

TV News in the Corporate Era

A veteran journalist notes a downturn in stories about issues important to readers as citizens to information of interest to consumers. **By Richard Campbell**

In the mid-1950s the three major television networks — ABC, CBS and NBC — moved their entertainment divisions to Los Angeles, in part, because of its close proximity to Hollywood production studios. Network news operations, however, remained in New York. Symbolically, these cities came to represent the two major branches of network TV: entertainment and information. The rules and rituals governing U.S. journalism also began shifting during the 1950s. At the time, former radio reporter John Daly hosted the CBS game show *What's My Line?* When he began moonlighting as the evening TV news anchor on ABC, the fledgling network blurred the so-called entertainment and information border, foreshadowing what by the 1990s had become a central criticism of journalism.

Tell Me a Story, the 2001 autobiography of Don Hewitt — the creator and long-time producer of *60 Minutes* (until his recent forced retirement at age 81) — best captures Daly's border transgression. In his account, Hewitt praised the narrative

qualities of news and promoted the onscreen star-reporter-character over the program's lowly backstage field producers, who have always done most of the research and reporting for the program. Drawn to news through his early love of 1930s movie characters, Hewitt writes: "As a child of the movies, I was torn between wanting to be Julian Marsh, the Broadway producer in *42nd Street*, who was up to his ass in showgirls, and Hildy Johnson, the hellbent-for-leather reporter in *The Front Page*, who was up to his ass in news stories. 'Oh my God,' I thought, 'in television, I could be *both* of them.'"

In the early days of TV journalism, the most influential and respected news program was CBS's *See It Now*. Co-produced by Fred Friendly and Edward R. Murrow, *See It Now* served as the conscience of TV news in its formative years. Murrow also worked as the program's anchor and main reporter, introducing the investigative model of journalism to national television — a model that programs like *60 Minutes*, *20/20* and *Dateline* would later imitate. Regarded by TV documentary historian A. William Bluem as "the

first and definitive” news documentary on American television, *See It Now* sought “to report in depth—to tell and show the American audience what was happening in the world using film as a narrative tool.” In the early 1960s, *CBS Reports* carried on the traditions of *See It Now*, and as that decade unfolded, the literary model of reporting played a more significant role in the program. Talking to the *New York Times* in 1959, Friendly hinted at the importance of the narrative tradition to *CBS Reports*: “Though based on truth, the programs still have to have stories of their own, with the basic outline of beginning, middle and end.”

TV news chases crime

By the mid-1970s, the public’s fascination with the Watergate scandal — combined with the improved quality of TV journalism — helped local news departments realize profits for the first time. In an effort to retain high ratings, stations began hiring consultants, who advised news directors to lead their newscasts with crime blocks: a group of stories that recount the worst local crimes of the day. Today, most regional news stations around the country still lead newscasts with local isolated crime stories, even though such stories have very little connection to the vast majority of viewers.

A few stations, however, responded to viewers and critics who complain about overemphasizing crime—especially given that FBI statistics revealed that crime and murder rates fell in most major urban areas during the 1990s. In 1996, for example,

the news director at KVUE-TV in Austin, Texas, concerned about crime coverage, launched a new set of criteria that had to be met for news reports to qualify as responsible crime stories. She asked that her reporters answer the following questions: Do citizens or officials need to take action? Is there an immediate threat to safety? Is there a threat to children? Does the crime have significant community impact? Does the story lend itself to a crime-prevention effort? With KVUE’s new standards, the station eliminated many routine crime stories. Instead, the station provided a context for understanding crime rather than a mechanical running tally of what crimes were being committed each day.

In addition to news consultants pushing crime stories, another strategy they favor — to counter the grimness of crime coverage — has been happy talk: the ad-libbed or scripted banter that goes on among local news anchors, reporters, meteorologists and sports reporters before and after news

News doctors have tried to replicate in modern local TV news the ad images of young attractive models that have dominated television advertising since the 1960s.

reports. During the 1970s, consultants often recommended such chatter to create a more relaxed feeling on the news set and to foster the illusion of conversational intimacy with viewers. Some news doctors also believed at the time that happy talk was indeed an antidote to that era’s “bad news,” which included coverage of urban riots and

the Vietnam War. A strategy still used today, happy talk often appears forced and may create awkward transitions, -especially when anchors must report on events that are sad or tragic. Although the situation has improved slightly at some local news stations, national news consultants, such as Frank Magid Associates, continue to set the agenda for what local reporters should cover—lots of local crime—as well as how they should look—young, attractive, pleasant, with little regional accent. Essentially, news doctors have tried to replicate in modern local TV news the ad images of young attractive models that have dominated television advertising since the 1960s — to create continuity between the look of news and the look of the advertising that the news interrupts.

Visual language and TV's edge

Officially, print news came under the spell of television with the arrival of the colorful *USA Today* in 1982, radically changing the look of most major U.S. dailies. This new paper incorporated features closely associated with postmodern forms, including an emphasis on visual style over substantive news and the use of brief news items that appealed to readers' short TV-era attention span. *USA Today* represents the only successful launch of a new major U.S. daily newspaper in the last several decades. Showing its marketing savvy, *USA Today* was the first paper to pay grudging tribute to TV's increasing influence on journalism. Marketers at the paper even designed its vending boxes to look like color TV sets.

In addition to TV news' obsessions

with crime stories and superficial packaging, the brevity of a TV report is often compared unfavorably with the length of print news. However, newspaper reviewers and other TV critics seldom discuss the visual language of TV news and the ways in which images may actually capture events more powerfully than words. The complexity of this shift from a print-dominated culture to an electronic-digital culture is often reduced to a two-dimensional debate about information vs. entertainment. Yet over the past 50 years television news has dramatized America's key events and provided a clearinghouse for shared information. Civil-rights activists, for instance, acknowledge that the movement benefited enormously from televised pictures that documented the plight of southern blacks in the 1960s. Other enduring TV images, unfurled as a part of history to each new generation, are embedded in our collective memory: the Kennedy and King assassinations in the 1960s; the turmoil of Watergate in the 1970s; the space shuttle disaster and the Chinese student uprisings in the 1980s; the first war on Iraq, the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building, and the Clinton impeachment hearings in the 1990s; and the 9/11 tragedy and second war on Iraq that started in 2003. During these critical events, national TV news has been a cultural reference point.

In contrast, many print critics – not used to the subtle ways visual language operates — missed a disturbing TV news strategy that developed in the mid to late 1980s. In their coverage of crack cocaine, news operations formulated a visual shot in which news photographers (using shaky, handheld cameras)

leaped from the back of police vans and followed gun-wielding authorities as they broke down the doors of various crack houses. At the time, few critics mentioned that in such a shot TV news actually represented the police or state point of view. A profession that prides itself on neutrality and on watching over the police on society's behalf apparently did not question whether it was appropriate for reporters to tell these stories implicitly from the authority's viewpoint.

In assessing the visual power of TV news, images do not stand as some kind of testimony to "reality" that is somehow more authentic than the printed word. Just as there is a selection process in print, images in TV news are chosen, camera angles are selected, and other images and angles are ignored. For example, one shot that means to establish credibility – called a "stand-up" – a TV producer might situate a reporter in front of a courthouse or outside the White House when, in fact, the reporter never entered the courthouse or the White House on that particular day. But the pictures made it look like the reporter was on top of the situation – and physically at a newsworthy location – serving as our eyewitness to the world.

Reporter as star and the triumph of individualism

Although local news rituals have had an impact in changing the face of regional journalism, the most influential journalistic enterprise at the national level has been *60 Minutes*. In the 50-plus year history of television, *60 Minutes* remains the only program rated No. 1 in three different decades.

It is the most popular and profitable TV program in prime-time history, finishing among the Nielsen top ten for 23 consecutive years — another record. From the mid-1970s to the early 2000s, a typical episode of *60 Minutes* reached a bigger audience than any other single news form in U.S. journalism. Most importantly, the program set the standard for investigative TV reporting that few of the many copycat magazine shows have approached.

Over the years, critics have tried to explain *60 Minutes*' standing as America's first popular news program. In 1981, the program's creator, Don Hewitt, told the *Chicago Tribune* that storytelling was the key to the program's appeal: "I'll bet if we made it multi-subject and we made it personal journalism — instead of dealing with issues we told stories; if we packaged reality as well as Hollywood packages fiction, I'll bet we could double the rating." Hewitt rightly predicted that personal journalism, starring reporters in mini-news dramas, would dislodge hour-long news documentaries in which the network point of view — what Hewitt calls "the voice of the corporation" — seemed tedious, institutional and aloof.

Hewitt's program has been able to downplay — until the fateful 1995 spiked tobacco story (the subject of the Hollywood movie "The Insider") — *60 Minutes* as a corporate extension of CBS (and now Viacom) in order to play up the program as champion of the little guy and solid Middle American values. Hewitt notes in his 2001 autobiography, "Every time the ship of state starts to tip left or right, it's the great American middle class that rights it and keeps it from capsizing.... So that's where

I am, in the middle most of the time, which is where you're likely to end up if you play both sides of the street, which I frankly admit I do." Along with the appeal to moderate politics and Middle America, a second secret of *60 Minutes* involves adapting a fictional story form — the detective mystery — to TV journalism. Through this familiar cultural frame, the reporters of *60 Minutes* have performed over the years, not as detached journalists, but as dramatic characters. Their mission: to locate themselves in the middle of an adventure and make sense of the world through their stories. "*60 Minutes* is the adventures of five reporters," Hewitt has said, "more fascinating to the American public being themselves than Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman were playing Woodward and Bernstein [in the 1976 film "All the President's Men"]".

In his own 1984 autobiography, Mike Wallace, the show's long-time star senior reporter, discussed his own perceptions of the detective role he has performed since 1968: "By the late 1970s ... I kept bumping into people who jumped at the chance to alert me to some scandal or outrage.... They would give me vivid accounts of foul deeds and the culprits perpetrating them, and urge me to take appropriate action: 'You really should look into this, Mike.'" Certainly many powerful segments over the years have concluded with *60 Minutes* calling for congressional investigations, redressing government oversights or wrongly accused prisoners, and lauding individual rights in the face of bureaucratic ineptitude. These stories portray reporters as cagey and competent — often heroic — and mark many of the program's finest minutes.

Given the power *60 Minutes* has developed over the years as the premier investigative arm of American journalism, it was a surprise in late 1995 when the show decided not to air an episode on the tobacco industry spiking nicotine levels after legal threats from one cigarette company's lawyers. In fact, this icon of investigative journalism caved into Big Tobacco at a time when CBS was being sold to Westinghouse, and apparently the corporate bosses — and the program's own journalists with investment ties to the transaction — didn't want to hamper the deal. So they waited for *The Wall Street Journal* to break the story and then aired the episode two months later. However, Disney — which owns ABC and the copycat TV newsmagazine *20/20* — then made a movie about the spiked story, called "The Insider," starring Russell Crowe and Al Pacino.

In the end, stories about the inner workings of complex institutions — including CBS/Viacom — are not well suited for *60 Minutes*. And, in fact, this can be said for most journalism — there are very few good story forms out there for explaining how institutions work or don't work. Instead, the detective narratives of *60 Minutes* often transformed experience into melodrama, making the world simpler and more understandable. Detective stories celebrate individual heroes and condemn institutional villains. In this way, journalism in general suffers from this malady that plagues *60 Minutes* (even as good as some of its best investigate pieces have been): Stories centering on the afflictions of individuals make the world seem like a place where problems are personal not social — that require only private

redress or remedy rather than any sort of collective engagement.

Journalism spent the first part of the 19th century freeing itself from political partisanship only to find itself at the beginning of the 21st century under the strong influences of corporate machinations.

The *60 Minutes* spiked story incident is probably the key cultural and social marker revealing that contemporary journalism is in its newest incarnation – the corporate era. Journalism, so central to American democracy that it is the only business enterprise the founders protected in the Constitution, spent the first part of the 19th century freeing itself from political partisanship only to find itself at the beginning of the 21st century under the strong influences of corporate machinations. And the very process that American citizens count on to report on this phenomenon has fallen virtually silent because it is not in the interest of national or global corporate powers to have their journalism extensions reporting the details of the their bosses' business. After all, these kinds of complex "Big Money" stories – that American viewers actually are interested in – do not fit neatly into formula stories that tell tales of individuals wronged at the hands of dysfunctional institutions. How do journalists tell this story when many of these powerful institutions are their own corporate parents?

Although corporate control is strong on the newspaper side of the journalism business — Gannett after all operates the largest newspaper chain in the world, controlling more than 90

daily newspapers – the real impact of the current corporate incarnation is in television. Here journalism outlets have become minor subsidiary companies in large entertainment conglomerates that all now own movie studios as well as journalism businesses. Disney, in

addition to its themes parts and film division, owns ABC News; Viacom, which own Paramount studios, controls CBS News; General Electric, which runs NBC News, purchased Universal studios in 2003; News Corp. owns Fox News in addition to Twentieth Century Fox studios; and Time Warner, which now operates CNN, owns Warner Brothers studios among its many other holdings as the world's largest media corporation.

Rethinking reporting's role

Even in this corporate era of journalism, many traditional reporters, editors, and even publishers will still fight ferociously for the overt principles that underpin some of the profession's basic tenets—freedom of the press, the public's right to know, and two sides to every story. In general, though, journalists do not acknowledge any moral duty to improve the quality of daily life or question the fundamental economic structures that journalism rests upon. Rather, journalists value their important news-gathering capabilities and the well-honed news story, mostly ignoring the economic implications of the corporate era and leaving the improvement of public

life to political groups, nonprofit organizations, business philanthropists, and individual citizens.

Good journalism aims to improve our standard representative democracy, in which most of us sit back and watch elected officials and superstar journalists act on our behalf...

When reporters are unwilling to claim any agency for improving public life or to question the creeping “corporatization” of the profession, democracy suffers. *Washington Post* columnist David Broder, writing in 1992, argued that national journalists—through rising salaries, prestige, and formal education—have distanced themselves “from the people that we are writing for and have become much, much closer to people we are writing about.” In 2004 this view has been echoed by the second Bush administration. Ken Auletta, writing about the press and the president for *The New Yorker* in 2004, pointed out that, according to the administration’s top political advisors, President Bush viewed “the press as ‘elitist’ and thinks that the social and economic backgrounds of most reporters have nothing in common with most Americans.” For his part, Broder maintained that journalists needed to become activists, not for a particular party but for the political process and in the interest of re-energizing public life. For the news media, this might involve spearheading voter-registration drives or setting up pressrooms in public libraries or even in shopping malls, where people converge in large numbers. More radically, leading

national journalists – who command TV time and print space – could rouse and lead a debate on the disruption of the balance between journalism’s business interests under capitalism and its watchdog role for democracy.

By advocating a more activist role for reporters and the news media, journalists at their best

promise to reinvigorate both reporting and politics. Good journalism aims to improve our standard representative democracy, in which most of us sit back and watch elected officials and superstar journalists act on our behalf, by reinvigorating deliberative democracy, in which citizen groups, local government, and the news media together take a more active stand in reshaping social, political, and economic agendas. In a more deliberative democracy, larger segments of the community would discuss public life, social policy, and media ownership before advising or electing officials who represent both individual and community interests.

In 1989, the historian Christopher Lasch argued that “the job of the press is to encourage debate, not to supply the public with information.” Although he overstated his case—journalism does both and more—Lasch made a cogent point about how conventional journalism has lost its bearings. Adrift in data – from the overload of 24-cable news and thousands of Internet sites – mainstream journalism has lost touch with its partisan roots. The early mission of journalism—to advocate opinions and encourage public debate—has been relegated to alternative magazines, the

editorial pages, and cable news channels starring elite East Coast reporters. Ironically, Lasch connected the gradual decline in voter participation, which began in the 1920s, to more responsible conduct on the part of professional journalists. With a modern “objective” press, he contended, the public increasingly began to defer to the “more professional” news media to watch over civic life on its behalf.

In modern America, serious journalism has sought to provide information that enables citizens to make intelligent decisions. Today, this guiding principle has been derailed. First, in a world engulfed in media outlets and computer highways, we may be producing too much information. According to social critic Neil Postman, as a result of developments in media technology, by the mid-1990s society had developed an “information glut,” transforming news and information into “a form of garbage.” Postman believed that scientists, technicians, managers, and journalists have merely piled up mountains of new data, which add to the problems of everyday life. As a result, too much unchecked data and too little thoughtful discussion emanate from too many channels of communication.

A second, related problem suggests that the amount of information the media now provide has made little impact on improving social and political life. In fact, many people feel cut off from our major institutions, including journalism. Many citizens, however, are looking for ways to take part in public conversations and civic debates — to renew a democracy in which many voices participate. In fact, among the benefits of the

contested and unpredictable 2000 and 2004 presidential elections were the ways legal, economic and political complications engaged the citizenry at a much deeper level than the predictable, staged campaigns themselves did. Much of this complexity played out in local grass-roots politics and on the Internet.

Although newspapers remain a strong medium of communication, critics have raised a number of concerns about their future in the face of the new media competition. For instance, some charge that newspapers have become so formulaic in their design and reporting styles that they may actually discourage new approaches to telling stories and reporting news. Another criticism is that many one-newspaper cities cover only issues and events of -interest to middle- and upper-middle-class readers, thereby underreporting the experiences and events that affect poorer and working-class citizens. In addition, given the rise of newspaper chains, the likelihood of including new opinions, ideas, and information in mainstream daily papers may be diminishing. Although wealthy and powerful chains may keep smaller struggling papers solvent, such chains sometimes have little commitment to local communities beyond profits. Chain journalism tends to discourage watchdog journalism and the crusading traditions of newspapers. Like other business managers, many news executives prefer not to offend investors or outrage potential advertisers by running too many investigative reports, especially business probes. Indeed, reporters generally undercover the business and ownership arrangements in their own industry.

Since the 1990s, the social definition and role of a reporter has been in question and in transition. In reporting the latest White House gossip, weekly supermarket tabloids had a readership three and four times larger than that of *The New York Times*, which itself followed up on stories that first appeared in tabloids. Talk-show hosts were also performing news functions by bringing to light controversial issues. Giving third-party candidates like Ross Perot a platform, Larry King's talk show on CNN played a journalistic role in both the 1992 and the 1996 presidential campaigns. By 2000, the 24-hour cable-news prime-time talk shows had become major venues for political discussion and national debate. The 1990s and early 2000s also saw furious competition for younger readers weaned on moving images in a highly visual culture. Because most major newspapers are now available via interactive computer services, the old battle lines between print and electronic culture need to be redrawn and remapped. For better or worse, journalism today encompasses a host of resources that perform news and entertainment functions.

The future of news

In critiquing the limits of TV news stories four nights a week, Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*, "anchored" by Jon Stewart, parodies the narrative conventions of the evening news: the clipped 8-second "sound bite" interview that severely limits meaning or the formulaic shot of the TV news "standup," which depicts a reporter "on location" at the site of the report, apparently establishing credibility by revealing



Jon Stewart, *The Daily Show*

that he or she was really there. On *The Daily Show*, Stewart's cast of reporter-fools (who actually seldom leave the studio) are digitally superimposed in front of exotic foreign locals or shot with the silly graphic "Anytown, USA" appearing over their shoulder. Stewart, as the fake anchor, also spoofs "real" national TV news anchors who report incredible events and canned government pronouncements without a trace of emotion or irony. Stewart, on the other, will interrupt his reports to marvel at the incredible, share irony with the audience, or to rail against official double talk. While national news operations like MSNBC thought nothing of adopting the Pentagon's slogan, "Operation Iraqi Freedom," as its own graphic title, *The Daily Show* offers its satiric graphic counter, "Mess O' Potamia."

When *The Daily Show* used a conventional woman-on-the-street interview (taking footage from one of the national news programs), Stewart stepped out of his fake detached anchor mode to comment on the quality of an interviewee's response: apparent

“shock” that mega-retailer Wal-Mart employs illegal aliens. Stewart shouted at the video clip: “Lady, why do you think that sweatshirt you just bought cost 29 cents?” As news court jester, Stewart exposes the melodrama of TV news that nightly depicts the world in various stages of corruption and disorder while at the same time offering the stalwart presence of celebrity-anchors overseeing it all from their hi-tech command centers. From Walter Cronkite’s soothing “And that’s the way it is ...” to Dan Rather’s brief flirtation with “Courage!” as signature signoffs, the main network news anchors have functioned for more than 40 years as melodramatic heroes restoring a sense of order through the power and reassurance of their individual celebrity: no matter how bad things are, they are there for us and on top of it. As satirist, Stewart isn’t so sure, arguing that the “city” is a mess and badly in need of repair – and with a little more amazement, irony, outrage and emotion.

Much of the limits and unimaginative quality in both our fictional and non-fictional storytelling forms has to do with TV executives and news producers finding it easier to repeat the familiar rather than develop a new variation or generic hybrid that might tell a different tale, challenge a comfortable genre, or even invent a new story form. Although the world has changed (except for splashy new graphic openings), local TV news has virtually gone unaltered for the last 30 years, still limiting reporters’ stories to a minute and a half and relying on canned “Action News” and “Eyewitness News” packaged formats, complete with dramatic theme music, that continue to roundup and

rundown the days random local crimes (“if it bleeds, it leads”) in storytelling that is haphazardly presented and has virtually no impact on the larger community.

Perhaps the biggest lack of narrative imagination, which has the most serious implications for democracy, has to do with our national political life and the ways campaign managers (and their PR “spin doctors”) package our leaders. At one level, of course, most Americans make judgments about who they will vote for based on 30-second TV spots that the candidates produce themselves and spend millions of contributed dollars to buy time on local stations, cable channels and the national networks. Like many 30-second product commercials, political ads are most often limited romantic tales that associate the candidate with wholesome virtues – like decency, patriotism and “family values.” At the local level, and less often nationally, candidates ambush rivals with melodramatic “attack ads,” which impugn the integrity of Candidate B for ruining “the city” (e.g., raising taxes) or shaking the social order (e.g., favoring the rich) and offering Candidate A as heroic counterpoint. But most often political ads portray candidates in some idyllic rural setting as civilized champions of honor, duty and service. Unfortunately, though, we don’t get much information on the candidate’s ideas about key social problems like the U.S. role in policing world affairs or the increasing influence of international business conglomerates, which, by the way, fund many of these spots and in exchange the dark problems of corporate culture are not usually mentioned.

Like many a 30-second commercial,

the slick exterior of the smartly packaged candidate emerges as a winning product line, riding a tractor or romancing a crowd. But in the end we don't learn much about the characters who gave the money for the ad, what their interests are, and what the candidate's obligations are for such financial favors. The basic problem with selling candidates on TV, however, is that a generation of young voters – raised on the TV satire and political cynicism of “Weekend Update” on *Saturday Night Live*, Leno, Letterman, Conan O’Brian, *The Simpsons*, *South Park* and *The Daily Show* – are not buying these hollow 30-second romantic and melodramatic tales. Although overall eligible voter turnout increased to 60 percent for the 2004 presidential election (vs. 51 percent in 2000), the 18-to-29-year-old voter turnout was just 52 percent (although this was up from 42 percent in 2000).

News outlets today – whether TV or print or online — are working to compete in a world overloaded with out-of-context information where data has become so fragmented that the traditional mainstream journalism has lost its bearings. The best journalism, however, continues to sustain its democratic traditions: making sense of important events, telling the nation's main stories, watching over our central institutions, and serving as a check on power. And this latter function is crucial at a time when mainstream journalism's power has diminished. As Andrew Card, George W. Bush's chief of staff, warned the press early in 2004: “[The news media] don't represent the public anymore than other people do. In our democracy, the people who represent the public stood for election.

... I don't believe you [the press] have a check and balance function.”

Journalism's current dilemma is twofold. On one hand, “new news” forms have short-circuited mainstream news media's power, drawing off readers and viewers. As Mark McKinnon, a leading Republican strategist in George W. Bush's 2004 campaign, argues, the old news forms and the mainstream press corps “sit in real-time limbo, lost in the dust of the Internet and cable.” On the other hand, the major TV anchors and print journalists, who could make a difference in leading journalism to a new role in this fragmented information age, now find themselves increasing as small cogs in large conglomerates. And in the corporate age, news stories about the economic and democratic implications of the business dealings of large entertainment conglomerates are usually not viewed in the best interest of the corporation. So American journalism has moved through its partisan, penny press and modern TV eras to this current corporate moment. The significance of this shift is the downturn in stories about events or issues important to readers as citizens and as members of communities to information of interest to readers and viewers, now seen primarily as consumers, private individuals and focus groups.

Richard Campbell is Director of the Journalism Program at Miami University of Ohio and former Director of the School of Journalism at Middle Tennessee State University. He is the author of *Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication* and *60 Minutes and the News: A Mythology for Middle America*. He has worked in print and broadcast journalism in Milwaukee. He holds a Ph.D. in Radio-TV-Film from Northwestern University.