

# **Print (and Video) to Screen:** *Journalism in motion pictures of the 1990s.*

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Paul Steinle  
*Formerly of Quinnipiac College*  
Hamden, Connecticut 06518  
(*Presently at Southern Oregon University*  
Ashland, Oregon. 97520)

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## Introduction

Journalism and the lives of journalists have long been favorite themes for screen writers and movie makers. This was also true during the 1990s. Journalism was portrayed in the background and foreground of many films describing journalists and journalistic practice.

Overall, a balanced picture was presented of print journalists, often describing them as idiosyncratic and driven. But, in most instances, print journalists were also depicted as useful and ethical contributors to society.

On the other hand, television journalists were rarely shown making a contribution to society. In most instances, television reporters were portrayed as indifferent to society, primarily seeking to enhance their reputations with spectacular or sensational reporting. By featuring predominantly self-centered, sensationalistic reporters, television news= overall contributions to society were ignored and its worth was devalued.

## The Scope and Findings

For this research, 23 films were identified that were released during the 1990s with *significant* journalism themes or with journalists in key roles.

Journalism was a favorite subject for screenwriters for a number of reasons. Journalists play a leadership role in shaping tastes and defining mores, so they tend to be cultural vanguards exploring the cutting edge of society, experiencing change firsthand and agonizing over the implications of change. Using journalism as a plot device also provides a screenwriter entry into any subject. Making a screen character a journalist gives the screenwriter a plot device to probe into any subject and to deliver exposition quickly. Journalists have the prerogative to ask anyone tough questions and to investigate any subject -- either serious or trivial.

Journalists also tend to be quirky, driven, passionate people who can become interesting characters. Journalists also deal with major issues and they may be inserted into dangerous situations -- another good formula for drama, or action, or both.

The practice of journalism may also yield dramatic story fodder. Journalism is bounded by a set of ethical standards, but those standards are unclear and often in dispute. So, a journalism character can go wrong (or right) in many ways, and it gives the screenwriter a chance to explore ethical standards, watch standards being established (or torn down), and see how these standards affect the journalism characters (and/or society) in the screen play.

## How Journalism Drove Plot

Journalism rendered at least four storytelling functions in major motion pictures in the 1990s.

First, journalists were the key characters in a number of films and their activities as practicing journalists were critical to the story line. Second, the ethics and practice of journalism itself were the predominant focus of a handful of films. Third, characters were cast as journalists, but their professional activities neither reflected on the practice of journalism nor determined the direction the plot in those films followed. And fourth, journalists -- mostly TV reporters -- appeared merely as transitional

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devices advancing the plot of many movies.

In researching this topic, 23 films in which journalists or journalism fulfilled the first three functions cited here were identified and studied.

A considerably more comprehensive list would have to be compiled to collect all the 1990s films that fulfilled the criteria for the fourth category. So that category is not addressed in this paper.

There are ten films from the first category -- where journalists and their activities as practicing journalists are critical to the story line:

<b>Film</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b><i>Year released</i></b>
<i>Die Hard 2</i>	Renny Harlin	1990
<i>A Show of Force</i>	Bruno Barreto	1990
<i>Year of the Gun</i>	John Frankenheimer	1991
<i>Newsies</i>	Ken Ortega	1992
<i>Straight Talk</i>	Barnet Kellman	1992
<i>The Pelican Brief</i>	Alan J. Pakula	1993
<i>Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil</i>	Clint Eastwood	1997
<i>True Crime</i>	Clint Eastwood	1999
<i>Snow Falling on Cedars</i>	Scott Hicks	1999
<i>The Runaway Bride</i>	Garry Marshall	1999

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The study found six films from the second category -- where the practice of journalism is the central focus of the films:

<b>Film</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b><i>Year released</i></b>
<i>Hero</i>	Stephen Frears	1992
<i>The Paper</i>	Ron Howard	1994
<i>Up Close and Personal</i>	Jon Avnet	1996
<i>Mad City</i>	Costa-Gavras	1997
<i>Winchell</i>	Paul Mazursky	1998
<i>The Insider</i>	Michael Mann	1999

This study identified nine widely distributed films from the third category -- where journalists were prominently featured, but their status as journalists was not really material to the outcome of the plot or the motivations of the key characters:

<b>Films</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b><i>Year released</i></b>
<i>He Said, She Said</i>	Ken Kwapis and Marisa Silver	1991
<i>The Other Woman</i>	Jag Mundhra	1992
<i>Universal Soldier</i>	Roland Emmerich	1992
<i>Straight Talk</i>	Barnet Kellman	1992
<i>Born Yesterday</i>	Luis Mandoki	1993
<i>I Love Trouble</i>	Charles Shyer	1994
<i>Ready to Wear (Pret-a-Porter)</i>	Robert Altman	1994
<i>Celebrity</i>	Woody Allen	1998

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<b>Films</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Year released</b>
<i>Message in a Bottle</i>	Luis Mandoki	1999
<i>Never Been Kissed</i>	Raja Gosnel	1999

In order to analyze the portrayal of journalism in 1990s films, I split the films into two further subcategories: films about print journalists and those about TV journalists.

### **TV News is Trashed**

A Northeastern Airlines jet has been circling Dulles International Airport over Washington, D.C. for more than an hour, and it's running low on fuel. On board, Richard Thornberg (William Atherton), a television field reporter, ignores a "Fasten Seat Belts" sign, grabs a cabin phone and rushes into a restroom despite the anxious protests of a flight attendant. Given this scenario, a screenwriter defines the television journalist of the 1990s in a single word.

"Moron," says the flight attendant, after Thornberg locks himself in.

"Network, here I come . . . ," mutters the career-fixated Thornberg, after barricading himself in the john.

This sublimely self-centered reporter is waiting to report on a desperate situation in *Die Hard 2* (1990). Half-a-dozen airplanes are circling in a snowstorm after terrorists have seized control of Dulles Airport. Thornberg's report will ignite panic and, in the screenwriter's view, his action is likely to propel his career.

. . . The likelihood of a full scale and deadly battle is dangerously close . . . , says Thornberg. "The horrifying fact is that no one is safe, whether in the planes above Dulles or in the terminal below. . . . A holiday season of peace and love has turned into a nightmare. . . . At least the truth is not held hostage because, I, Richard Thornberg, just happen to be here to put his [sic] life on the line for humanity and for country. . . ."

Thornberg was making his second screen appearance as the reporter-Hollywood-likes-to-hate. In *Die Hard* (1988), he threatened to bring down the Immigration and Naturalization Service on a frightened Mexican-American housekeeper in order to interview two kindergarten-aged children in her care.

Television news reporters have appeared as a transitional and atmospheric device in films as early as 1968 (*The Boston Strangler*), but each year the portrayal has become less polite, darker and

more intrusive.

Richard Thornberg's characterization reflects the kind of portrayal TV news reporters could expect in the 1990s. Thornberg's persona -- the unethical, career-driven, insensitive, and manipulative TV reporter -- is reflected among the news media posse who hound their victims like Keystone Cops with video cameras. In dozens of 1990s films, mobs of relentlessly insensitive TV reporters rush around like a gaggle of geese feeding on turmoil and tragedy.

In at least two other major films in the 1990s the behind-the-scenes practices of TV journalism also come to the foreground to play a dark role.

### **The Really Bad Guys**

*Hero* is a satirical morality play with an ironic title performed against the backdrop of a local TV news organization in which Chevy Chase is cast in a supporting role as a wise-guy TV news director. TV reporter Gayle Gayley (Geena Davis), who travels to another city to accept a reporting award, is summed up by her news director as a driven professional. "They are all alike, the good ones," says Chase about Gayley. "They are junkies for the story."

Television journalists are also ghouls, says the screenwriter.

After Gayley's flight home crashes, her cameraman is dispatched to videotape the accident. Framed against the burning plane, the cameraman demonstrates complete disregard for Gayley and her co-passengers. "Major awards. Major awards," he happily mumbles while filming the inferno.

Fortunately, Gayley has been dragged from the plane before the fire erupts, but the face of television journalism has been clearly documented. Its practitioners are narcissistic, consumed by craft, motivated only by competition and awards, and insensitive to the victims whose stories they are merchandising.

In the final scene of *Hero*, a key character tries to inject some sanity. "This is not a news story," he says. "This is real life." But only he and the audience are listening.

### **America's Most-trusted Gets Revenge**

Costa-Gavras' *Mad City* (1997) is an even more damning indictment of television news.

Max Brackett (Dustin Hoffman) is a ballsy TV reporter who has been demoted to a smaller market newsroom after a confrontation with a network superstar. Brackett goes further astray when he manipulates a personal tragedy to pump up his career. He happens upon the takeover of a local museum by a recently fired guard, Sam Bailey (John Travolta). Despite the fact that Bailey is holding a dozen children hostage, Brackett counsels the guard to extend the takeover and appeal to the public directly by going on television. Bailey is simple-minded enough to go along with this plan which ultimately leads to tragedy.

Brackett's motives are clear.

"How do I know you're coming back?" asks Bailey, after Brackett makes an appeal to go outside and talk to the authorities.

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“Because you’re the best show in town,” says Brackett.

The further irony in *Mad City* is that Brackett is trumped by an even more cynical, manipulative television anchor man, Kevin Hoffman (Alan Alda).

“I think (Bailey) will talk to me,” Kevin tells a colleague. “I’m the man Americans trust.”

Subsequently, when Brackett won’t cooperate with him, Kevin Hoffman discredits Brackett and Bailey by distorting several interviews in the editing suite.

In *Mad City*’s concluding scene, an intern, who has been pumped up by anchorman Hoffman to become an on-air reporter in the short span of this brief news event, sees Bailey die in an explosion. On the air she blurts out, “He’s (Bailey) confetti!”

Innocence has been coopted by the allure of television news.

### **The Good Guys**

In only three films, two notable and one not widely seen, are TV journalists portrayed slightly more positively in the 1990s.

In an obscure but intriguing Bruno Barretto film about radical unrest and government suppression in Puerto Rico, *A Show of Force* (1990), a local TV reporter (Amy Irving) is persistent and helps unravel a deceitful government plot.

Irving’s character exhibits courage and common sense, and she conspires to entrap a renegade FBI agent (Kevin Spacey) by getting him to confess on live television. But, since she had inadvertently led police to a suspect whom they killed, her character is motivated more by guilt than persistence and more facilitated by serendipity than journalistic craft.

### **When Sally Meets Tally**

In *Up Close and Personal* (1996) the heroine, Tally Atwater (Michelle Pfeiffer) is a star-struck ingénue develops under the tutelage of former network correspondent Warren Justice (Robert Redford). Justice changes her professional name from Sally to Tally after he is impressed by her on-air appearance. “She eats the lens. . .” says Justice with preposterously grave admiration.

Her motives are throughly show-biz rather than news-biz at the start of the film. “I just want to be a star,” she intones sincerely on her resume tape. But in the movie’s final scene the screen writers (Joan Didion and John Gregory Dunne) want us to believe Tally’s journalistic credentials can now be stamped valid.

“Why are we in the news business, she asks rhetorically in a solemn speech to her awe-struck colleagues? “I’m only here for one reason,” says Atwater, “to tell the STORY. . . .”

That sounds like a revelation for Atwater, but there is no hard evidence in the film that she has any notion how these “stories” she now seeks to tell might be gathered and verified, if they are not dumped into her lap.

### **Greed Trumps Self-Promotion**

Only in Michael Mann's Academy Award-nominated film, *The Insider* (1999), do we encounter an authentic, multidimensional television journalist with any palpably redeeming virtues.

Lowell Bergman (Al Pacino) is a film character modeled on a former, real-life CBS *60-Minutes* field producer. Bergman is elevated on the screen when he faces off against greed, a more insidious character flaw than naivete or remorseless self-promotion.

What are you -- a businessman or a newsman? Bergman barks at a Don Hewitt-like character (Philip Hall Baker) who seems to be more concerned with CBS's corporate interests than the public's interest.

Unfortunately, the actual sequence of events surrounding CBS News's decision to withhold the broadcast of an insider's interview, condemning the Brown and Williamson tobacco company, have been altered in the film (Osbourne, *Brill's Content*). But the screenplay vividly dramatizes the dilemma a publicly-held news organization like CBS News faces when confronting a litigious corporate giant like BMW.

Bergman is arrogant and manipulative, but also professional and persistent. And he is driven by the worthy goal of delivering the deadly truth about nicotine dependency to the public.

### **The Linear Media**

Reporters with pads and pencils received a gentler treatment on the screen in the 1990s than that given to TV reporters.

In those films that took print journalism seriously and in which journalism was important to the plot, print journalists generally were depicted as serious professionals. They were often hard-boiled and skeptical, but more likely to adhere to ethical standards and pursue a quest for truth-telling than their video counterparts.

Chronologically, the first 1990s film in this category is John Frankenheimer's little seen *Year of the Gun* (1991).

David Raybourne (Andrew McCarthy) is a reporter for an English-language Rome newspaper, *American News*, who is writing a fictional account of the 1970s Red Brigade rampage through Italy. The story heats up when Raybourne conjures up a scene in his manuscript in which the Italian prime minister is kidnaped. Coincidentally, the Red Brigade has just such a scheme in the works and they come after Raybourne when they discover what he has written.

The most illuminating (and intimidating) journalism character in the film is Alison King (Sharon Stone), a big-time news photographer who has convinced herself she can find refuge behind her camera in the midst of mortal danger.

>The first time I put my life on the line to get a picture was in Saigon, King tells Raybourne. >I saw him throw the bomb and in a millisecond I decided to stand my ground. So when the bomb went off the camera was to my eye and I caught the explosion in stop frames.

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>One minute the crowd was sitting there having their morning croissants and coffee. The next minute everything was airborne. Chairs. Tables. Arms. Legs.

>Then it was all over, and I was still standing. Still shooting.

>I deliberately snapped a few photos to steady myself before I waded into the gore and finished the roll. . . . A lot of people are repelled at what I do. But I want them to look at my pictures to see what I've seen, feel what I've felt. To be witnesses.

>My job is to bring back the bad news and keep the body count.=

King is an action-driven photographer, hooked on danger, who delivers unforgettable news pictures. King is more driven than Osbourne, and her determination to read his private manuscript and her inability to keep her mouth shut after she does, gets King and Osbourne kidnaped and nearly assassinated.

In *Year of the Gun* the audience learns about the danger inherent in documenting a revolution, but may be shocked by the recklessness behavior needed to get that job done.

### **The Strait-laced Reporter**

In *The Pelican Brief* (1993), reporter Greg Grantham (Denzel Washington) is a much more sober and conservative reporter. Grantham is a preppie, buttoned-down, Bob Woodward-style investigative journalist. Grantham's main character trait is respectability and his main asset is his position on the staff of the capital's leading newspaper.

Grantham is so upstanding and trustworthy, people hand him great stories. His sources range from a Supreme Court justice to a White House custodian. When a young law student, Darby Jones (Julia Roberts), calls with a tip about a conspiracy she claims has led to the assassination of Grantham's Supreme Court source and a second justice, Grantham risks his skin to save Darby and helps her nail the bad guys.

Grantham treats his sources with respect and it pays off. **AI** promise I will protect you as a confidential source. . . ,@he tells a lawyer, and that lawyer's subsequent revelations confirm the assassination plot. Grantham dresses conservatively, lives up to his promises, and is awarded with great tips and insider information.

### **Getting A Wood@**

*The Paper* (1994) focuses on one day in the life of a New York City tabloid, *The Sun*. The quirky characters in *The Paper* are believable newspaper folks -- idiosyncratic and gossipy with screwed-up personal lives. They love their jobs and they're hungry for Awood@ -- the tabloid jargon for blockbuster headlines.

The senior editor, Bernie White (Robert Duval), is in denial about his health -- he chain-smokes,

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ignoring a hacking cough, despite a cancer diagnosis -- and he has sacrificed his family life to his profession.

The managing editor, Alicia Clark (Glen Close), is a masthead-climber obsessed by status -- a higher salary, a loftier title and a job at New York's most prestigious newspaper -- *The Sentinel* (Their motto: "All the news in the world.">@).

And the city editor, Henry Hackett (Michael Keaton), is a warmhearted guy who loves his feisty tabloid and tosses away an opportunity for a nine-to-five job with a better salary at *The Sentinel*. He falls on his own sword when he sneaks a look at his competitor's notes during a job interview in order to crack open a big lead for *The Sun* (The *Sun*'s motto: "It shines for all.">@).

At a 3:00 p.m. story meeting, the editors act like a dysfunctional family when they try to decide whether to run "Wood" ("Gotcha!">@) on a story about two young black men who may be falsely charged with murder, or to pursue another angle which may vindicate them.

>We taint them today, says Clark. >We make 'em look good on Saturday. Everybody's happy. . . (laughter).=

>This is a story that can alter the public's perception of two teenagers who might be innocent and, as a weekend bonus, ignite another race war. How about that? says Hackett.

>. . . That's not what this is all about, says Clark. >We got our ass kicked yesterday, so you want to beat everyone today. That's all.=

>Yeah. I do, says Hackett. >You don't?=-

>Give me a break, says Clark.

>Fuck it, then, says Hackett. >Let's not beat anybody. Let's not beat anybody all week. What da= ya= say, let's not beat anybody until October. Fuck it. Let's not beat anybody again for the rest of our lives.=

>So, what do you want to run? says senior editor White.

>They didn't do it? says Hackett, tentatively.

>You don't have that, says Clark. >You don't have close to that.= Hackett starts to protest again.

>Hey, says White, cutting in. >You don't have it. You know it. You wanna= run the story? You've got five hours until eight o'clock. Go, get the story. Hey, do your job. Do your job. But don't take a position because it's the opposite of what she says. It's like watching a bunch of sixth-graders for Christ sake.=

Despite the bickering, at the end of the day, they all conspire, in their own fashion, to make the right ethical decision to protect the reputation of the two black teenagers who are falsely accused of

murder.

*The Paper* says that newspaper people are goofy and feisty, but their journalistic code of ethics can supersede those flaws.

### Just Say No

In Clint Eastwood's *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, John Kelso (John Cusack) is a freelance writer for *Town and Country Magazine*. His role as a journalist is important to the story because it gives him entry into a bizarre cast of characters who inhabit this slice-of- decadent-southern-life story. However, there is one heavy duty journalism scene where he is pressured to sign a pre-story agreement allowing the subject of his story a final edit of the piece. He refuses, and a victory for journalistic autonomy is rung up in a major motion picture.

### Check Your Facts

Surprisingly, a valid breach of journalism ethics provides a major plot point in the frothy *Runaway Bride* (1999). Ike Graham (Richard Gere) a columnist at *USA Today* is fired after he writes a column about Maggie Carpenter (Julia Roberts). He wrote she abandoned grooms at the altar *seven* times when in fact she only did *three* times. So he is fired for writing a story without checking his facts.

### An Issues Piece

In *True Crime* (1999), Steve Everett (Clint Eastwood), a hard-drinking, womanizing reporter with the *Oakland Tribune*, follows his nose for news and uncovers information which delays the midnight execution of Frank Beachum (Isaiah Washington), a falsely accused man. *True Crime* is a testosterone-charged story in which Everett starts an affair with his managing editor's wife and engages in locker-room-language debates with his executive editor, Alan Mann (James Woods.)

The screenwriter cuts through the facade that modern journalism erects to justify some of its more sensational coverage in Mann's cynical, no-nonsense exchange with his managing editor, Bob Findley ( Denis Leary). After Findley claims the newspaper's coverage of the condemned man's execution constitutes an *Issues piece*, the writer skewers this pretense:

> . . . Well, dog my cats, says Mann.  
 > It's capital punishment, Alan, says Findley. >We are putting a man to death tonight. We are killing a human being.  
 >Well, stop the presses. Bob, by the way, that Amy whats-her-name -- the pregnant broad old Frank shot in the throat -- was she a human being, huh? Is that part of the issue?  
 AYeah. That is part of the issue.  
 >Bob, let me tell you . . . (Mann is opening a package of vendor food). Crumb cake?  
 >No.

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>Issues are the shit that we make up to give ourselves an excuse to run good stories, okay? Judge grabs a female attorney's tits -- the sex discrimination i..s..s..u..e. Nine-year-old boy blows away his brother with an Uzi -- that's the child violence issue. People wanna= read about sex organs and blood. We make up issues, so they don't have to feel too nasty about it. Got it?=-

### **Journalism is Making Choices**

The final motion picture of the 1990s in which journalism plays a key role is *Snow Falling on Cedars* (1999) The central character is Ishmael Chambers (Ethan Hawke) a young man who has inherited a newspaper in a small San Juan Islands community in coastal northwest Washington from his father, Arthur (Sam Shepard). Ishmael has learned journalism growing up at his father's side.

A Journalism is facts,@ says Ishmael.

A But which facts?@ says his father. A You can't print them all. Journalism is making choices -- cutting out what's not important.@

The senior Chambers is also an ethical icon in his community. He criticizes the U.S. government's decision to intern Japanese-Americans during WWII and it costs him readers and advertisers. And, at Arthur's funeral, the Japanese-American community honors the editor and sets a high standard for his son.

A Your father was a man of great fairness and compassion, Ishmael,@ says one elder Japanese-American man at the cemetery. A We know that you will follow in his footsteps and honor his legacy.@

But Ishmael has been twice wounded -- severely. He lost the love of a young Japanese-American girl who was his high school classmate and he lost part of his left arm to Japanese bullets during the invasion of a South Pacific island.

When he discovers documents that may vindicate the Japanese-American man who has married his former sweetheart -- a man charged with murder -- he has to work through his old despair before he delivers the documentation to the authorities.

Despite his equivocation he tells an attorney his decision was inevitable. A I had to (reveal the information),@ he tells the lawyer. A I had no choice.@

Ishmael's dialogue rings true. We have witnessed the development of his ethical compass and his actions are motivated. For saving this man, he also receives the kindest praise given to any journalist in a 1990s film. Outside the courthouse, his former sweetheart embraces him and says to him, tearfully, A I am so grateful for your gentle heart.@

At the end of the decade, print journalism's connection to humanity is reaffirmed.

### **Summary**

This analysis of the motion pictures of the 1990s which dwell on journalism or journalists

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indicates that, on balance, television journalists are more often a target for criticism and scorn than their print counterparts.

This phenomenon is based on two primary factors. First, the weaknesses of multidimensional television journalism are more exposed to critical comment than are the weaknesses of print journalism where a series of editing safeguards protect reporters.

Second, there is a predisposition to denigrate TV reporting by screen writers who themselves are more closely aligned with the linear print culture.

### **TV's Weaknesses are Exposed**

The weaknesses are more apparent in television journalism because when TV news presents poorly conceived, poorly researched, poorly verified, poorly written, and poorly presented reporting -- the viewer can't easily skip over the bad in search of the good. Since the stories are presented serially, we must confront the bad waiting for the good. In a newspaper the reader can skip the bad and search for the good. In television that is not possible.

In television news the audience may also be predisposed to dislike the messenger because the viewers can see the reporters asking tough or insensitive questions; we rarely see print reporters ask those same controversial questions and therefore print journalists don't bear the prejudices of those practices.

Television news has also made a dubious tactical decision to emphasize live reporting. TV news=Alive@format -- which has become the predominant format for local news reporting in the 1990s -- is particularly vulnerable to the dissemination of ill-informed stories that may be highly speculative and even inflammatory. Live reporting can serve the medium well in breaking news situations -- like floods or rescues -- but the rush to report when there is little known also tends to devalue the medium.

Finally, screen writers are generally not exposed to the best local TV news. Screen writers tend to live in New York City and Los Angeles where local TV news reporters and anchors tend to be selected primarily for their photogenic appearance or their audacity and where the news has a tradition of being celebrity-focused rather than community-focused. They don't see TV news in many second-tier cities where more thorough, enterprise reporting shows up more often on the news.

### **The Nature of TV News is Suspect**

Finally, the linear print culture does not trust the multidimensional, television presentation culture.

The print culture believes that the act of *presenting* the news distorts it and distorts the judgment of the people who present it. Consequently, the print culture belittles the presentation culture.

Television news inherently includes all the aspects of presentation -- a person speaking directly to an audience -- as an integral element of its delivery of the news. As a result, TV reporters are to some degree evaluated by their facial features, their haircuts and their tone of voice in addition to the substance of their reports.

Some TV reporters/anchors invest too much energy in their presentation to the detriment of their reporting. But, at the same time, print journalists, commentators and screenwriters have focused

disproportionately on the presentation aspect of TV news, since it is so different from the rituals and practices of print reporting. As a result, screen writers tend to disparage the presentation aspect of TV reporting while neglecting the more substantial aspects of television reporting.

Print reporting has also been a fixture in our culture for a longer period (since 1700) and the form has developed a greater reservoir of good will in our society.

And, TV news is a team effort. It may be difficult for a screenwriter to understand how this news team functions, and it's cumbersome to dramatize a story of teamwork versus the story of the lone (print) journalist. As a result, TV reporting is inadequately depicted.

The net result of these phenomena is a skewed, negative portrayal of TV news on the screen. This is harmful for at least two reasons. Our society needs good role models on the screen to inspire young men and women to enter this important field, and the public needs a fair and sophisticated depiction of this field of journalism to appreciate the contributions that TV news can and often does make to society.

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