjects for their approval or clarification. All interviews conducted via e-mail were also made available to the respondents for their approval or clarification. All data collected was stored and backed up for the duration of the research. Eight respondents agreed to give their full names and titles, and agreed to be quoted or referenced in the finished research. The ninth respondent is currently working for a cable news network and required anonymity for his participation. The ninth respondent is referred to as a Senior Cable Executive.

The respondents (including the ninth respondent who also signed the agreement, but checked the box marked “anonymous”) agreed to these terms by signing an agreement to participate (see Appendix B). This document allowed the respondents to end their participation at any time or refuse to respond to any question or request. It was the intention of the study to utilize the expertise of the respondents, not to use the respondent’s answers to prove a point.

Data Analysis

The transcript of each interview was provided to the respondents for clarification or expansion. This research is designed to provide information from the perspective of the responding journalists, and they were given every opportunity to fully explain their
positions. After all of the interviews had been conducted, transcribed, and approved by the respondents, the data analysis began. During analysis, each transcript was divided into sections that corresponded to specific research objectives. Each section was then numbered to correspond with a research objective. A paraphrase from each section was then plotted on a chart to determine where each journalist stood on each research objective. This allowed a big picture look at each research objective and helped determine whether there was agreement, near agreement, or no agreement on each research objective. To achieve agreement, at least seven of the nine journalists must have provided answers that were consistent with each other. To achieve near agreement, five or six of the nine journalists must have provided answers that were consistent with each other. Minimal, or no agreement was achieved if fewer than five of the nine journalists provided answers that were consistent.

Each interview question was designed to correspond to a research objective. Therefore, respondents were addressing each research objective while answering the questions on the interview checklist. The structure of the interview provided specific answers that corresponded to a research objective.

Limitations

The diverse nature of interview subjects provided for a wide range of opinions on the quality of the news both before the 24-hour news cycle and during the 24-hour news cycle. In addition, the expertise of the interview subjects provided evidence as to whether any changes to the quality of the news are attributable to the 24-hour news cycle. However, there are limitations to this research. First, many of the interview subjects worked in the news before and during the 24-hour news cycle. For the respondents who
have been working in the field for more than 20 years it may be difficult to compare the current state of news to the state of news before the advent of the 24-hour news cycle. Simply put, time may affect their memories. Furthermore, the answers the respondents provided were based mostly on their opinions as to the quality of news, past and present. What is highly significant and informative to one journalist may be relatively insignificant and uninformative to another. Quality is often a personal opinion, and this is a significant limitation.

The study attempts to examine the perceptions of a select group of journalists regarding the 24-hour news cycle and its possible affect on the quality of the news in the United States, not to generalize the opinions of the entire news industry.
Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The primary objective of the study is to examine the extent to which journalists believe the 24-hour news cycle has affected the quality of television news in the United States. After extensive interviews with nine former and current television journalists, who have between 15 and 40 years of experience in the broadcast journalism field, it became clear that the 24-hour news cycle has had an effect on the quality of television news. Some believe the current quality of television news to be very high, some believe the current quality of television news to be very low, and others believe the quality of television news is specific to each organization that produces television news. In addition, some believe that the 24-hour news cycle hurt the quality of television news; some believe the 24-hour news cycle helped the quality of television news, and others believe the 24-hour news cycle had no effect on the quality of news. While their opinions differed concerning these aspects of the research, all of the journalists who participated agreed that television news organizations can improve the quality of the product being broadcast. Even though the journalists did not agree as to how the 24-hour news cycle has affected the quality of news, they did agree that quality news is achievable within the 24-hour news cycle.

This chapter takes a close look at each of the journalist’s answers to specific research questions. Each research question corresponds with a specific objective. By looking at each issue individually, it is possible to determine whether there was agreement, near agreement, or no agreement in the journalists’ answers to the research questions.
Objective #1 (Research questions 2, 4, and 8-16)

In terms of quality, how would you characterize the current state of journalism in the U.S.?

The journalists interviewed showed no agreement in their answers to this question. Charles Bierbauer (2006a) stated that the volume of television news has never been greater but that the quality of television news is very uneven. Scott Stovall (2007a) said the quality of news is good, but with a bias. Ralph Beglieter (2006a) declared, “I don’t think the state of journalism in the United States is very good right now.” Bonnie Anderson (2006a) said the quality of journalism in the United States is better than in any other country but that the quality of television news in the U.S. has degraded significantly within the past two decades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1 - Current State of Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality is good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Beglieter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Bierbauer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Hazinski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Knowles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Lewis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan Lucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Stovall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Cable Exec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four of the subjects believed the current quality of journalism to be good, if not a bit inconsistent. When compared to other countries, others agreed that the quality of television news in the United States to be better than average but rather inconsistent and dependent on the organization producing the news. John Lewis (2006) stated that two factors seem to be degrading the quality of television news. First, the move toward
infotainment or news that is as entertaining as it is informative. This includes celebrity news, sensational news, and news that is exciting to watch rather than important to the viewer’s life. The second aspect Lewis noted is the current polarization in society. Much of the population in the United States is divided politically, and the programming at television news organizations reflects this sentiment. “People don’t discuss things now, they argue things” (J. Lewis, 2006). This applies to all sides of the political spectrum, and is not specific to any political party. Stovall (2007a) agreed with Lewis, seeing a political bias in almost all of the television news that is presented today. However, Stovall said that the majority of television news outlets promote a liberal, or left-leaning, side to their reports.

Bill Knowles (2006) stated that there is too much competition in television news to adequately judge whether the entire industry is producing quality news. Instead, he said that quality depends on a number of factors, but most specifically, quality depends on the management of each organization making a commitment to producing quality news. If an organization commits to producing quality news, then it can, and most often will, produce quality news.

*In terms of quality, what are the differences, if any, between local news stations, broadcast news networks, and cable news networks?*

The respondents showed near agreement on this question. The differences, in terms of quality, between local news stations, broadcast news networks, and cable news networks, are due to size, resources, and originality. Broadcast news networks, cable news networks, and large market local news stations are better funded, have larger staffs, and have better facilities. All of these factors lead to these organizations producing higher
quality television news. Small market television stations are often under-funded, under-staffed, and operate out of poorly-equipped facilities. Because of a lack of resources, journalists in smaller markets resort to covering more trivial subjects like fires and water main breaks. In addition, the correspondents in smaller markets have very little time to attempt to present in-depth coverage on any issue (Senior Cable Executive, 2007a).

While Bonnie Anderson (2006a) agreed that larger organizations typically produce a higher quality of news, she added that broadcast and cable networks are degrading rapidly. She believes that the degradation in quality, at all levels, has more to do with the subjects being covered than the size or funding of an organization.

Table 4.2 - Organizational differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Broadcast, cable and large market organizations provide the best quality</th>
<th>Small local markets provide the best quality</th>
<th>Quality is equal among all size organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie Anderson</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Beglieter</td>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Bierbauer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Hazinski</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Knowles</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Lewis</td>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan Lucas</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Stovall</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Cable Exec</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another criticism of the small market organizations was based on originality. The smaller the market, the more likely the organizations in that market are to copy what the organizations in larger markets are doing. The smaller markets copy the larger markets in terms of which events to cover, how to cover each event, and when to move on to a new event (B. Knowles, 2007).
Joan Lucas (2007a) voiced lone dissenting opinion on this question. She stated that the quality of news is deteriorating at all levels because of redundant news and copycat reporting. "I think local stations are becoming more like the networks and cable news outlets in that they take a trivial local story and give it wall-to-wall coverage with live reports and 'expert' analysis," Lucas said.

In general, the respondents are in near agreement that the bigger the organization the better the quality of television news. However, this is not always the case and can depend on a number of other factors, including money, staff, and a willingness to present original ideas.

To what extent does the amount of television news programming in the 24-hour news cycle affect the quality of television news?

Respondents showed agreement on their answers to this question however they were not entirely consistent. In fact, Stovall (2007a) and the Senior Cable Executive (2007a) answered in the positive and negative. Stovall stated, it allows for more in-depth coverage of important news stories, which allows viewers to see more angles of a story, while in some instances it forces too much coverage and seeing a story from too many angles dilutes it, and it loses significance.

In this statement, Stovall said that the amount, or volume, of news available to viewers has both helped and hurt the quality of television news. The Senior Cable Executive agreed, but for different reasons. He believes the volume of news available has helped the quality of television news by allowing more events to be covered and more stories to be aired. However, he believes the quality of television news has been hurt by
the volume of news available because the volume of news has made television news more partisan.

Table 4.3 – Programming and quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Quality improved</th>
<th>Quality degraded</th>
<th>Quality unaffected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie Anderson</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Beglieter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Bierbauer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Hazinski</td>
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Including Stovall and the Senior Cable Executive, the majority of the respondents felt that the amount of news available was degrading the quality of television news. The most common reason for the degradation was the repetitive nature of television news within the 24-hour news cycle. Ralph Beglieter (2006) argued that with the intensification of the 24-hour news cycle comes a reduction in the amount of news available. He pointed to Google News, Yahoo News, and AOL News, as examples. Each organization presents the same news stories, almost all of them coming from the Associate Press or Reuters. He continues, stating that television news networks are no different. They may have more time to present the news, but they are not presenting more news, they are simply repeating the same news more often.

The 24-hour cycle actually means we are making shorter and shorter newscasts, smaller and smaller news bytes, so that people... anytime they tune in they'll hear the top stories, so that they don't feel they are getting the dregs of the news. They are getting the hot stuff anytime they tune in. What that means is that anything that isn't the hot stuff, the second tier stories, the analysis, the features, the in-
depth discussion of issues underlying the main story. Those are the things losing, the things giving way, making way for more and more and more for less and less and less of the stories.

John Lewis (2006) stated that it is competition that is hurting the quality of news. Because there are so many places for viewers to get their news, each news outlet is doing more and more to try to lure those viewers to their outlet. By using gimmicks, flashy graphics, and sensational content to attract viewers, the television news outlets are degrading the quality of their products. Management at these outlets demands higher ratings. The only way to get higher ratings is to increase the number of viewers, and the easiest way to attract more viewers is to give them what they want. But giving viewers what they want does not necessarily translate into quality news.

David Hazinski (2006b) doesn’t believe that the amount of news available to viewers is driving the quality. He believes that because of the amount of news available, each organization is now competing for only a part of the audience, rather than all of the audience. He uses FOX News and CNN to make this distinction. Each organization has determined its target audience, and each organization is competing only for viewers within that target audience. CNN is no longer courting FOX News viewers, and FOX New is no longer courting CNN viewers. Hazinski states that this does not affect quality, but is more of a result of each organization attempting to show a profit.

Bohnne Anderson (2006a) stated that she does not think the amount of television news available has an effect on the quality of the news. She agreed with Beglieter, who said that the amount of news available has hurt quality, in that news is more repetitive because of the amount of news available.
The big irony is that despite 24-hour news operations, the breadth and depth of the news coverage hasn't changed much. It's the same basic stories repeated over and over again. One would think that with 24 hours a network would be able to cover a much wider variety of news from many more places, but they don't.

While the journalist's do not fully agree that the amount of news available within the 24-hour news cycle affects the quality of news, they do agree that news within the 24-hour news cycle is overly repetitious. They also agree that the redundant nature of television news hurts the quality.

To what extent is television news in the 24-hour news cycle significant?
To what extent was television news before the 24-hour news cycle significant?

Respondents showed near agreement on these questions, which will be dealt with together as they were presented to the respondents as a question and sub-question. With five of the respondents stating that news is less significant within the 24-hour news cycle, it is becoming more evident that the journalists who participated in this research believe that the quality of news is degrading, in part, because of the 24-hour news cycle.

Significant is the first term the Project for Excellence in Journalism used to define quality news. Ralph Beglieter (2006) said the definition of significant has changed since the adaptation of the 24-hour news cycle.

In terms of the content I would say that the news industry today believes it is presenting significant news and information to the public, and some of what it presents certainly is. But I think the definition of significant has changed, and that most news organizations, and I include in this not just broadcasters, although I think they are the worst offenders. But print organizations as well, are serving up
news that audiences crave, rather than news that audiences need. I would say what
news audiences crave is not necessarily significant news, significant content.

Beglieter continued by stating that the television journalism industry is
significant, and the journalists who work in the industry are significant, as are some of
the stories broadcast by the television news industry. However, he believes that by
focusing on stories that the audience wants rather than stories that the audience needs, the
industry has decreased the significance of television news within the 24-hour news cycle.

Bill Knowles (2007) and David Hazinski (2006a & 2006b) agree that the


television news is less significant within the 24-hour news cycle, but for a different
reason. Knowles and Hazinski believe that the redundant nature of television news is
what is degrading the significance of the news. Knowles pointed to the recent case of two
boys who had been kidnapped and escaped in Missouri. He felt this was an interesting
and important story to cover when it first happened, but also felt the coverage went too
far when it stretched out over several days.

This is a significant story, but not necessarily four or five days later, and that is
the problem. It used to be that the 24/7s really tried to give you a whole lot of
news, a whole lot of different stories. Now they tend to beat up the same story, or
the same small group of stories to the point where the audience is tired of it. That
is the problem.

Hazinski agreed, stating that 24-hour news organizations have the opportunity to
be more significant but choose instead to repeat a small number of stories rather than
providing more content and more context with the 24-hour window available. Instead of
finding more events that are significant to more people, the television news outlets tend
to focus on a few stories that are significant to the largest number of people. The outlets then put all of their efforts and resources into saturating those few stories. Television news is therefore significant to the audience that is interested in those few stories, but less significant to the viewers who are not interested in those few stories.

Table 4.4 - Significant

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The Senior Cable Executive (2007a) was the only respondent who said that news within the 24-hour news cycle is more significant than news before the 24-hour news cycle. While he admitted that trivial, and therefore less significant, news does get broadcast because of the 24-hour news cycle, he believes that because of the amount of live and breaking news that is reported, the overall significance of television news is greater now than it has been at any time in the past.

Scott Stovall (2007a) does not believe the 24-hour news cycle to have had any effect on the significance of television news. In the past, television news was significant in the fact that people structured their days in order to view the news. Currently, people can get news anytime and anywhere. Stovall believes both models are significant, just in different ways. “Times have changed, and so has TV news,” Stovall said.
To what extent is television news in the 24-hour news cycle informative?

To what extent was television news before the 24-hour news cycle informative?

Respondents showed no agreement on the previous questions and were split evenly between news being less informative within the 24-hour news cycle and the 24-hour news cycle having no effect on whether news is informative. As was the case with significance, the respondents who said television news is less informative within the 24-hour news cycle did so because of the redundant nature of news within the 24-hour news cycle. Bill Knowles (2007) believes that the information that is presented on television news is informative, but he also believes that news that was presented before the 24-hour news cycle was more informative. He believes television news before the 24-hour news cycle had a greater range of content, and that content was more often put into a context that was helpful to the viewers. Knowles again pointed to the coverage of the Missouri kidnapping.

I couldn't believe that Cooper’s program last night, which is Tuesday, and I think the story broke on Friday, the Missouri kids found safe. Five days later he is still on it... still talking about the psychology of kidnap victims and kidnappers, and how they bond with each other and all that. That is stunning stuff, but not five days later; I don’t think.

Bonnie Anderson (2006a) said that news is less informative within the 24-hour news cycle but does not attribute the degradation to the 24-hour news cycle. Instead, Anderson (2006b) cites money as the reason for the decline. Anderson pointed out that 20 years ago news operations not only lost money, but were expected to lose money. Many of the news executives considered losing money a positive aspect to doing the news.
They were providing a service to the public and would provide that service even at a
great cost to the network. Once a few television news organizations started to make
money, it became expected that all television news organizations should make money,
and they should make as much money as possible.

So, to me, money is the bottom line, it is not politics; it is not anything else,
although those things play a part. But the overwhelming, the overwhelming
reason for the decline of journalism and the quality of journalism, and the people
on the air committing journalism, or trying to and falling far short, is because they
are being managed by folks who care nothing about truly informing the public.
They see this as a product as they would sell shoes or sell soap, and they are
trying to get as many people to buy their product regardless of what they have to
do to this very important key to American democracy.

Table 4.5 - Informative

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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Ralph Beglieter (2006) argued that television news was informative before the 24-
hour news cycle, and it is informative within the 24-hour news cycle. However, he added
that viewers are informed about different types of topics or events. Today viewers are

69
more informed about celebrities, sports, and business news and are informed about a smaller number of topics. Before the 24-hour news cycle, viewers were better informed about public affairs and were informed about a wider array of topics.

As with significance, the Senior Cable Executive (2007a) was the only respondent to say that news within the 24-hour news cycle is more informative than news before the 24-hour news cycle. He believes viewers are better informed because of the wide array of viewing choices they have. In the 1960s and 1970s, the majority of the news consumers received their news from the three broadcast networks, CBS, ABC, and NBC. Within the 24-hour news cycle, that audience has been significantly fragmented, allowing for a wider range of topics and perspectives to be broadcast. With a wider range of topics and perspectives being broadcast, it allows viewers an opportunity to be informed about a wider range of topics and perspectives.

I see it as an explosion of options that has actually has made the information available in our society more robust. You have to remember, these days, it is not just the cable news. It is the 24-hour web journalism. It is blogging that goes on around the clock. Cable news has had a tremendous amount of competition from the blogosphere and from online news services, many of which are run by the cable companies themselves. They are actually fractioning the market even further... It definitely gives many more perspectives than existed before. That has got to be a good thing for the viewers. I should say a good thing for the news consumers.
To what extent does television news in the 24-hour news cycle demonstrate enterprise?

To what extent did television news before the 24-hour news cycle demonstrate enterprise?

Respondents showed near agreement on the previous questions, indicating that news demonstrates less enterprise within the 24-hour news cycle. Joan Lucas (2007a) again pointed to repetition as the cause for news demonstrating less enterprise. She stated that while organizations have more time to cover issues, they choose instead to cover the same stories. In addition, Lucas believes correspondents are all following each other to new stories rather than developing their own original ideas. Lucas added that before the 24-hour news cycle television news organizations were more distinct in their coverage and style.

Now it’s just “feed the beast,” give me as many stories as you can as fast as you can. Before (the 24-hour news cycle) news outlets would spend more time and money researching stories. Now it’s whatever can be done fast and cheap.

Bill Knowles (2007) stated that the story count on most television news organizations is at an all-time low. He believes this is not because of lack of enterprise but believes that correspondents and television news organizations show a lack of enterprise in the interest of higher ratings. Knowles stated that Americans are not very interested in international news. The television news organizations have the resources, the ability, and the correspondents to cover a wide range of stories from around the world. However, ratings show that the American television news viewers would rather see sensational or interesting stories from the United States. If viewers want redundant
local stories, then television news organizations will provide them with redundant local stories. In other words, Knowles believes that the story count is low because a few stories that are sensationalized get better ratings than a high number of stories about a number of topics from around the world.

Scott Stovall (2007a) stated that news has always demonstrated enterprise and must continue to do so to remain competitive. He believes that if an organization or a correspondent does not demonstrate enterprise, then it will be topped by competing organizations, or correspondents, that do demonstrate enterprise. Television news is a highly competitive field, and the only way to remain competitive is to cover original stories and cover them better than their competition.

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<th>News demonstrates more enterprise within the 24-hour cycle</th>
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The Senior Cable Executive (2007a) was again the only respondent to state that news demonstrates more enterprise within the 24-hour news cycle. He added that just because a large portion of the news focuses on a small number of stories that does not translate to a lack of enterprise. In fact, it allows for an abundance of enterprise. With 24 hours to fill, television news organizations can look at each subject from a number of
different angles, and they can explore each of those angles more deeply than at any time in the past. The Executive pointed to coverage coming out of Iraq, coverage of the Pentagon, and coverage of Barak Obama, a 2008 presidential candidate. All subjects have been reported from a number of perspectives and commented on by a wide range of experts. Without the 24-hour news cycle, the majority of these stories and the majority of the perspectives would never have been broadcast.

To what extent does television news in the 24-hour news cycle demonstrate courage?

To what extent did television news before the 24-hour news cycle demonstrate courage?

Respondents showed near agreement on the previous questions, however, some respondents separated their answers between journalists and television news organizations. Ralph Beglieter (2006) stated very clearly that any journalist who is willing to go into a war zone to report a story is showing courage. Journalists regularly travel into Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries that are in conflict to report stories to the American viewing public. Beglieter feels this is a courageous act and demonstrates courage. However, he also feels there is another type of courage, courage at the organizational level. Beglieter feels this is where the news industry demonstrates less courage than it did in the past.

There was a time when news organizations in the U.S. would ferret out and publish, even against the rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court, the top-secret documents that underpinned an international war. I'm thinking of the Pentagon Papers of the 1970s. Compare that to the lackadaisical reporting that was done
about alleged asserted weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The news
organizations in the U.S. in the post 9/11 period, not only didn’t ask the questions,
but actually punished journalists who dared to ask tough questions about what the
government was doing, and why it was doing it. In that arena, I would have to say
news organizations are less courageous than they were before the 24-hour news
cycle.

David Hazinski (2006a) believes that journalists demonstrate courage once they
get on the scene. The example he used was Hurricane Katrina. Once the journalists were
on the ground in New Orleans, they were then able to report what was actually
happening. Before the correspondents arrived, however, each news organization had to
rely on the public relations announcements from the government organizations in charge.
This was a case where the journalists challenged authority and questioned the information
coming out of New Orleans. However, the first reports were either downplayed or
sensationalized because the journalists were not on the scene to verify what they were
reporting. By not being on the scene of any news event, news organizations leave
themselves open to being manipulated by “spin-doctors.” This type of reporting demonstrates very little courage. In the case of Hurricane Katrina, the television news reporters did arrive on the scene and eventually demonstrated courage.

The pack mentality of television news organizations may also be a factor in whether the news demonstrates courage. John Lewis (2006) believes that no one organization wants to get too far out in front of the others. It is safer for each organization to cover the same types of events, and to only challenge authority if that authority is also being challenged by other organizations as well.

Joan Lucas (2007b) agreed that television news organizations demonstrate very little courage in the range of topics they cover. She believes that most news organizations are “cookie-cutter,” in that they are all covering the same event and the same types of stories, rather than trying to find original subjects to cover. In addition, Lucas believes that organizations taking sides on stories rather than presenting both sides demonstrates a lack of courage. She believes they are not demonstrating courage by taking a side so much as they are covering a niche.

Scott Stovall (2007a) and the Senior Cable Executive (2007a) both said that covering the news requires courage, and covering the news has always required courage. The difference between the two is that Stovall believes the 24-hour news cycle to have not affected whether news demonstrates courage, and the Senior Cable Executive believes that news demonstrates more courage within the 24-hour news cycle. According to Stovall,

To cover the important stories will always require courage, whether it’s for a cable news network, network nightly newscast, or local newscast. They all go for
the in-depth stories, whether it is in the war zones or hurricane-destroyed
neighborhoods. They all try to go the extra mile for the story that’ll touch the
heart of the viewer; cable news networks just have more on-air time to do it.

The Senior Cable Executive agrees, but believes that because of the amount of
news outlets available and the amount of coverage necessary to fill the 24-hour news
cycle, journalists and news organizations alike are demonstrating more courage than in
the past. He pointed to coverage out of Iraq, specifically coverage of a sniper who was
targeting U.S. soldiers. This was a story that came from a war zone and was broadcast
against the wishes of the United States government.

Look at the story that CNN aired on the sniper video, the insurgent sniper video,
the enormous problems the U.S. military was having. CNN got crucified for that,
for airing the truth about what was going on. Still, CNN did it. If that is not
courage, I don’t know what is.

While respondents showed near agreement that news demonstrates less courage
within the 24-hour news cycle than it did before the 24-hour news cycle, the respondents
were divided on whether the 24-hour news cycle was a factor.

*To what extent is television news in the 24-hour news cycle fair?*

*To what extent was television news before the 24-hour news cycle fair?*

Respondents showed near agreement on the previous questions, stating less fact
checking and taking sides as reasons for the news being less fair within the 24-hour news
cycle. Interestingly, the one respondent (S. Stovall, 2007a) who believes news to be fairer
within the 24-hour news cycle believes so for much of the same reason. Stovall stated
that television news has almost always had a liberal slant to it. He believes that having
the 24-hour cable news networks, each with a more distinct view of events, changed the overall bias of the news media. By having several networks, each able to show a different perspective, viewers can find news from all perspectives, not just a liberal one.

Charles Bierbauer (2006b) disagreed, stating that each organization, or each journalist, taking a side creates an environment where viewers are seeing news that is less fair. Bierbauer pointed to CNN host Lou Dobbs as an example. Dobbs seems to pick a few topics, develop a position on those topics, and only cover the side of those topics he believes to be correct. Bierbauer is deeply frustrated by this type of television news.

As a journalist who always championed the, ‘It’s not about me,’ approach to journalism, and, ‘I’m a neutral conveyor of news,’ I have difficulty sitting here and listening to Lou tell me what he thinks the answer is. I would rather make that decision myself based on valid and valuable elements that the news networks or the newspapers can provide for me.

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John Lewis (2007) calls the above phenomena “agenda reporting.” He stated that before the 24-hour news cycle, television journalists became journalists because of a
childlike curiosity. They joined the profession because they wanted to find out information and then present that information to public. More and more, journalists are coming to the television news industry looking to use journalism to strengthen an agenda. By picking a few subjects and reporting only what they perceive to be the right perspective on that subject, O'Reilly, Dobbs, or any other correspondents, are not presenting fair information to the audience. Lewis believes journalists should look at all events with an open mind, report those events without bias or opinion, and let the viewer decide what the “right” side of the story is.

The speed with which news in the 24-hour news cycle operates may be another factor that has led to the decrease in perceived fairness of television news. Joan Lucas (2007a) believes that because television news organizations are so concerned with getting the story first, they do not take enough time to research each story before broadcasting it. She believes this has led to a decrease in fairness. Before the 24-hour news cycle, news outlets took more time to confirm the facts before airing a story. Now, she believes, the news outlets report speculation and rumors and then apologize later if they turn out to be incorrect.

The Senior Cable Executive (2007a) agreed that speed has decreased fairness but does not believe that is necessarily a negative aspect to television news. For example, after a plane crash, correspondents may report incomplete information simply because they don’t have all of the information available to them when they first go on the air. The Executive believes this can be unfair, but before the 24-hour news cycle, viewers would not have had any access to the information until much later. He believes that because news gets broadcast more quickly there will be more mistakes, and is therefore less fair.
But he also believes that getting information to the public as quickly as possible is a positive aspect to television news and the 24-hour news cycle.

Ralph Beglieter (2006) does not believe fairness is tied to the 24-hour news cycle. He states that fairness has always depended on each news organization. This was the case before the 24-hour news cycle, and this is the case within the 24-hour news cycle. Some organizations are very concerned with producing news that is fair, others are less concerned with producing news that is fair. In addition, Beglieter points out that there are no regulations for cable networks requiring that they present fair information.

*To what extent is television news in the 24-hour news cycle balanced?*

*To what extent was television news before the 24-hour news cycle balanced?*

Balance within the news seems to be closely tied to fairness within the news. Respondents showed near agreement on the previous questions, with the results mirroring the questions concerning fairness. Beglieter (2006) and the Senior Cable Executive (2007a) do not believe that balance is impacted by the 24-hour news cycle, and Stovall (2007a) was the only respondent to state that news is more balanced within the 24-hour news cycle. As with fairness, Stovall stated that the news is more balanced now because there are more outlets to present a wider range of perspectives. Specifically, Stovall noted that broadcast networks have always had a liberal slant, and that within the 24-hour news cycle there are cable networks that present moderate and conservative points of view.

Joan Lucas (2007a) believes that there is less balance on the news within the 24-hour news cycle. She states that one would think there would be more balance with more air-time to cover an event, but she believes that is not the case. Lucas observed that many of the television news outlets use the same experts with the same opinions. She does not
believe this provides balance so much as it provides a dramatic shouting match. Dramatic
shouting matches are good for ratings but do very little to improve the balance of
reporting.

I think there was less drama in news coverage (before the 24-hour news cycle).

Newsrooms reported both sides of a story without interjecting biased opinion.

Now you have to tell the audience what they should believe instead of letting
them make up their own minds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>News is more balanced</th>
<th>News is less balanced</th>
<th>The balance of the news is not impacted by the 24-hour cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie Anderson</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ralph Beglieter</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles Bierbauer</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Hazinski</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Knowles</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Lewis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joan Lucas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scott Stovall</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Cable Exec</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Charles Bierbauer (2007b) agreed with Lucas that news is less balanced within
the 24-hour news cycle but for a different reason. The speed with which television news
must operate within the 24-hour news cycle also affects the balance of the news. The
pressure to report events as soon as they occur often does not allow a correspondent to
seek out other perspectives of those events. For example, many television news outlets,
especially 24-hour cable news networks, want a reporter on the air live within minutes of
a presidential press conference. Bierbauer believes this hurts the balance of the coverage.
What are the compelling reasons to get our reporter on camera within a minute after the president’s news conference if he hasn’t had a chance to go ask some questions, talk to some people, and give it a thorough, or at least a qualitative analysis. There is too much rush, rush to get things onto the air or into print or onto the web without giving them enough thought.

Bill Knowles (2007) believes some television news organizations, FOX News in particular, participate in agenda reporting rather than balanced reporting. Knowles stated that many FOX News anchors and commentators have focused on the idea of presenting a conservative point of view. He also believes that the viewing public knows this is happening and is not in any way fooled into thinking that FOX News is presenting balanced reporting.

Knowles continued on, saying that to improve balance on television news, whether at FOX News, CNN, or anywhere else, the producers need to increase the story count. A higher story count, no matter what those stories are about, will increase the number of perspectives being aired, and will therefore improve the balance of news coverage as a whole on television news outlets.

To what extent is television news in the 24-hour news cycle accurate?

To what extent was television news before the 24-hour news cycle accurate?

Respondents showed near agreement on the previous questions. The results are closely related to whether news is fair and balanced within the 24-hour news cycle, with one notable change. Scott Stovall (2007a) does not believe news is more accurate within the 24-hour news cycle, but he also does not believe the accuracy of news is impacted by
the 24-hour news cycle. Stovall stated that the news has always had to be accurate and must remain accurate for news outlets to maintain credibility with viewers.

The Senior Cable Executive (2007a) also does not believe the accuracy of news to be impacted by the 24-hour news cycle. He admitted that inaccurate news may, at times, be broadcast on 24-hour cable networks, as well as other television news outlets but stated that no correspondent sets out to report inaccurate news. Inaccuracies are broadcast more often in breaking news situation, he says. Breaking news stories are often reported as they are happening, and it is possible for information or speculation to be presented as accurate fact. The Executive was also quick to point out that each television news organization does all it can to correct any inaccurate news that is reported and confirm any rumor or speculation that is presented. The Senior Cable Executive went on to state that in enterprise reporting situations television news is very accurate. Because of the time that can, and often is, spent on enterprise reporting, correspondents are able to verify all of their information and ensure accuracy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>News is more accurate within the 24-hour cycle</th>
<th>News is less accurate within the 24-hour cycle</th>
<th>The accuracy of the news not impacted by the 24-hour cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie Anderson</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Beglieter</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles Bierbauer</td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Hazinski</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Knowles</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Lewis</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan Lucas</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Stovall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Cable Exec</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bonnie Anderson (2007a) agreed with the Senior Cable Executive but believes that the 24-hour news cycle is a factor in making television news less accurate. She believes that the speed with which stories are broadcast and the pressure correspondents are under to broadcast hurt the overall accuracy of the news. There just isn’t enough time to confirm all of the elements of the story if the correspondent only has minutes to gather, analyze, and present information. Because of the premium put on speed within the 24-hour news cycle, the news is less accurate, according to Anderson.

John Lewis (2006) pointed to what he calls “agenda reporting” as a cause of numerous inaccuracies on television news. He believes that because many of the correspondents who work in television news today are correspondents who are pushing a personal agenda, they are also presenting less accurate news. By having an agenda, or by believing one perspective to be correct, correspondents are more likely to overlook factual inaccuracies that support their agenda. They are also more likely to omit factual accuracies that do not support their agenda.

One point that was made by nearly all of the respondents, no matter which position they supported, was that neither television news organizations nor their correspondents plan to present inaccurate news. Those organizations that do present inaccurate news do so because of speed, pressure, agenda reporting, or speculation. These elements can be associated with the 24-hour news cycle, but they do not have to be associated with the 24-hour news cycle.
To what extent is television news in the 24-hour news cycle authoritative?

To what extent was television news before the 24-hour news cycle authoritative?

Respondents showed agreement on the previous questions, indicating that news within the 24-hour news cycle is less authoritative than news before the 24-hour news cycle. Bonnie Anderson (2006b) believes that a lack of experience and a lack of experienced mentors are factors in the decline of the authority shown on television news. Anderson admitted that she was a very inexperienced correspondent when she first stated covering international events. However, she also points out that she worked with a very experienced team of correspondents, producers, and videographers. She was able to learn from these mentors, and they were the ones who allowed her to become an authoritative journalist. Anderson believes that many of the correspondents today are suffering from a lack of experience, both personal experience and organizational experience. It takes many years to be able to understand the various perspectives of news events from around the world. It is the job of the correspondent to not only gather information to report those perspectives, but also to put each perspective in the proper context. Anderson believes this is where today's correspondents are falling short. They are able to get to the scene of a news event and very quickly present what they know to the viewing audience. What they are not able to do, because of a lack of experience, is present the information in a context that relates to the viewers. In other words, they can report information but are not very effective at explaining what that information means to the viewer. Attaching meaning to information has long been an indicator of authoritative reporting. Without context, information does the viewer very little.
Charles Bierbauer (2006b) agreed with Anderson that a lack of experience is a
factor that is making television news less authoritative. He cited cost cutting as reason the
correspondents are less experienced. A less experienced correspondent makes
significantly less money than a more experienced one. However, saving money by hiring
less expensive workers may be a significant factor in hurting the overall quality of
television news.

If you cut away the experience as one means of saving money, and you bring on
talented but raw, younger individuals, you are going to save some money upfront.
But you may be doing so at a cost. A newsroom should be a blend. You need the
older more experienced mentors for the younger up-and-coming and bright-eyed
and smart young people that you want in the newsroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>News is more authoritative within the 24-hour cycle</th>
<th>News is less authoritative within the 24-hour cycle</th>
<th>Whether news is authoritative is not impacted by the 24-hour cycle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie Anderson</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ralph Beglieter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles Bierbauer</td>
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<td>David Hazinski</td>
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<td>Bill Knowles</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Lewis</td>
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<td>Joan Lucas</td>
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<td>Scott Stovall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Cable Exec</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Bill Knowles (2006) stated that journalists need to ask tougher questions for
television news to be more authoritative. In the past, it was common for journalists to ask
authority figures difficult questions, and if they were not given an answer, the journalist
asked the question again. In today’s news market, it is common for a journalist to ask an
authority figure a tough question, but that question never gets answered, instead the authority figure moves the conversation in a less-critical direction. Journalists are no longer considered authoritative, because they no longer are able to get answers out of authority figures. Knowles pointed to the lack of information about weapons of mass destruction in the build-up to the 2nd Iraq war as an example of poor questioning by journalists.

There's no question that there have been the absence of tough questions asked of administration officials, and I think there has been some watering down forced by high management of pinning somebody really hard. Such as Sam Donaldson of my era used to pin every president he ever covered because that's how he saw his job, and ABC supported him. I really think that we are not asking the right questions.

Joan Lucas (2007a) pointed to the blending of news and commentary as a reason for television news being less authoritative. Before the 24-hour news cycle news presented news, and analysis programs presented analysis or opinion. Within the 24-hour news cycle, many hosts, and even some correspondents, are starting to mix their analysis or opinion with the news of the day. Because viewers are seeing news and opinion side by side, the viewers are less likely to trust the “news” they are viewing as authoritative. Lucas said she checks three or four sources if she sees a news event that she is interested in. She does this because she does not trust one source to fully cover the story. She wants to make sure she is able to digest all perspectives of the news event, not just the opinions of one host or correspondent. Lucas believes this to be a distinct difference from before
the 24-hour news cycle when viewers could trust that the news they were watching was
the news and not the opinion of the host.

Scott Stovall (2007a) believes the opposite. Because of the abundance of expert
analysis that is provided on 24-hour cable television news networks, Stovall believes that
news within the 24-hour news cycle is more authoritative. He said that since a viewer can
learn a number of different perspectives from a number of different experts, that viewer is
better informed about the news event. Stovall states that this element of television news
makes news within the 24-hour news cycle more authoritative. While the experts may be
giving their opinion or analysis, they are considered experts in their field. Stovall believes
this aspect of television news serves the viewer better than in the past.

The Senior Cable Executive (2007a) agreed with Stovall, stating that with more
options and more coverage, viewers are better served today than at any time in the past.
The Executive believes that more coverage and a wider range of perspectives make for a
better informed audience. As long as the news organizations are trustworthy in their
presentation of the news, the news they present is authoritative.

Objective #2 (Research question #1)

Objective #2 is to determine how journalists define the 24-hour news cycle. The
24-hour news cycle has been used colloquially for a number of years in research, pop
culture, and everywhere in between. The purpose of objective #2 is to determine if
journalists define the 24-hour news cycle in the same way.

How would you define the 24-hour news cycle?

Respondents showed agreement on the previous question. Eight of the nine
respondents agreed that the 24-hour news cycle is simply a news cycle with neither
beginning nor end. Before the advent of the 24-hour news cycle, television news consumers were required to wait until a news program was broadcast to get their news. With the 24-hour news cycle, they can tune in to a 24-hour cable news network at any time and from any place with a cable hookup to get their news. Bonnie Anderson (2006a) may have said it best,

The 24-hour news cycle now means there is no beginning or end to the collection and dissemination of news to the public. It is an on-going process that, while costly, is a tremendous public service. People the world over now are informed about what is happening almost instantly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A news cycle with no beginning nor end</th>
<th>The 24-hour news cycle no longer exists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Charles Bierbauer</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Hazinski</td>
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<td>Bill Knowles</td>
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<td>John Lewis</td>
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<td>Joan Lucas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scott Stovall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Cable Exec</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

John Lewis (2006) believes that there are two factors that illustrate the 24-hour news cycle. The first is the same as above; the news cycle has neither a beginning nor end. The second factor is the ability of a news organization to present breaking news as it is happening every time it is happening. Before the 24-hour news cycle, a broadcast network or local affiliate would have to pre-empt already scheduled programming to air breaking news, unless that breaking news happened during normally scheduled news programming. It is very expensive to pre-empt programming. By doing so, networks and
affiliates lose all of the money that would be paid by advertisers during that program. With the 24-hour news cycle, 24-hour cable networks are able to cover breaking news events live without having to pre-empt programming.

While eight of the respondents agreed that the 24-hour news cycle is a never-ending news cycle, not all eight of those respondents agreed that the 24-hour news cycle began with 24-hour cable news networks. Charles Bierbauer (2006a) stated that the 24-hour news cycle has always existed; it is technology that has made it more prevalent in our society.

In reality, we have always had a 24-hour news cycle. News happens on its own time, at its own pace. Paul Revere – call him an early local newsman – rode through the night spreading the word that the British were coming. He did not wait for daylight.

In pre-broadcast days, newspapers were published morning and evening, sometimes competitively and sometimes collaboratively. Wire services had AM and PM cycles to cater to the newspapers publishing deadlines. All-news radio debuted in the 1960s, well ahead of cable news networks. Lee Harvey Oswald shot John F. Kennedy in the morning hours. It was on the news swiftly. Jack Ruby shot Lee Harvey Oswald in front of a live television camera.

In short, the 24-hour news cycle is not new, the ubiquity of media coverage (24/7) is the product of technological advances—cable, satellites—that have created both mainstream and niche opportunities to reach audiences at any time.

The Senior Cable Executive (2007a) was the one respondent to disagree with this way of thinking. He disagreed, because he believes that even 24-hour cable news
networks are not operating within a 24-hour news cycle. He notes that FOX News, CNN, MSNBC, and CNBC, among others, have all gone to a format where they have different news programs scheduled throughout the day. Because each program starts at the top of the hour, or the half hour, each program starts with the top news of the day. This is the same model used by broadcast networks and affiliate stations since the beginning of television news. The only difference is that every program is a news program. While this makes it easier for cable news networks to report breaking news, it does not create a news cycle with no beginning nor end, especially when you factor in the fact that most cable news networks air pre-taped programming during the overnight hours. The Senior Cable Executive maintained that a network would have to run 24-hours of live programming for the 24-hour news cycle to exist. He believes the current news cycle to be a much extended news cycle, but not a 24-hour news cycle.

Objective #3 (Research questions 3 and 5-7)

Objective #3 is to examine the changes television journalists believe to have been brought about by the 24-hour news cycle, and is designed to determine whether any of the changes affecting television news are due to the 24-hour news cycle. It is clear that television journalism has changed since the advent of the 24-hour news cycle. But are those changes due to the 24-hour news cycle, or are they due to other circumstances?

In terms of quality, how is the state of television journalism different from what it was before the development of the 24-hour news cycle?

Respondents showed agreement on the previous question, with seven of the nine respondents saying that the quality of television news has declined, but not solely because of the 24-hour news cycle. In other words, there are factors that have lead to the
degradation in the quality of television news, however these seven respondents do not feel the 24-hour news cycle to be an overwhelming factor in that degradation.

### Table 4.13 – Quality within the 24-hour news cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of television news is better within the 24-hour cycle</th>
<th>Quality of television news is worse within the 24-hour cycle</th>
<th>Quality of television news has declined, but not necessarily due to 24-hour cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie Anderson</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ralph Beglieter</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Charles Bierbauer</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Hazinski</td>
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<td>Bill Knowles</td>
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<td>John Lewis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scott Stovall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Cable Exec</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bonnie Anderson (2006a) said the decline in the quality of television news should be blamed on economics, not the existence of the 24-hour news cycle.

I wouldn't blame the 24-hour news cycle for main or major quality issues with American journalism or even use it as a dividing line of any sort. I believe the decline in US journalism is due primarily to the discovery that news can make money. If a morning show or a half-hour evening newscast can make money; then it stands to reason (so the corporations thought, and they were right) that much more money can be made with a 24-hour news format.

Charles Bierbauer (2006a) used a sports analogy to describe why the quality of television news is degrading. He compared the expansion of television news into the 24-hour news cycle to that of the expansion of professional sports. By expanding the industry there has been a dilution of talent among the numerous news venues. Bierbauer added that professional skills take time to develop, and asking journalists to perform
multiple tasks in a multi-media environment does not allow them to develop the professional skills they need to perform quality journalism.

The 24-hour news cycle has led to more stories being covered but has also led to the sensationalism of some of those stories (S. Stovall, 2007a). According to Stovall, this certainly has created a change in the quality of news, he is just not certain that the changes are due to the 24-hour news cycle. David Hazinski (2006a) agreed, stating that while the quality of television news is appreciably different, television news is part of a societal wheel, and there are many spokes in the wheel, the 24-hour news cycle simply being one spoke.

The only two respondents to say the quality of television news has declined due to the 24-hour news cycle were Ralph Beglieter (2006) and Joan Lucas (2007a). Beglieter stated that because of the 24-hour news cycle, journalists are no longer taking time to review information before it is broadcast. He believes that because of the intensity and pressure of the 24-hour news cycle, the overall quality of television news has declined. Lucas agrees, adding that the saturation of some news events has lead to a decline in quality as well.

Before 24-hour news programs, a news outlet would give only a few minutes to a news story. If it was considered an important subject that needed more coverage, extra time would be given to a story, or a station would do a special report. Now, to fill time news channels give six hours to trivial topics that really deserve no more than a mention. And what’s worse; different networks use the same so-called experts to fill the hours of coverage.
While respondents showed agreement on the question of whether the quality of news has declined within the 24-hour news cycle, they did not agree that that degradation was due to the 24-hour news cycle. In fact, respondents are in agreement that the 24-hour news cycle is not the cause of the degradation in the overall quality of television news.

*To what extent has the 24-hour news cycle had an effect on the quality of television news?*

*What, if any, are the positive aspects of the 24-hour news cycle?*

*What, if any, are the negative aspects of the 24-hour news cycle?*

The three questions above are going to be dealt with together as all of the respondents either addressed the three questions as one or throughout the course of the research linked the three questions to each other. Respondents showed unanimous agreement that the 24-hour news cycle has had both positive and negative effects on the quality of television news.

Some of the same characteristics of television news that were identified as positive were also identified as negative, often by the same respondent. Bonnie Anderson (2006a) illustrated this point by answering the three above questions with one answer.

The 24-hour news cycle has improved the quantity of news and, in many ways, even the quality of news. There is far more live reporting around the clock so that viewers can see events unfolding before them. That's the good news.

The bad news is that there is far more live reporting around the clock... and all too often, it is without context or background information. It is very raw, and with reporters often not having time to THINK about or research what is developing in
front of them, and in front of their viewers, a lot of guessing and fluff ends up on the air.

**Table 4.14 – Effects of the 24-hour news cycle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>24-hour cycle has had no effect on the quality of television news</th>
<th>24-hour cycle has had a positive effect on the quality of television news</th>
<th>24-hour cycle has had a negative effect on the quality of television news</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie Anderson</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Charles Bierbauer</td>
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<td>David Hazinski</td>
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<td>Bill Knowles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scott Stovall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Cable Exec</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Charles Bierbauer (2006a) agreed with Anderson, stating that with the 24-hour news cycle, viewers can find out about the news basically at any time, and they can be updated as to what is happening almost instantly. Bierbauer also agreed with Anderson that this same element of the 24-hour news cycle has a negative effect on the quality of television news. He used a hypothetical example to show how the speed with which reporters must operate within the 24-hour news cycle can better inform the public but can also lead to more errors and more misinformation being provided to the viewing public.

The effect has been to make news incremental. At noon, there may be a report of a crash on the Interstate causing a massive traffic jam. In half an hour, there may be indications of major casualties. Minutes later, it may be clear that a passenger bus and a truck with hazardous materials were involved. The process adds layers of information and impact. The six o’clock news should tie it all together, but the
ongoing cycle informs us bit by bit. At times, there will be misinformation—it was not hazardous material—that is corrected as the cycle advances.

John Lewis (2006) echoed this same sentiment, saying that people can witness news as it happens. He feels this is a positive aspect of the 24-hour news cycle. However, when asked, what are the negative aspects of the 24-hour news cycle? Lewis responded, “The same thing… the same thing.” Lewis added that because the viewers are watching news as it happens, there is no chance to put the news into context, and there is a greater chance that errors will be broadcast. In short, Anderson (2006a), Bierbauer (2006a), and Lewis (2006) agree that positive aspects of the 24-hour news cycle include breaking news coverage, the speed with which viewers are informed, and viewers being able to access news at any time of the day. They also agree that negative aspects of the 24-hour news cycle mirror the positives. Because television journalists are often reporting news as it happens, there is a greater possibility to make errors and a greater possibility that the stories will be reported without context.

David Hazinski (2006a), Bill Knowles (2006), Joan Lucas (2007a), Scott Stovall (2007a), and the Senior Cable Executive (2007a) all agreed with Anderson, Bierbauer, and Lewis that the coverage of breaking news and access to news are positive aspects of the 24-hour news cycle. However, Hazinski, Knowles, Lucas, Stovall, and the Senior Cable Executive disagreed with Anderson, Bierbauer, and Lewis about the negative aspects of the 24-hour news cycle. Most notably, Hazinski, Knowles, Lucas, Stovall, and the Senior Cable Executive said that the most notable negative aspect of television news within the 24-hour news cycle is the sensationalization and saturation of certain stories.
Stovall (2006a) believes that sensational and over-covered stories are part of what are driving viewers away from traditional television news. Lucas (2006a) echoed this sentiment.

Trivial subjects are beaten to death. To fill time news programs take topics that probably wouldn’t even have made a newscast years ago and cover them for hours at a time.

The Senior Cable Executive expanded on this thought, calling the saturation of news stores “media fixation.” Media fixation concerns both excessive coverage and sensational coverage.

There are some salacious aspects to the 24-hour (news) cycle. Pictures of a fire will trump a hearing any time, even if the hearing is important. A teenager shooting at a school and wounding a couple of kids and perhaps a teacher would trump a big hearing on Iraq any time. So there is an unfortunate tendency of the immediacy of news trumping value and context of news.

Bill Knowles (2006) focused mostly on the redundant nature of television news within the 24-hour news cycle while discussing the negative aspects of the 24-hour news cycle. He believes that the 24-hour cable news networks have gotten away from Ted Turner’s original vision of constantly gathering and disseminating the news. Instead, Knowles feels that it is all too common for 24-hour cable news networks to “beat stories to death.” David Hazinski (2006a) agreed with Knowles, stating that television news has become repetitive and dulling to an audience. Hazinski however, took the thought a bit further.
It (the 24-hour news cycle) has blurred the line between objective reporting and opinion. CNN does unbiased reporting right next to simple opinion from Lou Dobbs, et al. This has confused the audience and weakened the credibility of all broadcast journalism.

Ralph Beglieter (2006a) agreed with all of the above negative aspects brought about by the 24-hour news cycle; a greater chance of errors, a lack of context, overly repetitious coverage, and a blending of news and opinion. Where he differed from the other eight respondents is on the positive aspects of television news within the 24-hour news cycle. Beglieter did not agree that being able to get news any time and almost anywhere is a positive aspect of the news. He feels people would be better served if they were provided a more thoughtful broadcast or publication. Beglieter did discuss one positive aspect of 24-hour television news.

When things happen in the world they (24-hour television news organizations) don't wait for the next day's newspaper to be published of course. When a war breaks out, or a nuclear power plant explodes, or mine collapses, they don't sit around and say, "Where are we in the news cycle, let's make sure we get this in time for the morning news, or the morning newspaper." They (breaking news events) happen when they happen, and we can all find out when things are happening pretty soon after they occur. Rather than having to wait for some journalist to figure it all out and put it all out on a silver plate for us either in the form of newspaper or an organized television broadcast or radio broadcast.

The purpose of objective #3 was to examine the changes television journalists believe to have been brought about by the 24-hour news cycle and to determine whether
any of the changes affecting television news are due to the 24-hour news cycle. Respondents agree that there have been changes that have negatively affected the quality of television news due to the 24-hour news cycle. However, they also agree that the 24-hour news cycle brought about only a fraction of the changes that have caused the perceived decline in the quality of television news. Other reasons given for the decline in the quality of television news include the current economic situation for television news networks (B. Anderson, 2006a), inexperience of journalists (C. Bierbauer, 2006a), and the mixing of opinion with news (B. Knowles, 2006).

In addition, respondents agree that the 24-hour news cycle has created both positive and negative changes to the quality of television news. Several respondents concluded that the same aspects of 24-hour news that have created positive changes have also created negative changes.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of Objective #1 was to determine to what extent the 24-hour news cycle has had an effect on the quality of television news. Eleven research questions and eight sub-questions were asked of nine journalists with extensive experience in the television news industry. The respondents showed agreement on only two of the questions. Respondents showed agreement that the amount of television news available has degraded the quality of television news, and they showed agreement that television news within the 24-hour news cycle is less authoritative than news before the 24-hour news cycle.

Respondents also showed no agreement on two of the research questions. Respondents showed no agreement on their characterization of the current state of the
quality of television news in the United States. Respondents also showed no agreement as to whether television news within the 24-hour news cycle is more informative, less informative, or whether the 24-hour news cycle has had an effect on whether television news is informative.

Respondents showed near agreement on most of their responses to the research questions. Respondents showed near agreement that broadcast networks, cable networks, and large-market local television stations produce higher quality news. Respondents also showed near agreement in their answers concerning six of the eight terms used to describe quality television journalism. Respondents showed near agreement that television news within the 24-hour news cycle is less significant, fair, balanced, and accurate; and demonstrates less enterprise and less courage.

Objective #2 was designed to examine how journalists define the 24-hour news cycle. Eight of the nine respondents agreed that the 24-hour news cycle is a news cycle with no beginning or end. This is consistent with the definitions of a 24-hour news cycle given in the literature review. The one dissenting opinion came from the Senior Cable Executive who feels that even 24-hour cable news networks are not operating within a 24-hour news cycle because they have broken their days down to one hour or half hour increments. The executive also stated that because all 24-hour cable news networks show repeated programs during the overnight hours, they cannot claim to be operating within a 24-hour news cycle.

Objective #3 was designed to examine the changes television journalists believe to have been brought about by the 24-hour news cycle and was designed to determine whether any of the changes affecting television news were due to the 24-hour news cycle.
Respondents showed agreement that the quality of television news had degraded since the development of the 24-hour news cycle. However, the same respondents were not in agreement that the 24-hour news cycle was the cause of this degradation. They were in agreement that the 24-hour news cycle played a role in the degradation of the quality of television news but mentioned a number of other factors that have contributed to the degradation in the quality of television news.

In addition, the respondents showed unanimous agreement that while the 24-hour news cycle had negative effects on the quality of television news; they also agreed that the 24-hour news cycle had positive effects on the quality of television news. Several of the respondents pointed to the same elements of the 24-hour news cycle as having both a positive and a negative effect on the quality of television news.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Statement of Discovery

It is clear that respondents feel the 24-hour news cycle has affected the quality of television news. However, it is also clear that the 24-hour news cycle is only one factor among a number of other factors that are contributing to the perceived degradation in the quality of television news.

Objective #1

The respondents interviewed throughout the course of this research collectively agree that the quality of television news in the United States is perceived to be worse than at any time throughout the 68-year history of television. This information correlates with Richard Harwood’s (2004) research that showed a perceived decline in the quality of television news by the public. While none of the respondents fully agreed with each other concerning the quality of television news, they did agree that the quality of television news could be improved, and that there are several factors that have led to the perceived degradation in the quality of television news, including the 24-hour news cycle.

Some of the factors that have led to the perceived decline in the quality of television news include profit-first reporting (B. Anderson, 2006a), scandals in the field of journalism (R. Begleiter, 2006), dilution of talent (C. Bierbauer, 2006a), blending of news and opinion (D. Hazinski, 2006a), declining story count (B. Knowles, 2007), agenda reporting (J. Lewis, 2006), coverage of trivial events (J. Lucas, 2007a), saturated coverage of select events (S. Stovall, 2007a), and tabloid news coverage (Senior Cable Executive, 2007b). While all nine respondents agreed that news within the 24-hour news cycle is of lower quality than news before the 24-hour news cycle, only two of the
respondents, Ralph Beglieter and Joan Lucas, believe the 24-hour news cycle to be a major factor in the decline of quality. The other seven respondents felt that while the 24-hour news cycle may have been a factor, there are other, more relevant, factors that have led to the perceived decline in the quality of television news. Those factors include, but are not limited to, the speed with which journalists must operate today, the amount of money spent on news coverage, the amount of profit a news organization is expected to show, the experience of journalists today, and the ownership of television news organizations. Each of these factors will be discussed more thoroughly in the following section, titled “Suggestions for Future Studies.”

Objective #2

Eight of the nine respondents agreed with the common definition of the 24-hour news cycle, as a news cycle that has neither a beginning nor end. In addition, respondents such as David Hazinski (2006a) believe that the 24-hour news cycle can be described as having the ability to report breaking news at any time. The only respondent to disagree with the common definition of the 24-hour news cycle was the Senior Cable Executive (2007a). He does not believe that 24-hour cable news networks are operating within a 24-hour news cycle because of the fact that no news network carries live news programming 24-hours a day. While he stated that the cable news networks and the broadcast news networks have the ability to report live, breaking news 24-hour a day, they rarely do.

Objective #3

The nine respondents unanimously agreed that the 24-hour news cycle has brought about both positive and negative changes to the quality of television news. To put it another way, the respondents agreed that the 24-hour news cycle has certainly
brought about change to television news; however the respondents discussed a wide
range of changes that have been brought about by the 24-hour news cycle. Those changes
are perceived to be positive in some respects: getting breaking news at any time and
getting updates as new information becomes available (B. Knowles, 2006), and negative
in other respects: more errors due to faster reporting (Senior Cable Executive, 2007a) and
less context due to inexperienced correspondents (B. Anderson, 2006a). Meanwhile, John
Lewis (2006) said that there is very little difference between the elements that create
positive or negative changes to the quality of television news.

You have the competition; everyone wants to be first. When you get locked into
that you can lose accuracy, maybe some things you may not want to put on the
air. If it’s happening live you may not have a choice, it is just going out to
viewers. We used to say ‘turn it around.’ So if I was shooting a camera and
something happened here we would send it to Atlanta and it would immediately
get sent right back out on the satellite to the viewers.

Lewis added that another positive and negative aspect to the 24-hour news cycle
is that government leaders have used television news to speak directly to the people. This
is a positive because citizens can hear directly from their leaders. However, Lewis stated
that it is also a negative because government leaders can circumvent the political process,
domestically and internationally, by going over the heads of other government leaders.

Suggestions for Future Studies

While respondents agreed that the quality of television news has declined, and
that the 24-hour news cycle has affected the quality of television news, they did not agree
that the 24-hour news cycle has had a detrimental effect on the quality of television news.
Because results of this research are not, nor were they expected to be definitive, there are a number of future studies that should be considered. If other research is performed, the television news industry and those affected by the television news industry will have a clearer idea as to why the public and journalists alike believe there to be a decline in the quality of television news.

**Profit**

The need and drive for a greater profit within the television news industry was an idea that was brought up by all nine respondents. Bonnie Anderson (2006a) believes that the decline in the quality of television news is due primarily to the discovery that news can make money.

If a morning show, or a half-hour evening newscast, can make money, then it stands to reason (so the corporations thought, and they were right) that much more money can be made with a 24-hour news format. A 24-hour news operation, along with its news cycle, is expensive so corners are cut and quality suffers... as does the public.

Bill Knowles (2006) agreed with Anderson that corners get cut and quality suffers. He expanded on the thought, stating there is too much pressure on news managers to turn a profit in order to keep stockholders happy. He added that keeping stockholders happy has nothing to do with producing quality news, but that without stockholders many organizations would not be able to produce news at all. David Hazinski (2006b) echoed Knowles' view on bottom-line journalism.

Ironically, I don't think it (competition) is driving the quality. I think everybody is more concerned with the bottom line. The bottom line is slicing out a piece
anymore, rather than competing for the whole pie. So what you have is a lot more differentiation between FOX and CNN.

John Lewis (2006) stated that he may sound cynical, but he too believes that the drive for profit is severely affecting the quality of television news.

It all comes back... you know the old saying follow the money... I’m really sounding cynical, but I’m being honest. Anyone who goes out and tells you I’m starting this newspaper or I’m starting this web site or I’m starting this television network or I’m starting this radio network whatever... because I care about people and I want to bring peace to the world... he’s lying to you... or he’s going to be out of business in a week. It’s money. It’s a business.

The respondents who specifically addressed the subject of profits for television news organizations as it relates to the quality of television news have brought up an interesting idea for future research. How money, profit, and bottom-line journalism affect the quality of television journalism would provide even more information as to what is causing the perceived degradation of the quality of television journalism in the United States.

Speed/redundancy

Another subject brought up by all nine respondents was the speed with which journalists must operate within the 24-hour news cycle. Along the same lines, all nine respondents discussed the redundancy of television news within the 24-hour news cycle. Scott Stovall (2007b) believes there to be a direct correlation between the 24-hour news cycle and the repetition of coverage on 24-hour cable news networks.
I think there is so much repetition because people are watching TV news 24-hours a day. People aren’t just sitting down for 30 minutes to watch it. They may turn it on at 3:25 in the afternoon, or they may turn it on at 10:15 at night. There is so much repetition because people are watching at extremely different times. The main stories get replayed time and time again, because I think everybody is watching at different times. I think that is one of the reasons there is a lot of repetition, plus, I think there is so much repetition because they have so much time to fill. They are on 24-hours a day.


That’s the beauty of 24/7, if it’s done right, the quality if fine. The problem is that they get onto a story and won’t let it go because there is this view that not everybody is watching all the time. You have to keep repeating yourself on one show.

While Stovall and Knowles believe the speed with which television news organizations must operate within the 24-hour news cycle creates more redundant news, they both fell short of saying that speed and redundancy on television news created a decline in the quality of news. Joan Lucas (2007a) was more critical in her examination of the issue. Lucas feels that television news organizations are giving too much air time to trivial subjects, just to fill up the air time, and to do so quickly. In addition, Lucas believes the use of “experts” to fill the time has had a negative impact on the quality of television news.
I think local stations are becoming more like the networks and cable news outlets in that they take a trivial local story and give it wall to wall coverage with live reports and “expert” analysis. It’s to the point where the public doesn’t know if “the storm of the century” is really about to hit their city because they’ve been told so many times that “this is the big one.” It’s like the boy who cried wolf. The media has cried wolf so many times you can’t believe them anymore.

The statements above illustrate a need for further research on what is affecting the quality of news. It is clear that the respondents feel that both speed and redundancy on television news within the 24-hour news cycle have an effect on the quality of television news. Complete and thorough research on the subject would give the field of broadcast journalism even more insight into the perceived degradation in the quality of television news.

Experience

The amount of experience of a journalist was not discussed by all of the respondents, but the subject of experience was brought up enough that it appears to be another viable research subject. Charles Bierbauer (2006b) believes that a newsroom should have older more experienced journalists, and talented young journalists who have not yet gained that experience. He believes the level of experience coincides directly with cost cutting.

Bonnie Anderson (2006b) agreed with Bierbauer and added her personal experience learning from mentors. She admits that she was young and inexperienced when she first started covering international events, but she believes the news consumers
were better served because she worked with a team of journalists who had experience and could guide her through the coverage.

You also have so many of these kids, and I was a kid as a war correspondent, and make no mistake, I was the youngest correspondent ever at a network but I was working with really veteran producers and editors who knew what I didn’t. We were not pressured by the time constraint or the lack of any time constraint when it came to live TV. So I was schooled, and we made sure that anything that was going out had my fresh eyes on it but also the context that the news deserves.

Anderson added that context in news is one of the most important aspects, and she believes that experience is one of the only ways journalists are able to put stories in context. In other words, Anderson does not believe that it is enough to be young, good looking, and ambitious; journalists also need experience.

Is there a correlation between experience and the quality of television news? I can’t say for certain, but based on the interviews for this research, more research is certainly warranted.

Ownership/management

Corporate ownership of television news organizations relates closely with profitability of television news organizations as well as the experience of the journalists who work for those organizations. However, it also makes sense to conduct research on the idea of ownership and/or management of television news organizations and how these factors affect the quality of television news. Ralph Beglieter (2006) stated that almost all of the major television news organizations are owned and managed by corporations. He does not believe this to be a positive aspect when it comes to the quality of television
news because the managers of these corporations are not focused on news, but on profitable programming.

Today, ABC news is owned by the Disney Corporation, whose primary business, I'm not being critical of this, but the primary business of the Disney Corporation is not news, the primary business is entertainment. Sometimes good entertainment, sometimes light entertainment, but I'm not a judge of that, that's not the point. The point is; the managers of organizations like that don't have news... it's not on their agenda.

Bonnie Anderson echoed this idea, stating that most corporations are much more concerned with making a profit than producing quality news. She not only believes this hurts the quality of television news, but she believes that the ownership of news organizations have forgotten why journalism is specifically protected in the constitution.

It actually becomes obscene that companies want to make so much money that they actually degrade the quality of journalism and the quality of reporting, and they forget all about the main reason for all of this. The whole reason the founding fathers even protected this profession is that... is to inform the public. They go overboard on the money making part and fall far short on the informing part.

A study of corporate ownership and management of television news organizations could be tackled in the same study as the profit making aspects of television news. However, it may be better if each study were done independently so the researcher could focus on one aspect of television news at a time. This would allow for a thorough look at each aspect. In total, all of the research listed above would provide a much more
comprehensive look at what factors are affecting the quality of television news in the United States.

**Viewer trust**

The preceding suggestions for future research are all qualitatively based. Each of the subjects could incorporate a quantitative aspect to the research, but the underlying idea behind the suggestion is for qualitative research. One area where quantitative research could be very valuable is on the subject of viewer trust. A statistical analysis of how the public viewed television journalists in the past and to what extent the public trusted those journalists would provide a past look at viewer trust. Conducting updated research on the same subject would allow for a quantitative, past versus present analysis of viewer trust. Knowing how viewers used to feel about television journalists, and comparing that to how viewers currently feel about television journalists would provide valuable information to the field of broadcast journalism.

**Viewer habits**

In addition to viewer trust, a quantitative analysis of viewer habits would also be valuable. Knowing how and when viewers consumed television news in the past and comparing that data to how and when viewers consume television news today would provide a number of insights into the business of television news and may allow the news organizations to provide a product that is considered to be of a higher quality. This could change the viewers’ opinions of today; that the quality of television news is on the decline.
Suggestion for Improvement to Research

This research was an attempt to examine whether the 24-hour news cycle has had an effect on the quality of television news in the United States. Because the research was qualitative in nature, there were not many statistics used, and because of the sample size, many of the subjects brought up for discussion came from a small number of sources. This is a shortcoming to the current research that could have been improved had the following elements been integrated.

Larger sample

A larger sample would have provided more extensive and more thorough analysis. The nine respondents provide insight into the business of television news that cannot be found anywhere else. However, a larger sample would have provided even more insight and analysis. Also, the majority of the answers provided that portrayed the current state of television news as higher quality than the past state of journalism news came from the two sources who are still actively involved in the day-to-day production of television news programming, Scott Stovall (2007b) and the Senior Cable Executive (2007a). A more balanced sample that included an equal number of current and former journalists would have provided a more complete set of data.

Conclusion

The simplest conclusion that can be gleaned from all of the preceding information is that while the quality of television news has declined since the development of the 24-hour news cycle, news within the 24-hour news cycle can be of a high quality. However, while the nine journalists who were interviewed for this study believe that the quality of television news has declined, only two of them believe the decline to be due to the
existence of the 24-hour news cycle. The other seven respondents believe the decline in quality television news to be due to a number of factors. The most common factor listed by the journalists was bottom-line reporting. Bottom-line reporting happens when a news organization is more concerned about profits and expenses than it is about presenting quality news. Examples of bottom line reporting, from both the Literature Review and Findings, include a decrease in foreign bureaus, a decrease in international reporting, and an increase in celebrity reporting. Much of the bottom-line reporting is a result of stockholder pressure on the news organization to increase its profit each year.

Traditionally, the only way to increase your profit is to increase income, or decrease expenses. Closing foreign bureaus, cutting back international reporting, and reporting celebrity news are all ways to decrease expenses. Ralph Beglieter (2006) explains.

The economic incentives are not there. All the news organizations in the U.S. respond now, they are all private corporations, they respond to the demands of shareholders. What shareholders want are bigger profits, tomorrow. Not next month, not next year, not a decade from now. They want tomorrow’s profit to be higher so the share price is higher. The only way you can make profits higher is by reducing costs relative to the price you charge for your product. The only way to do that is to get rid of staff, to run a leaner meaner organization. That means reducing the number and quality of journalists who are in the news division.

We’ve seen that across the board. Newspapers have been firing people left and right, they have been closing. Broadcast organizations have been firing people, reducing their staffs, cutting back foreign bureaus. The economic evidence of the diminution of the news industry is well documented.
While the journalists agreed that television news within the 24-hour news cycle can be of high quality, they also agreed that a change will not occur unless the public demands it. As long as the television news organizations get high enough ratings to make a profit, they are not going to change their business model. In other words, news viewers must call for change, or they need to stop watching television news to force the organizations to make such a change. As Beglieter said, “The economic incentives are not there.” By changing the channel, or turning off the television, viewers can create economic incentives for television news organizations. Without an audience, there is no income. Without and income, there is no increase in profit. Without and increase in profit, stockholders will pull their support. Much of the power rests in the hands of the viewer, but if the viewers don’t demand change, then change will not occur.

In addition to the audience demanding change, the journalists who currently work in television news need to make a commitment to produce quality news. However, as Bonnie Anderson (2006a) said, taking a stand that is contrary to management’s can be a scary situation.

Part of it is just having guts to just stand up and say, ‘No, I will not do this.’ And the truth is; you are putting your career on the line. I did it and lost my job at CNN. So this is not for the faint-hearted. But this is for folks, who truly care and truly believe, and I do believe that if enough people got together, and they can get together, get people in the newsroom together. Get 30-40 people and go to management and say, ‘We won’t do this.’ Then no single person will be singled out. You have got to draw a line about how far you will sell out to keep your job. And send a signal to management.
This commitment must be a personal and organizational effort to increase the quality of news. It is easy for a journalist to comply with everything their assignment they are give. However, journalists must take a stand if they believe the events they are being asked to cover to be less than newsworthy. In addition, the managers and administration at the organization must pay attention to the journalists. They must listen when a journalist says, “This is not news, we should not be covering this event.” Without cooperation among the viewers, journalists, and management, the current business model will not change.

The current business model is to present news that the audience wants, or at least news the organization thinks the audience wants. The problem with this model is that the news the audience seems to want has very little to do with quality. Quality news should be significant, informative, fair, balance, accurate, authoritative, and it should demonstrate enterprise and courage. Very few stories presented on television news today fulfill these requirements. It is much more common for television news to be insignificant, uninformative, unfair, unbalanced, inaccurate, and for television news to lack authority, enterprise and courage. Instead of fulfilling the requirements of producing quality news, television news organizations often spend their days covering the latest celebrity arrest.

Celebrity news that is covered around the clock is the opposite of quality news. There is a time and place for celebrity news coverage; however it is not all day every day. Celebrity news continues to get covered because it is cheap, easy, and the audience seems to want it. If this remains the case, then the perceived decline in the quality of television news will continue. The audience is the factor that ultimately drives everything in
television news. If viewers leave the television news organizations, then those organizations will change their business model to try to lure those viewers back. If viewers continue to watch the news, while complaining about the quality of the news, then the business model will stay the same, and the quality of television news will keep the status quo.

Television is the medium that the majority of Americans use to get their news. A well-informed population is essential for a democracy to work properly. Therefore, quality television news is necessary for the American democratic process to work. It is time for ownership, management, journalists, and news consumers to demand quality television news. It is time to put an end to bottom-line journalism. It is time to reopen foreign bureaus. It is time to cover all of the news, not just the cheap easy news. It is time for television journalists to perform their basic duties of informing the populace about the world around them. It is time for quality television news, even within the 24-hour news cycle.
Appendix A

The following questions are designed to allow the respondents to answer based on their perspective. Please provide your professional opinion as an answer to each question.

Each answer should also focus on television news in the United States.

1) How would you define the 24-hour news cycle?
2) In terms of quality, how would you characterize the current state of journalism in the U.S.?
3) In terms of quality, how is the state of television journalism different from what it was before the development of the 24-hour news cycle?
4) In terms of quality, what are the differences, if any, between local news stations, broadcast news networks, and cable news networks?
5) To what extent has the 24-hour news cycle had an effect on the quality of television news?
6) What, if any, are the positive aspects of the 24-hour news cycle?
7) What, if any, are the negative aspects of the 24-hour news cycle?
8) To what extent does the amount of television news programming in the 24-hour news cycle affect the quality of television news?
9) To what extent is television news in the 24-hour news cycle significant?
   9a) To what extent was television news before the 24-hour news cycle significant?
10) To what extent is television news in the 24-hour news cycle informative?
10a) To what extent was television news before the 24-hour news cycle informative?

11) To what extent does television news in the 24-hour news cycle demonstrate enterprise?
   11a) To what extent did television news before the 24-hour news cycle demonstrate enterprise?

12) To what extent does television news in the 24-hour news cycle demonstrate courage?
   12a) To what extent did television news before the 24-hour news cycle demonstrate courage?

13) To what extent is television news in the 24-hour news cycle fair?
   13a) To what extent was television news before the 24-hour news cycle fair?

14) To what extent is television news in the 24-hour news cycle balanced?
   14a) To what extent was television news before the 24-hour news cycle balanced?

15) To what extent is television news in the 24-hour news cycle accurate?
   15a) To what extent was television news before the 24-hour news cycle accurate?

16) To what extent is television news in the 24-hour news cycle authoritative?
   16a) To what extent was television news before the 24-hour news cycle authoritative?
Appendix B

Agreement to Participate in
"Are 24 Hours Enough: A Study of the 24-Hour News Cycle"
Dustin McDunn, Principal Investigator
School of Communications, University of Hawai‘i, Honolulu, HI 96822

These interviews are being conducted as part of a research project designed to study whether the advent of the 24-hour news cycle has had any effect on the quality of the news. I will conduct one or two 60-minute audiotape-recorded sessions with you and up to 12 other individuals. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from participation at any time. You may elect not to answer any question(s) at any time for any reason. The interviews will be informal and conversational and will focus on your recollections and opinions of the news industry. Following the interviews, I will transcribe and review the tapes. I will then return the transcript to you. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcript and make any revisions you wish. I will then incorporate your revisions into the transcript and, at a later date, final-type the transcript for publication. If you disapprove of your transcript or the above procedures, I will destroy both the transcript and the cassette tapes, and your participation in this project will end. At a future date, bound volumes may be distributed to libraries for use by the general community. Users will be welcome to utilize, in unpublished works, short excerpts from any of the transcriptions without obtaining permission as long as proper credit is given to the interviewee and interviewer.

Since your expertise is the basis for this research, it is the desire of the researcher to quote you directly and for your name to appear as the interviewee on the transcript. This may potentially lead to a loss of privacy through the use of your name in any future publication. If you wish, "Anonymous" may be substituted for your name. The interview process may also bring back painful or unpleasant memories. You may elect not to answer any question(s) at any time for any reason. There will be no direct benefit to you for your participation in this project. However, your participation will contribute to the base of information concerning the news industry.

"I certify that I have read and that I understand the foregoing, that I have been given satisfactory answers to my inquiries concerning project procedures and other matters and that I have been advised that I am free to withdraw my consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time without prejudice.

I herewith give my consent to participate in this project with the understanding that such consent does not waive any of my legal rights, nor does it release the Principal Investigator or the institution or any employee or agent thereof from liability for negligence."

__________________________________________________________
Printed Name  Signature of Interviewee  Date

☐ If you wish to remain anonymous, please check this box. If you check this box, your name will remain confidential and will not appear in any published document.

Please contact Principal Investigator Dustin McDunn at (808) 734-9120 if you have any questions regarding this project.
If you cannot obtain satisfactory answers to your questions or have comments or complaints about your treatment in this study, contact: Committee on Human Studies, University of Hawai‘i, 2540 Maile Way, Honolulu, HI 96822. Telephone: (808) 956-5007

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Appendix C

Expert credentials

Bonnie Anderson

Bonnie Anderson spent nearly 30 years working in print, radio, Internet, and television journalism. She has worked for English and Spanish language organizations and has worked for local, national, and international news organizations. The two decades of Anderson’s broadcast journalism career were spent with NBC News and CNN.

Anderson won seven Emmy Awards, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, and has been nominated for the Maria Coors Cabot Lifetime Achievement Award sponsored by Columbia University.

As Managing Editor of the CNN en Español network, Anderson supervised newsgathering staff, including correspondents, producers, and camera crews. As Vice President of the CNN News Group, she recruited and coached on- and off-air personnel. Anderson previously served as a national correspondent for CNN, where she covered such top breaking news stories as the Oklahoma City bombing, the Los Angeles earthquake, Pope John Paul II’s visit to Denver, Hurricane Andrew in South Florida, the Branch Davidian standoff in Waco, and the Olympic Park bombing in Atlanta.

As a foreign correspondent for NBC News, Anderson was one of the first female war correspondents. She reported from more than 100 countries, covering stories such as the civil wars in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Lebanon; the famine and civil war in Ethiopia; the Iran-Iraq war; and the Gulf War. She also worked at The Miami Herald and The Miami News.
Anderson is currently president of the Anderson Media Agency, which offers a broad range of media-related services for individuals, corporations, government officials, and journalists. The agency specializes in preparing men and women for effective teleconferencing, public speaking and on-camera work as television news reporters, company public relations and communications officers, as well as spokespeople in television advertisements. The Anderson Media Agency offers coaching in voice control and inflection, pacing, breath-control, TelePrompTer reading, confidence building techniques, script writing, anchoring, audio tracking, and on-camera performance.

Anderson is also the author of *News Flash: Journalism, Infotainment, and the Bottom-Line Business of Broadcast News*. In *News Flash*, Anderson describes the decline of broadcast journalism into infotainment. She claims television journalism has been taken over by bottom-line thinking that places more value on good looks than on substantive reporting. She shows how, in the increasingly competitive world of network news, network executives tend more and more to hail from the entertainment industry. The executives hire reporters based on their ability to project credibility, consistently valuing looks and youth over training and experience, and approve coverage only if they can be assured that it will appeal to advertiser-friendly demographics.

*Ralph Begleiter*

Ralph Begleiter has more than 30 years of experience in broadcast journalism, spending most of that time working as a correspondent for CNN. For almost two decades, Begleiter was CNN's World Affairs Correspondent based in the network's Washington, D.C. Bureau. He joined CNN in 1981, and took on the State Department assignment in 1982. In 1994, after leaving the State Department beat, he conceived and began hosting...
the weekly *Global View* program, a public affairs discussion of international issues seen worldwide on CNN International. He also hosted CNN’s *International Hour*, seen worldwide.

Among his CNN assignments, Begleiter developed and hosted *Cold War Postscript*, a 24-part weekly program examining connections between the history of the Cold War and global affairs in today’s world. From 1994-95, he co-anchored CNN’s prestigious *International Hour*. Begleiter has covered a wide range of international events ranging from the funeral for Jordan’s King Hussein in Amman and the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to the 1997 handover of Hong Kong and the 1996 “Summit of Peacemakers” from Egypt’s Sinai Desert.

While at the network, Begleiter was CNN’s most widely traveled correspondent; he has flown almost 2-million miles and visited 92 countries on six continents. His CNN travels with U.S. Secretaries of State and Presidents included visits to many areas of the then-Soviet Union and to all of the now-independent states of the former USSR. Begleiter has also traveled extensively in Asia (including China, Vietnam, Mongolia, Japan, and Korea), the Middle East (including Israel and most Arab nations), and Europe, and made less expansive trips to Latin America and Africa.

In 1994, Georgetown University’s Graduate School of Foreign Service awarded Begleiter its Weintal Prize, one of diplomatic reporting’s highest honors. He was named as a contributor to CNN’s award-winning coverage of major global events, including the Gulf War (1991) and the first democratic elections in Russia (1996).

During the Persian Gulf Crisis in 1990 and 1991, Begleiter followed the diplomatic construction of the unprecedented international coalition which eventually
went to war against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, reporting live from Geneva on the dramatic collapse of diplomatic efforts to avoid the war with a final Iraqi-American high-level meeting in January 1991.

In August 1990, Begleiter became the first and only Western news correspondent ever to accompany a Soviet Foreign Minister, then Eduard Shevardnadze, aboard Shevardnadze’s aircraft on an official diplomatic mission. He covered virtually every high-level Soviet-American meeting between 1983 and 1999.

Throughout 1990, Begleiter covered the unfolding democratic revolution in Eastern Europe and the re-unification of Germany. He has interviewed many world leaders, among them British Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and John Major, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin, several Russian Foreign Ministers, Chinese President Jiang Zemin, and French Presidents Jacques Chirac and Francois Mitterrand. Begleiter has also interviewed history-making world figures such as South African President Nelson Mandela and Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng.

He has also covered the U.S. national political conventions since 1976 and served as an election night anchor for CNN and CNN International. In 1981, he covered the U.S. Supreme Court and the trial of presidential assailant John Hinckley in Washington, D.C.

Begleiter joined the faculty at the University of Delaware (UD) in 1999. In 2006, his Global Agenda class met weekly by videoconference with students in Beirut, Lebanon, to discuss cross-cultural and media issues. In 2002 he took UD students to Cuba for the 40th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis.
Other honors earned by Begleiter include awards from the National Press Club, the National Academy for Cable Programming, the Houston International Film Festival, the New York Festivals International Competition for Television, Film and Video Communication, the Associated Press, and United Press International.

Charles Bierbauer

Charles Bierbauer has a long and highly respected career in journalism, spending more than 40 years in the field, the final 20 years of that career at CNN. From 1981-2001, he was a correspondent for CNN in Washington, D.C., where he covered the Supreme Court, the George H.W. Bush and Reagan administrations, and the presidential campaigns from 1984-2000.

Bierbauer transitioned to academia after leaving CNN and became the first dean of the newly merged College of Mass Communications and Information Studies at the University of South Carolina in July 2002.

Bierbauer began his career as a radio reporter for WKAP radio in Allentown, Pennsylvania, in 1963. But he is no stranger to print journalism, having written for his hometown newspaper The Morning Call. He was a reporter with the Associated Press in Pittsburgh from 1967-68 and a correspondent in Bonn for the Chicago Daily News. From 1977-81, he was an overseas correspondent for ABC News, first as Moscow Bureau Chief and later as the Bonn Bureau chief. Prior to that, he worked in Philadelphia, London, Bonn, and Vienna as a correspondent for Westinghouse Broadcasting. In 2001 he was a reporter and producer for a Discovery Channel documentary on the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks.
Bierbauer is a graduate of Penn State, where he earned a bachelor's degree in Russian as well as bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism. He remained involved with Penn State as a lecturer, a member of the College of Communications Board of Visitors, and as a member of the alumni association's Communications Advisory Board. He served as a member of the national Council for Media & Public Affairs at George Washington University and is on the advisory board for the Washington Center for Politics and Journalism. In 1997, he won an Emmy for anchoring CNN coverage of the 1996 Olympic Park bombing in Atlanta. He also is a recipient of the ACE Award from the Association for Cable Excellence and the Overseas Press Club Award for his reporting of the Yom Kippur War.

In 2006, the University of South Carolina's Mortar Board honor society awarded Bierbauer its Excellence in Teaching Award. He was nominated for the award by a student in his Media and Government Maymester (a short summer term in the month of May) class.

David Hazinski

David Hazinski has nearly 15 years experience as a news correspondent in broadcast journalism and has another 20 years experience as a professor of broadcast journalism. He was the originating co-host, writing and serving as technology advisor of World Business Review with Caspar Weinberger, an internationally syndicated television program dealing with advanced technology and business systems seen in 50 million homes in 27 countries. He has also covered many of the major national and international events of the last few decades as a broadcast journalist.
For six years, he was an international correspondent for NBC News, based in New York, Washington, D.C., and then Atlanta. While his primary coverage area was the Southeastern United States, Hazinski also reported from most of the rest of America as well as Europe and Central and South America. Before joining NBC News, Hazinski spent ten years with television stations in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and was nationally syndicated. He has won numerous local, state and national journalism awards, including a Golden Quill and a string of teaching awards.

David Hazinski is currently an Associate Professor of Telecommunications and Head of Broadcast News at The University of Georgia’s Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication. He is also President of Video Communications, Inc., a video production and consulting company, and a principal in IntelligentMC, LLC, an international information systems design and consulting company.

As an IntelligentMC principal, Hazinski served as Project Manager for the launch of the Aaj Tak 24-hour news channel in the Hindi language in India in 2000. His job was to coordinate the organization, the design of the technology and programming, and the training of the entire staff for a news channel with 14 bureaus and 40 sub-bureaus. The launch has been called “spectacularly successful,” both economically and journalistically. Six months after its launch, Aaj Tak had eight of the top ten news shows in India and 53-percent of the news market. Most recently, he re-designed the central International Broadcast Center for the Voice of America in Washington and is consulting on new network launches for the VOA.

Hazinski has also consulted for a broad range of clients on everything from system design to editorial policy. Clients include the Attorney General of the United
States, CNN, Habitat for Humanity, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Orange County News Channel, among others. He has been executive producer of video projects for organizations ranging from the Bass Angler Sportsman Society to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). He is the author of a dozen trade publication articles. Currently, he serves on the Executive Advisory Board for Digital Video for R/com Networks, Inc., the Turner Broadcasting Educational Committee, and the Cox Center for International Training and Research.

Hazinski holds a Bachelor’s Degree from Duquesne University in Journalism and a Masters Degree from The University of Pittsburgh in Educational Communications and Technology.

Bill Knowles

Bill Knowles is a long-time newsman who spent more than 20 years as a broadcast journalist and another 20 as a professor of broadcast journalism. The majority of Knowles’ broadcast experience came at ABC, starting in 1970 when he was hired as a writer for anchorman Howard K. Smith. Knowles advanced through ABC over the next 15 years taking on such roles as: Southern Bureau Chief, where he rebuilt, managed, and provided editorial direction to ABC News bureaus in Atlanta, Miami, and Dallas; Washington Bureau Chief, where he managed and provided editorial direction to more than 500 ABC News employees in Washington, D. C.; and West Coast Bureau Chief, where he managed and provided editorial direction to 60 ABC employees in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Knowles has a long list of career highlights including coverage of four presidents, seven presidential nominating conventions, the visit of Queen Elizabeth II in 1983, liftoff

Knowles moved to academia in 1986 when he accepted a job as Professor in Journalism/Radio-Television at the University of Montana. While at the University of Montana, Knowles edited numerous texts for Allyn & Bacon, McGraw-Hill, Thomson-Wadsworth, and Bedford-St. Martin’s Press. In addition, Knowles was honored in August 2006 as the winner of the Edward Bliss Distinguished Broadcast Journalism Educator award for career achievement from the Radio-Television Journalism (RTVJ) Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC).

Also while at the University of Montana, Knowles remained active in other educational service endeavors. He was a member of the site visit team for the United Arab Emirates Education Ministry to accredit a new journalism/broadcasting/cinema program at the American University in Dubai in 2005. Knowles also served as the Head of the RTVJ Division of the AEJMC from 1995-96, the Vice Head/Convention Program Chair of the RTVJ Division of the AEJMC from 1994-95, the Professional Freedom & Responsibility Chair or the RTV Division of the AEJMC from 1993-94, and appeared on or produced 25 panels on various journalism education issues at AEJMC conventions from 1992-2006.

*John Lewis*

John Lewis is an award-winning journalist with more than 20 years experience at CNN as well as several years of work as a radio correspondent for several international
organizations. Lewis joined CNN in 1980 as its Tokyo-based news correspondent and bureau chief. He was with CNN for 21 years until the end of 2001, most of that time in Asia. Lewis expanded CNN's presence in Asia, establishing bureaus in Seoul, Beijing, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Bangkok, and New Delhi, and served as senior Asia producer for the network as well as legal representative in Japan, Korea, and Indonesia. After leaving CNN, Lewis taught senior-level broadcast journalism courses as a Visiting Professor at the Gaylord College of Journalism at the University of Oklahoma and was a senior associate with Producers International Media, Inc., a consulting and training company serving the international broadcast, banking, and hotel industries.

Before joining CNN, Lewis worked as radio correspondent for the Erstwhile Mutual Broadcasting System, Northeast Asia correspondent for the Far Eastern Economic Review and AsiaWeek magazine. As a freelancer, Lewis wrote for the Asian Wall Street Journal, the Christian Science Monitor, Newsweek, AP, and other publications throughout Asia. He has worked and spent extensive time in every Asian country with the exception of Mongolia. He speaks Japanese and is familiar with Korean, Chinese (Mandarin), and Thai.

Lewis graduated with two BA degrees, Philosophy and Sociology, from Sophia University (Jochi Daigaku), a Jesuit University in Tokyo, Japan. He attended Sophia’s graduate school of Oriental Religions and Philosophies and has an MA in East Asia Studies; he also holds a Doctor of Science degree in Media Management.

Lewis served four years as a military intelligence officer in the United States Army seconded to various U.S. intelligence agencies. He is a Vietnam veteran. Lewis
moved to Hawaii in July 2005, where he took up his present position of media-relations specialist at the East-West Center in October of the same year.

_Joan Lucas_

Joan Lucas spent more than 20 years in the broadcast journalism field before moving into public affairs. Lucas is currently the Director of Public Affairs and Special Projects for KOB-TV in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In addition, she is the Director of Annual Eyewitness News 4 Health Fair, Scheduling Manager of Station and News Promotions, and the writer and producer for all of KOB’s event promotions.

Lucas began her broadcast journalism career in Las Cruces, New Mexico, in 1985, while still in college at New Mexico State University. Lucas’s first broadcasting job was for KRWG-TV, a PBS affiliate in Las Cruces where she worked as an evening anchor and producer, a general assignments reporter, and an assignments editor during her two years at KRWG. Simultaneously, Lucas was a news anchor and producer for KRWG-FM, a National Public Radio station in Las Cruces.

Upon graduation from New Mexico State, Lucas took a job in El Paso, Texas, where she worked as a morning anchor/producer, a general assignment reporter, and a weekend assignments editor for KTSM-TV, an NBC affiliate.

After two years in El Paso, Lucas move on to KMOL-TV, an NBC affiliate in San Antonio, Texas. Lucas spent 12 years in San Antonio where she started as a producer and assignments editor, but quickly moved into more prominent roles. Those roles include being an investigative, political, and general assignment reporter as well as anchoring _S. A. Today_, the morning newscast for KMOL-TV, from 1994-97.
Lucas moved from on-camera to behind the scenes when she became the executive producer and assignments manager for KNDU-TV in Kennewick, Washington. Lucas’ time behind the camera led to her current position in public affairs.

Lucas is a journalist with more than two-dozen awards including honors from the Society of Professional Journalists, Texas and New Mexico Associated Press, New Mexico Association of Broadcasters, and Alpha Epsilon Rho for Excellence in Community Service, General Assignment, Spot News, Feature, and Documentary Reporting. She was also named, Who’s Who in American Universities and Colleges in 1986.

Scott Stovall

Scott Stovall has more than 20 years experience as a professional broadcast journalist. Stovall has experience in both radio and television and has experience as both a military and civilian journalist. He has covered a number of significant news events in the Eastern Washington area, including the shooting death of Washington State Trooper James Saunders, the disappearance of five-year-old Sophia Juarez, and the nearly 200,000 acre Hanford fire that burned much of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

Stovall started his broadcasting career while in the Navy where he worked as news reporter in La Maddalena, Italy, and at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. After being honorably discharged in 1992, Stovall moved back to his hometown of Midland, Texas, where he took a position as a news anchor, reporter, and photographer for KWES-TV. Stovall anchored the NewsWest 9 Sunrise newscast and worked as a general assignment reporter for the station’s other newscasts. During his time in Midland, Stovall also worked as a radio DJ for KCRS-FM radio.
In 1995 Stovall moved to KNDU-TV in Kennewick, Washington, where he has been a mainstay over the past 12 years. Stovall Anchors the 5, 6, and 11 p.m. newscasts at KNDU, while also working as a reporter and photographer for those newscasts. In addition, Stovall produces and anchors KNDO Local News 11 at 11. KNDO is a sister station of KNDU located in Yakima, Washington. Stovall’s newscasts have consistently ranked among the top in the market, most often achieving the number one rating in the market.

In addition to Stovall’s numerous broadcasting duties, he also serves on the Success By Six Adviser Board and the Boy Scouts Blue Mountain Council Board.

Senior Cable Executive with a cable news network

The Senior Cable Executive at a cable news network has asked to remain anonymous because of current employment obligations at that network. The Senior Cable Executive has more than 30 years working as a journalist and is currently working in a department responsible for the editorial vetting process. The Senior Cable Executive has experience reporting in the United States and abroad.
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