

PREVENTING INACCURATE MEDIA:
A GATEKEEPING ANALYSIS OF HOW NEWS MANAGERS ARE OVERSEEING
THE PROCESS OF CITIZEN JOURNALISM

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Master of Arts

by
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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

PREVENTING INACCURATE MEDIA: A GATEKEEPING ANALYSIS OF HOW
NEWS MANAGERS ARE OVERSEEING THE PROCESS OF CITIZEN
JOURNALISM

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DEDICATION

When I first told my family that I wanted to obtain my master's degree, I do not think they realized all the late nights, and time that it would take. I missed out on some family time, but they supported me because they knew this was an important goal of mine. My family stepped up to take care of my dog, Lola, who is like a child, while I worked tirelessly on school assignments and projects.

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PREVENTING INACCURATE MEDIA: A GATEKEEPING ANALYSIS OF HOW NEWS MANAGERS ARE OVERSEEING THE PROCESS OF CITIZEN JOURNALISM?

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the process that news managers at local broadcast television stations use when vetting user-generated content or citizen journalism, focusing on techniques used for verification and implications for the future. The research was completed using a qualitative gatekeeping analysis of interviews and discussions with ten people in news management positions such as News Director, Assistant News Director, Executive Producer, Managing Editor and General Manager from stations located with media markets 19-29. As of 2018, market 19, Cleveland, has 1.4 million households and market 29, San Diego, has a little over 1 million. This includes Charlotte, North Carolina, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Raleigh, North Carolina, Cleveland, Ohio, San Diego, California and Portland, Oregon. Each interview was coded using the constant comparative method to find a better understanding of the use of citizen journalism and user-generated content in news rooms. By examining the process used in various newsrooms, this research attempts to define how to prevent fake media from getting on-air. By examining this topic through an array of interviews and other research, the findings will ultimately lead to a better understanding of how to utilize citizen journalism or user-generated content in the best way possible.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Images scrolling across Fox News channel showing the devastation and impact of Hurricane Harvey in Texas-one picture was later determined to be fake. Barr (2017) describes that during coverage of the natural disaster, Fox News personality Jesse Watters discussed a tweet with an image of a shark swimming in flood waters. Fact-checking publication Politifact determined that the image was several years old, leading Watters to apologize for the comment on his Twitter account, (Barr, 2017). Qiu (2017) states that the photograph is a kayaker being followed by a shark off the coast of South Africa and was first featured in Africa Geographic magazine in 2005. The tweet went out in August 2017 and by January 2018 was able to generate 147,080 likes and 87,161 re-tweets. Willingham (2017) spoke with an internet and technology expert, who says many times, “likes” and “shares” can lead people to believe the content is trustworthy. There were similar prank images used during media coverage of Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Irene, (Qiu, 2017). In 2012, Superstorm Sandy tore through the New York City metro area, with news outlets showing images and video of the impact of the storm. A few are determined to be manipulated. Mahoney (2012) explains that a Twitter user stated during Superstorm Sandy that the New York Stock Exchange was under three feet of water, which was inaccurate, but nonetheless has the potential to damage a nation’s economy. In both examples, major news outlets were taking this media and distributing it out to the public as if it were accurate. This leads to an argument over whether there are

proper checks and balances in the field of journalism to determine the validity of such user-generated images.

These photos and videos typically fall under the term “citizen journalism,” also known more widely now as “user-generated content” and “participatory journalism,” where people submit media to be used by professional news outlets. Bentley (2013) describes how newsrooms had a hard time distinguishing what constitutes as a “citizen,” which is why the latter terms become more prevalent, (as cited in Anderson, Williams and Ogola, p. 184). It typically refers to content created by people who have no plan to develop a career in journalism, (Bentley, 2013, p. 184). A journalism organization might have procedures or criteria for employees to determine whether an image or video will be used for on-air purposes before it is broadcast. It can help news outlets when they cannot access a location or if a person is able to reach the location of an incident before news cameras arrive. In the twentieth century, quality newspaper journalism involved a reporter trained in writing and observation as well as libel laws and ethics of the profession.

There are examples of citizen journalism being vital in promoting activism. Bonilla and Rosa (2015) offer the example in 2014 when a tweet stating, “I just saw someone die,” with a picture of Michael Brown’s lifeless body in the middle of a street in Ferguson, Missouri, set off a chain of events, images uploaded of demonstrations and confrontations with police across social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter. Video of Eric Garner being placed in a chokehold by an NYPD officer prompted public outcry and aided the overall ensuing investigation, (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015, p. 5).

Borden and Tew (2007) discuss that professional journalists are typically guided by a set of rules that involves gatekeeping, factuality and objectivity. In terms of gatekeeping, journalism organizations typically try to select the most important information from a story relaying it to the audience without attempting to sensationalize. Journalists are tasked with reviewing claims to back up allegations within a story as part of factuality. It is expected that journalists remain objective in their reporting, withholding any personal judgment or bias from the story.

Citizen journalism came to the forefront with the introduction of *OhmyNews* network in 2000 and CNN iReport in 2006. At the time Ingram (2015) states that both were considered revolutionary and pioneering. Alejandro (2010) explains that the website, *OhmyNews* network in South Korea, was influential in determining the outcome of the South Korean presidential elections in December 2002. Seungahn and Chung (2016) describe how it had a unique setup in that professional journalists work alongside citizen journalists to help with news production, (p. 2303). The website had 100 professional staff members, including beat reporters and editorial staff, along with 70,000 registered citizens at its height. Almost half the news stories were produced by citizen journalists and placed on its homepage daily. Each story was categorized into five layers ranging from raw and unrefined to edited versions for publications. The citizen journalists employed at *OhmyNews* did not receive a salary but rather compensation through payment by readers who donate money to stories they like. The news stories produced by citizen journalists at the website were published through professional journalistic values, norms and skills. Professional journalists served as gatekeepers for stories, especially hard news. In some cases, a citizen journalist would receive a phone

call or e-mail from a staff member with a request to edit a story. In 2010, the website announced it would be re-launching as a blog dedicated to covering and discussing the world of citizen journalism and no longer accept new stories, (OhmyNews.com). As more citizen journalism websites were created, the site stated that it needed to refocus and with contributors from all over the globe, it was difficult to fact-check each story.

CNN iReport has changed its operation due to the rise of social media. Rather than asking users to post at the iReport site, the company, CNN, requesting that users use a hashtag #CNNiReport on social media platforms where staff at CNN will sift through looking for the best ones to use, (Ingram, 2015). Another change made was requiring stories to be verified by an editor before a user can post items to the site. This was due to an incident in 2008 where it was falsely reported that Apple CEO Steve Jobs had a heart attack. Schiffman (2008) explains that story prompted Apple shares to be sold off before the company denied the report and the stock could recover. CNN removed the story after it was flagged, and the user's account was disabled.

Fiedler (2008) mentions that some bloggers are joining groups such as the Media Bloggers Association or MBA, that asks members to adhere to a statement of principles that are like those advocated by the Society of Professional Journalists. It encourages bloggers to meet standards such as "honesty, fairness and accuracy, [to] distinguish fact from rumor and speculation [and to] act responsibly and with personal integrity."

A prominent broadcast journalist lost his job in an incident dubbed "Rathergate," (Bentley, 2016). In May 2004, a story narrated by CBS Anchor Dan Rather challenged the military service record of then-President George W. Bush. Bush was running for re-

election at the time. The report suggested that Bush received preferential treatment as a Texas Air National guard lieutenant in the 1970s, subsequently keeping him from being sent to serve in Vietnam during the war. Four documents were offered as proof of this allegation but within hours of the newscast, bloggers began to question the validity of the documents, suggesting the type on the memos was computer-generated and would not have been available during that time period. Ordon (2015) describes how that story ultimately ended Rather's 44-year career at CBS News; however, he stood by the story claiming it was accurate. The documents were never proved to be forgeries nor were they authenticated. Rather goes on to say that the network did not stand by the team on the show when the claims were exposed, which he blames on ownership changes at the network and corporate needs for political support.

This researcher hypothesizes that broadcast journalists employed in management positions have varied processes to review content before it makes it to air, including content submitted by staff as well as citizen journalists. By interviewing broadcast journalists working in media positions such as news directors, assistant news directors, and executive producers, this researcher aims to determine what has worked for stations and what has not. Using constant comparative method, the data, which includes interviews with news management, will be analyzed to find similarities and differences. This research is focused on broadcast television since it is an area familiar to the researcher. Broadcast television has a relationship with citizen journalism due to wide coverage areas in markets as well as desire for visually compelling images and video. This research is focused on images, video and text that are broadcast on-air. This is important to the researcher because many stations have a procedure in place to vet

content but manipulated images, video and text are getting on-air. The researcher would like to learn whether the system is flawed or if external factors such as social media and the Internet are harming the process. Manipulated content would likely affect the brand and credibility of a station which is another reason this researcher would like to evaluate the process.

Prior research shows those who favor narrow definitions of journalists, are “labeled as enemies of the First Amendment,” while those who want broader definitions are ridiculed for allowing “anonymous online hacks the same treatment as the most esteemed veterans of the media mainstream,” (Ugland & Henderson, 2007, p. 244). One of the biggest examples of success by a non-conventional journalist is Matthew Drudge’s claim, posted on the conservative website, *Drudge Report*, that President Clinton had an affair with a White House intern, (Docter, 2010, p. 598). It was picked up by mainstream media and even led to impeachment proceedings, (Docter, 2010, p. 598).

There have been many discussions on how to define who is a journalist. Gleason (2015) elaborates on the example of the state of Oregon, which tried to distinguish who is a journalist when the city of Lake Oswego City Council asked each person to provide a press pass or evidence of employment by a news media organization; however, it did not include bloggers or outlets that did not regularly cover meetings, (p. 379). Fairbanks (2008) describes how bloggers received credentials to attend both the Democratic and Republican National conventions during the 2008 election year. Democrats looked at posts, mission statements and web traffic in determining which bloggers qualified, but it was not disclosed how Republicans selected who was credentialed, (Fairbanks, 2008).

Goals of this Study

The purpose of this research is to examine what is being done to prevent images or video content from getting past the gatekeepers of broadcast television news organizations specifically looking at local news operations. A total of ten people currently employed at news organizations in editorial decision-making roles, such as news directors, assistant news directors and executive producers, were interviewed over the phone and recorded. The results of the study will help to start a discussion on what has worked for broadcast television stations and if the gatekeeping process has evolved at all.

Gatekeeping is a necessary component in the news distribution process. Typically, the work of the reporter is vetted by one or more editors, who check facts, spelling, and grammar, a headline is added and then for print organizations, the article is placed on the appropriate page or for broadcast stations, the slot in the newscast, (Bentley, 2016). Lindner (2017) clarifies that this process helps to ensure that news delivers a consistent product with factors such as pressing deadlines, limited resources, as well as an unpredictable supply of remarkable stories, creating a challenge. Part of gatekeeping, also known as “news routines,” entails editors assigning beats and stories to reporters as well as copy-editors who enforce the style guide for the organization, (Lindner, 2017, p. 1180).

This study is crucial in that the public is losing trust in the news media. A survey of 19,000 adults by the Knight Foundation (2018) determined that 43% of Americans have a negative view of the media while 33% have a positive view and 23% are neutral.

On a multi-item media trust scale from 0 to 100, the average American scored a 37. The spread of inaccurate information on the Internet is a major concern with news coverage according to 73% of Americans surveyed. It also found that 66% of Americans believe the news media does not do a good job in separating fact from opinion. The public is divided on who is responsible for ensuring the public has an accurate and politically balanced understanding of the news with 48% percent holding news media accountable and the other 48% stating people themselves are responsible. According to a Pew Research Center report, 23% of Americans have shared fabricated reports, (Jacobson, 2017). Weber, Prochazka, and Schweiger (2017) cite a study in which the name of the news organization and layout of an article were changed and when attributed to a reputable news brand, readers believed the article was higher in quality than a brand that was considered sensational or unprofessional, (p.3). This circulation of false stories does not help the public to trust the media. It is not only members of the public fooled by some of these fabricated reports. Benton (2016) explains the mayor of a small town in Louisiana, posted several articles on his Facebook page in the final 48 hours before the 2016 election, with headlines such as, “Hillary Clinton Calling for Civil War if Trump is elected,” and “Barack Obama Admits He Was Born in Kenya,” that he believed to be from verified news sources but were not.

It is important to determine if there is a step missing in the news gathering or verification process. It may be possible that there is little that gatekeepers of broadcast journalism can do since fake news stories are still accessible to the public through the Internet and disseminated quickly. Citizen journalism has proven that it is valuable to broadcast television newsrooms but also has disadvantages. It is beneficial to research

what steps can be taken to change the process of vetting news for the future. There have been incidents where elected officials or veteran news journalists have made errors in their reporting of facts which could be leading the public to not trust and value the information being published. This could be correlated to some of the examples indicated or there could be other factors.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Use of Citizen Journalism in News Media

Massive layoffs are becoming common at many news organizations due to factors such as a decrease in circulation, increasing costs and debt, and it has been suggested that this has contributed to a rise in citizen journalism to fill the gap, (Compton and Benedetti, 2010, p. 487). Online citizen journalism, for example, blogs and websites, started to appear in 2000, according to Lindner (2017), and grew with free, public engines, such as Blogger and WordPress. Stations are faced with covering the same area with less staff to edit and vet information. Citizen journalism is often utilized in situations where it can be difficult to get news staff on the ground, for example, when Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Harvey made landfall, (Mahoney, 2012). Many media companies have contributed to this trend as most did not forecast for the rapid growth of social media, and failed to devote resources to news gathering, and in turn, relied on citizen journalism, (Compton & Benedetti, 2010, p. 495). While there have been layoffs across the board, the remaining employees are being asked to do more work for the same amount of pay, (Compton & Benedetti, 2010, p. 490). Social networking sites have exploded, allowing non-professional journalists to create and publish their own content without a filter, filing reports from the frontline of major breaking news events such as train bombings in London and Madrid, (Compton & Benedetti, 2010, p. 491).

In 2016, Kuperberg (2016) states that Fox television stations in 11 markets started using the app, Fresco News, which allows users to receive assignments from newsrooms based on their location. The app users go to that location and capture images or video and submit that content to Fresco's team who then distributes it to the appropriate Fox television station. If the media is used on-air, the user receives money for the content. The CEO of Fresco, John Meyer, claims with broadcast television, there is usually only one angle to a story because there is one reporter or a camera there. He believes the app adds multiple perspectives providing a different dimension to a story.

There is much debate over what defines an individual as a "journalist." The Freedom of Information Act (1996) defines a journalist as "a representative of the news media as any person or entity that gathers information of potential interest to a segment of the public," and distributes that work, (as cited in Gleason, 2015, p. 380). The act defines news as "information that is about current events or that would be of current interest to the public," (Freedom of Information Act 1996, as cited in Gleason, 2015, p. 380).

Many tutorials and non-profits have been established to teach citizen journalists how to create news and assist in production techniques since many do not have formal training, (Bock, 2012, p. 640). While many professional journalists share an ideology that they are providing a public service and should always remain unbiased and objective, this frame of thinking is not always applied to citizen journalists since many do not have formal education in journalism or its ethics, (Bock, 2012, p. 641).

Professional broadcast journalists typically abide by a set of guidelines when it comes to scripting, such as having a declarative voice and using “elite sources” as well as “non-elite,” (Bock, 2012, p. 646). By contrast, citizen journalists will use more non-elite sources, as well as speaking in their own voice about what they are seeing, (Bock, 2012, p. 646). Supporters of citizen journalism believe the “rawness” of stories helps to create the authority that would normally be gained by a journalist’s professional experience, (Bock, 2012, p.650).

Success of Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism has been shown to promote activism and get a large group of voices involved, such as through protests following the shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Bonilla and Rosa (2015) state that the first example of citizen journalism was in 1991 during the beating of Rodney King by four Los Angeles police officers when a homemade VHS tape was produced and viewed as an influential tool to prosecute and view the full incident, (p. 5).

Following the tweet showing Michael Brown’s body in a Ferguson, Missouri, street, there was a series of demonstrations and confrontations with armed police that took place and were uploaded across social media, (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015, p. 4). There were a series of trending terms across social media that drew attention to these crimes, people posting pictures with their hands up or the “Million Hoodie March,” (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015, p. 8). In another example, Compton and Benedetti (2010) describe how a witness at the Vancouver International Airport used a hand-held video recorder to shoot video of a Polish immigrant, Robert Dziekanski, who was stunned by a Taser gun and

later died, (p. 491). Following the release of the video, there was public outcry and a probe into his death because the video contradicted reports from law enforcement, (Compton & Benedetti, 2010, p. 491). These examples show how citizen journalism has aided in providing concrete proof that defied reports from authorities such as police. Witt (2004) explores an occurrence where a citizen took photos of flag-draped coffins being loaded onto an airplane in Iraq. Those images eventually made their way to the front page of the *Seattle Times*, (p. 54). Smolkin (2004) explains that a cargo worker in Kuwait, Tami Silicio, took the photo because she was moved by the how each of the caskets were handled. Silicio then sent it to her friend, Amy Katz, who forwarded it to the *Seattle Times*. The military had a ban on media coverage of coffins returning to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware where most arrived. The policy was in place dating back to 1991 and the Persian Gulf War. A photo editor at the *Seattle Times* was worried publishing the photo could cost Silicio her job and after numerous phone calls and emails back and forth, Silicio agreed to allow the newspaper to run it. Her employer, Maytag Aircraft Corp, fired her as well as her husband who also worked for the company but at that point the photo had spread quickly. Eventually the Pentagon stopped further distribution of the photos and reaffirmed the ban from 1991 stating that it protected the privacy of servicemen and their families. Silicio later stated she was unaware of the ban but hoped it would help citizens form their own opinions about the war. In this situation, professional journalists did not have access to the coffins and there was a ban on press photographing coffins. The gatekeeping theory is applied in that Silicio was able to get around the military ban since she was a citizen. She sent the photograph to a friend who decided to bring it to the attention of the *Seattle Times*. This friend served as a gatekeeper in passing

along the image to the newspaper because likely she felt it was compelling and needed to be published. This was an image that the military did not want released but it managed to get through several people before it made its way to the media. The *Seattle Times* editor debated whether to publish it but ultimately decided it was suitable for publication.

Jakob (2016) discusses the photos taken at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. It started when Sergeant Joseph Darby had asked fellow enlisted members for photos of their time in Iraq. Specialist Charles Graner, known for his interest in photography, provided two compact disks, one with conventional photos of scenery while the other had photos of naked and hooded Iraqi detainees in demeaning and sexually suggestive poses, while US military members stood by, smiling and gesturing. It was so troubling to Darby that he handed the disk over to the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command in January 2004. Just a few months later, CBS news magazine, *60 Minutes*, aired the story on its April 27th, 2004 broadcast. This led to at least 11 major U.S. government investigations into prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib and other prison locations, (Bartone, 2010, p. 163). This was an area that was not accessible to the press. In terms of gatekeeping theory, this is an example where the news cannot cover everything that occurs. Darby serving as a gatekeeper in getting the image to the U.S. Army Criminal Investigative Command. It is not known how the images were able to get to *60 Minutes* however it would seem that a gatekeeper there felt the images needed to be broadcast and the public needed to be informed about the situation.

There have been instances in small communities of citizens taking it upon themselves to look further into issues that affect the surrounding area. Fanselow (2008) highlights specific examples of community blogs that have pushed for change, and in

some cases, succeeded. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* published an article in 2007 about methamphetamine abuse in Minnesota but the last paragraph mentioned a heroin network among teens in Northfield, about 45 miles from St. Paul. The author of the blog *Locally Grown Northfield*, Griff Wigley, decided to look into the issue. Wigley confirmed the information with the local police chief and provided more coverage of the issue with a dozen posts on the issue. More coverage than the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, a professional newspaper, (Fanselow, 2008, p. 24). The blog author Griff Wigley claims more counseling and treatment at high schools became available because of the blog, (Fanselow, 2008, p. 24). Many of these community blogs are also not afraid to call out local politicians and can report more extensively on community issues than investigative reporters at traditional media organizations, whose numbers are declining due to newsroom budgets and corporate ties, (Fanselow, 2008). For example, Wigley also questioned the city of Northfield policy on burning tree waste at a city lot. The city produced a panel to investigate the matter and decided that wood chipping would be better than burning. Gatekeeping theory is applied to this in that it is a story that many news outlets might not have the resources or desire to address. Wigley being a citizen in the area knew that it was a story that would be of value to his neighbors and in turn helped to advance the story more than the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*.

Many citizens turn to traditional media for information about politics, which was noticeable during the 2016 presidential election. Kaufhold, Valenzuela and De Zuniga (2010) evaluate whether citizen journalism can take the role of reporting during situations involving government affairs. Professional journalism is defined by the authors as “paid, trained and supervised journalists” where citizen journalism typically is unpaid, involves

no formal training and includes work that is typically unedited, (Kaufhold et al., 2010, p. 517). Citizen journalism was useful in the 2003 anti-war protests and election protests in Iran back in 2009 because the users had better access to the stories than professional journalists did, (Kaufhold, et al., 2010, p. 517). By surveying a group of adults, Kaufhold et al., (2010) determined that consumers of traditional media had more political knowledge than consumers of citizen journalism but both forms fostered participation and understanding of politics (p. 522).

Legal Definitions

Citizen journalism has been active longer than most people think, but it is only in recent times that the professional media has embraced it. As far back as 2003, public journalism started to make its way into traditional media. In some newsrooms, citizen journalism was shown to change public policy, and create new community organizations, (Witt, 2004, p. 50). An advocate for citizen journalism, Jay Rosen, has pushed for citizen bloggers to receive press credentials and have access to major news outlets, (Witt, 2004, p. 49). Most citizen journalists or web bloggers are at the front of all the action but do not have the official title of journalist. There is debate in the professional journalism field, as well as citizen journalism field, over whether this group should have the same rights as professionals. Since manipulated images have made their way to mainstream media, some argue that there should be standards on what is acceptable to publish.

Courts have not officially determined if bloggers and other web reporters fall within the category of journalist, although the case, *Too Much Media, LLC v. Hale*, addressed the issue, (Rich, 2012, p. 966). Shellee Hale worked several jobs, including as

an anti-terrorism specialist and as a computer consultant. In 2007, she decided to start her own blog, that she intended to use to investigate a computer company, Too Much Media. The New Jersey company sold software to adult websites and recently experienced a security breach that potentially exposed personal information of thousands of customers. Hale decided to conduct a probe of the company by conducting interviews with people who agreed to participate if it was on a confidential basis. She was able to uncover harmful allegations against Too Much Media but never asked for the company's side of the story. Too Much Media sued Hale for defamation and trade libel, and, in turn, Hale invoked New Jersey shield law, (Rich, 2012, p. 968). The Supreme Court of New Jersey decided that the shield law did not protect her since her use of an Internet message board was not the same as conventional news outlets. The case was appealed, but the courts determined that Hale did not follow the traditional news process that most journalists go through and could not be protected under shield law or reporter's privilege, (Rich, 2012, p. 969). While the court admitted that news employees have absolute privilege, the rise in technology complicates the law because some critics believe any person who owns a computer could potentially identify themselves as a newsperson and fit within the legal guidelines, (Rich, 2012, p. 970).

The United States Supreme Court oversaw the *Branzburg v. Hayes* case in 1972. Ultimately, the 5-4 decision centered on whether journalists have a constitutional right to conceal the identity of sources of information, (Fargo, 2010, p.65). Lee (2016) illustrates that Justice Lewis F. Powell, who authored a key opinion in the *Branzburg v. Hayes* decision, did not like the concept of special status for the press because it could include a wide variety of organizations with different concepts of social responsibility, (p. 155).

Another issue, as Gleason (2015) explains, is that categorizing journalists “feels like a system of licensing,” which is a concept detested by journalists, (p. 376). In a study of citizen journalists, Bal and Baruh (2015) found that one interviewee admitted he does not do a lengthy fact-checking process and prefers to check user profiles and original content, so readers can determine for themselves whether information is accurate. Others admitted that most of the articles they published contained commentary, which they say did not require fact-checking.

Many judges believe there needs to be a clearer definition of the term journalist because the ambiguity of the law allows anyone with a Facebook account or blog to call themselves journalists, and thus invoke the shield law, (Rich, 2012, p. 974). It can vary in scope, but a shield law protects members of the news media from revealing sources to any legal, legislative or investigative body with the power to subpoena, (Rich, 2012, p. 965). Critics fear some web bloggers could abuse the right by setting up a blog within a few minutes to avoid testifying before a grand jury, (Rich, 2012, p. 980). Many journalists regarded as top-level will point to their education or on-the-job experience to separate them from others who do not work in the field, (Ugland & Henderson, 2007, p. 256). By delineating a journalist as a professional who follows the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics, specifically the rule that subjects should have the chance to “respond to allegations of wrongdoing,” this could help the courts to define the occupation and protect the value of reporter’s privilege, (Rich, 2012, p. 981).

Circulation of False Information

Facebook is ground zero for the circulation of news stories that appear legitimate but are not. In fact, Ladhani (2017) explains that between August 2016 and the presidential election in November, users engaged with inaccurate news articles on Facebook 8 million times while they engaged with credible sites 7 million times. Even then-presidential candidate Donald Trump could not avoid it, retweeting an image of an inaccurate statistic that 81% of white people murdered are killed by black offenders, (Ladhani, 2017). A Washington Post article citing FBI crime statistics claims the numbers are nearly the same when comparing murders committed by white and black people, and in fact, many white people are killed by white offenders since murder is typically committed by a person known to the victim, either a family member or friend, (Bump, 2015). During the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Wingfield and Benner (2016) explain that Facebook was among sites accused of offering false news stories, including one story that Pope Francis had endorsed candidate Donald J. Trump, which, in turn, may have swayed voters in his favor. That same story about the Pope's endorsement had 888,000 shares on Facebook as opposed to a Snopes.com article debunking the claim, that only had 33,000 shares, (Benton, 2016). A CNN report found that several the Facebook ads linked to Russia targeted Michigan and Wisconsin, two states that were crucial in Trump's victory, (Raju, Byers & Bash, 2017). Some of the ads targeted key demographics in states such as anti-Muslim messages. Social media has added a new layer to the gatekeeping theory. There are not traditional gatekeepers like there are at newspapers and broadcast television stations. A lot of the information is published by one

user who feels that content needs to be published but there is no gatekeeper overseeing that the information is correct.

Keller (2018) describes an incident at the University of Missouri following the resignation of system president Tim Wolfe. Izadi (2015) describes that Wolfe stepped down after mounting racial tension after high-profile incidents at the Columbia, Missouri campus including a swastika etched on a dorm wall and a racial slur used against the student body president. Students criticized the lack of response from the administration. Keller (2018) claims a student at Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, Hunter Park, wrote on the anonymous app, Yik Yak, that he would, “shoot every black person I see,” (Keller, 2018). A now-suspended Twitter account, FanFan1911, and user name Jermaine then warned, “The cops are marching with the KKK. They beat up my little brother! Watch out!” The tweet included a photo of a severely bruised African-American child with the hashtag, #PrayforMizzou. Both posts sparked fear across the campus with students staying home on November 10th, many professors cancelling classes and stores along Ninth street closing their doors. The same Twitter account was used to spread panic about a fake chemical factory fire in St. Mary Parish, Louisiana in 2014 and fear of Syrian refugees in Germany in 2016. The photo attached to the tweet was an African-American child that was beaten up police in Ohio one year before. As part of his master’s degree thesis for Air University for the School of Advanced Air and Space studies, Lieutenant Colonel Jarred Prier wrote how these posts are typically disseminated by a person who writes a fake post then robotic accounts spread the post on the same platform. Using words or phrases that get the attention of users, the message can spread more quickly. The repetition of these messages and getting it out to a reputable

media source can convince the public that the message is true. In the University of Missouri situation, several media outlets reported that the KKK or Ku Klux Klan, a group that advocates white supremacy, was on campus before the rumor was dispelled.

While most professional journalists are assumed to follow a code of ethics, there are several examples of journalists who have been dishonest. Spurlock (2016) explains how *Washington Post* reporter Janet Cooke wrote a story about an eight-year-old boy named Jimmy who grew up in Southeast Washington D.C. and had been a heroin addict since the age of five, (p. 73). The story called, “Jimmy’s World,” even won a Pulitzer Prize but the award was returned when it was discovered she made it up. Stephen Glass was considered a “star reporter” at *The New Republic* until it was discovered that he fabricated all his stories even making up organizations, quotations, creating fake notes, voicemails and faxes. *The New York Times* reporter Jayson Blair left his position after it was determined that he made up stories, creating fake sources and even plagiarizing from other publications. Not only was Blair forced to resign but so was the executive editor and managing editor at the *Times*. Then there is the case of *NBC Nightly News* anchor Brian Williams. For years he told a story about traveling in a helicopter that was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade while covering the Iraq invasion in 2003. When questioned by a veteran, he admitted he was in a helicopter 30 minutes behind the one that was hit. Williams was suspended without pay for six months and then moved to NBC’s smaller cable news outlet, MSNBC. These examples when applied to gatekeeping theory demonstrate that in some cases, media outlets will trust their staff and will not conduct a lot of gatekeeping. These messages can be passed along to the final product with less gatekeeping because they were all trusted as honest professional journalists.

“Pizzagate”

An alarming example of how this inaccurate information can lead to real concern is the “Pizzagate” story. Mihailidis and Viotty (2017) describe how a 28-year-old North Carolina man, Edgar Welch, drove to a Washington, D.C. pizzeria in 2016, armed with a rifle, demanding that children involved in an alleged sex trafficking ring run by Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton be released (p. 443). However, after firing off several shots at a locked door, he soon learned there were no children there and surrendered to police, (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017, p. 444). It first appeared, according to Robb (2017), on Facebook in October 2016, a day after then-FBI Director James Comey announced that the bureau would be reopening its investigation into Clinton’s use of a private e-mail server while secretary of state. Data from the server was found on electronics that belonged to former Congressman Anthony Weiner, the husband of Clinton’s aide Huma Abedin. Weiner had been caught sending lewd text messages to a 15-year-old. A Facebook user claimed she had a police source that stated there was a lot of content on the server that claimed Clinton had “a well-documented predilection for underage girls,” and was connected to a child sex-trafficking ring (Robb, 2017). Alex Jones runs the internet news site InfoWars and reported the story. When it was found to be false, Jenkins (2017) states that Jones apologized claiming other media outlets had reported it and he was relying on third-party accounts. Mainstream media outlets did report on the conspiracy but only to debunk fictitious reports spread across channels such as Twitter and Reddit. This is another example of how social media has changed the gatekeeping process. The posts made on Facebook were not checked by a traditional media gatekeeper. It managed to spread quickly with no verification.

Efforts to prevent distribution of false news stories

In November 2016, Wingfield and Benner (2016) share that Google and Facebook announced that both will try to eliminate inaccurate news stories by taking away revenue sources. Google plans to ban websites that offer erroneous news from using its online advertising service and Facebook updated its audience network policy to ban such sites as well. Almost half of Americans rely on the social networking site as a news source according to a recent Pew Research study, (Wingfield & Benner, 2016). One viewpoint is that while blogs do not offer “pure” news, they offer an alternative perspective that helps consumers to understand the vast volume of news across the Internet, (Gunter et al., 2009, p. 200). Benton (2016) suggests that Facebook hire editors to manage what is published in the Trending section of the social media website. In October 2017, Preimesberger (2017) states that Facebook rolled out a new option that allows readers to determine the validity of an article by gaining context on the publisher through the click of a button. The social network was criticized for selling \$100,000 worth of ads to Russian operatives that praised then-Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump and criticized Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. The articles were turned over to Congress as it probes Russia’s involvement in the 2016 election, (Preimesberger, 2017). Chief Security Officer at Facebook, Alex Stamos, admitted in September 2017 that that the social media website reviewed its ad buys between June 2015 and May 2017, (Stamos, 2017). It was discovered that \$100,000 in ad spending was connected to 470 inauthentic accounts affiliated with one another that most likely operated out of Russia. Another review of ads that may have been from Russia found \$50,000 in potentially politically related ad spending on roughly 2,200 ads.

Decline in trust

Ceron (2015) proposes that the media's political coverage and negativity of news have contributed to cynicism and distrust in political institutions. Traditional media organizations are advised to be more transparent and increase efforts to produce high quality content on social networking sites, (Ceron, 2015, p. 496). In cases where journalists distort facts, or violate the privacy of others, Gauthier (1999) believes it can lead to "public apathy and disgust" with the media, and if the public does not trust the media, they will miss out on important information, (p. 203).

Bennett, Rhine and Flickinger (2001) state that since the 1970s, the public has lost faith in institutions, including media, and claim that most of the public believes the media is biased and unfair, (p.165). The mainstream media is also blamed by some for promoting these images in what is being called "spreadable spectacle" in which pressures such as distributing content at a fast speed along with gaining social media followers has led to less fact checking, (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017, p.448). This requires the reader to check URLs, look for quotes in a story and evaluate comments, but the reality is more and more citizens are reading less and are quicker to share an article rather than get into deep dissection of an article, (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017, p. 448). Fitzgerald (2012) points to Poynter's MediaWire as a media outlet that has earned the trust of consumers by admitting to mistakes and being honest about errors.

Theoretical Framework

Gatekeeping theory is framed according to Şerban (2015) to two unquestionable statements:

1. There are an infinite number of events occurring in the world in “certain spatio-temporal contexts” and
2. There is a limited capacity of the press in reflecting these events, (p. 12).

The “gate” is where the process of selection occurs and the person in charge of selection is deemed as “the gatekeeper,” (Şerban, 2015, p. 12). Shoemaker and Vos (2009) define gatekeeping as the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people every day, (p. 3). This process can also ultimately determine a person’s social reality or view of the world. The gatekeeping process is also thought to influence how messages are shaped, timed for dissemination and handled.

To illustrate this theory, various reporters may judge the same event differently as more or less important, (Şerban, 2015, p. 16). If the same news event is published in different news outlets, the attitudes in relation to it can be different “and even contradictory,” (Şerban, 2015, p. 16). In another example, the prestige or success of an individual reporter might ease the flow of a news item through the editorial gate, even if the story seems to lack credibility to the editors where a reporter with less experience might negatively influence getting the same story accepted, (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, & Wrigley, 2001, p. 235).

The theory can be traced back to 1731 within Benjamin Franklin's *Apology for Printers*, where the writer tried to "divorce responsibility for the act of printing from responsibility for content." Franklin was referring to the relation between the need to disseminate information and the requirement to meet community standards. Social psychologist Kurt Lewin delved into the theory further claiming any passage through the gates involves overtaking certain obstacles represented by a set of "impartial rules" or "gatekeepers" controlling the entrances and exits of the channel.

David Manning White first applied Lewin's theory to journalism, considering the wire editor as a journalist gatekeeper and the process of news selection determined by his subjectivity. White (1950) had a wire editor of a newspaper in the Midwest who he called Mr. Gates, save all the wire copy that he rejected during a one-week period, (p.384). At the end of the week, he asked Mr. Gates to explain why each piece of copy was rejected. There were two main reasons for not including these wire copies. The first was highly subjective value-judgments in which Gates did not feel certain stories were worthwhile or aligned with his own beliefs. For example, he preferred conservative stories and did not like stories that had a lot of figures or statistics. The other factor was space in that there was not enough room for all the stories to be included in the newspaper. Walter Gieber analyzed the activity of the same wire editor finding that he is passive within the process of news selection and the real selector is the press association. Going off Gieber's research, a study by Warren Breed places the process of news selection within the control of media owners and executives that impose policies on reporter to ensure the conformity of the media outlet.

With the influence of user-generated content or citizen journalism, al Nashmi, North, Bloom, and Cleary (2017) describe how gatekeeping theory has been updated to a model where the audience, as creators and distributors of media content, become a secondary gatekeeping process. The audience is now able to respond and redistribute content instantaneously through social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube and Reddit. As new gatekeepers, the audience can select the information that is significant to its interests and social circle and redistribute along the media spectrum. Singer (2006) believes that the Internet goes against the notion of a “gate” and challenges the idea that anyone can decide what passes through it. Professional journalists are veering from their gatekeeping role as they adapt to a medium whose open nature challenges the notion that journalists can decide what information people can see and not see. As journalism moved online, professional journalists who were tasked with selecting and vetting information before disseminating had to learn how to fit into a society where anyone can easily and instantly publish information.

Constant Comparative Method

Constant comparative method is used to analyze qualitative data. Hewitt-Taylor (2001) describes it as information that is coded into themes or codes and data is revisited until there are no new themes.

This method as described by Glaser (1965) is meant to allow for any vagueness and flexibility when generating a theory. It is described as having four stages:

- (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category,
- (2) integrating categories and their properties,

(3) delimiting the theory, and

(4) writing theory.

As each incident is coded, it is used to compare to other incidents within the same study. After incidents within the same category are coded several times, it becomes easy to see whether applicable incident points to a new aspect of the category. At the end of the process, there is coded data and memos that provide content behind the categories.

An issue with qualitative analysis is that it can be hard to convey credibility of theory, (Glaser, 1965). By using a codified procedure to analyze data, it helps the readers to understand how the analyst obtained theory from the data. However, a complex theory can be achieved with constant comparative method that matches closely with the data.

This researcher believes it is worth examining the process used by broadcast news stations in distributing user-generated content. A lot of factually inaccurate information is circulated to the public and, many people will turn to unverified news sources before reading reports from established news organizations. If viewers trust this source, there should be oversight or possibly more education for consumers so that inaccurate information is not being spread.

This research is valuable to the field of journalism because bloggers and other web reporters have not been officially determined by any court to fall within the category of journalist, although the court case, *Too Much Media, LLC v. Hale*, addressed the issue, (Rich, 2012, p. 966) to an extent. Still, no clear definitions are accepted about when someone becomes a professional journalist or what industry standards are acceptable for

publishing/using content from citizen journalists. Applying a base standard to vet citizen journalism would deal with issues of credibility and public trust of media.

This researcher hypothesizes that most broadcast television news stations have a similar vetting process before user-generated and staff-generated content makes it to air. To prove this hypothesis, it would be beneficial to gather data from interviews with a diverse group of people working in the news industry. By comparing the different procedures that are in place and whether a station has aired content proved to be inaccurate, a result will be determined on what practices are most effective. It would be beneficial to ask people who are in a position that would require making the final decision on content.

This researcher believes evaluating how manipulated images are getting past the gatekeepers of news is an important area to study because mainstream media is being impacted. It has made it difficult for professional journalists to do their jobs when the audience doubts the information it is receiving, not to mention, it is troubling that some of the mainstream media have been fooled by inaccurate images or videos.

This research is important to the field of journalism because it impacts the success of media outlets when people no longer turn to them for accurate information. This could have dangerous effects for the future and this researcher believes it is good to look at ways to reverse this trend and restore trust in journalism.

Conducting interviews with multiple broadcast journalism employees at news stations that lie within markets 19 to 29 will help to see if there is a common process that stations use to oversee content. These markets as of 2018 include Cleveland, Ohio (19);

St. Louis, Missouri (21); Portland, Oregon (22); Charlotte, North Carolina (23); Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (24); Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina (25) and San Diego, California (29), (The Nielsen Company, 2017). This is the estimated number of Nielsen television households in each market:

- Cleveland, Ohio (1,447,310)
- St. Louis, Missouri (1,189,890)
- Portland, Oregon (1,180,980)
- Charlotte, North Carolina (1,145,270)
- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (1,141,950)
- Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina (1,133,160)
- San Diego, California (1,002,770)

While there is a difference of almost 444,000 people between markets 19 to 29, these are all a similar size. The Nielsen Company describes markets as a DMA® or Demographic Market Area which is a group of counties that form an “exclusive” geographic area, (2013). There are 210 markets covering the United States including Hawaii and Alaska. According to a report by Norman Hecht Research Inc. (2009), each DMA® is ranked by the number of television households and Nielsen uses samples of these to produce audience estimates for local television stations. This information is also used to sell local, regional and national advertising.

By evaluating the process in which decision makers within media organizations select to air citizen journalism media, it will aid in determining what can be done to eliminate manipulated content. This can show how some newsrooms have been efficient

in selecting proper content and what errors have been made or corrected. The information garnered from the research will also help news management to see what changes can be made within their own organization related to user-generated content.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This is an important area to research because professional journalists are guided by a set of rules or ethics when compiling stories, although there is no formal agency to provide oversight and make sure the rules are followed. On the other hand, there is no rubric for citizen journalists, either, many of whom have no formal journalism experience. Society has more access to video and Internet than before, which as Bock (2012) explains, has opened the door for citizen journalists and multi-media bloggers, (p. 640). Most news organizations have corporate backing to protect against legal liability, but citizen journalists do not have this, (Bock, 2012, p. 640). Compton and Benedetti (2010) argue that citizen journalism is no substitute for professional reporting because there is no initiative to research stories since most independent online sites rely on reports from well-established news organizations, (p. 493). This research is limited to broadcast journalists since that is the field the researcher is acquainted with. Most of the research centers around examples involving broadcast journalists specifically images, video or text submitted by citizens that are broadcast on local news. Content from citizen journalists can add on to content. For example, if there is a fire with heavy smoke and flames and a firefighter rescues a baby and a neighbor captures this moment by recording video on their phone, a news station that missed this moment can use the video to add to the full story on the fire. By the time broadcast journalists make it to the scene of the fire, it could be completely extinguished, and the video would not be as compelling. Adding the video

from a neighbor would help to tell the whole story so that viewers could see the daring rescue rather than a burned-out building. There are situations where there is a fight in a school and a person records video on their phone. A news station may not learn about the incident until a week later and would be unable to get video of the fight on their own since the event already happened. This is another way that content from citizen journalists can add another layer to a story by intertwining the fight video with interviews of parents, students and the school. Television is a visual medium and a key component of broadcast journalists' work is including a visual element, typically that is compelling and helps to tell the story. When a reporter cannot access a scene, work from citizen journalists can aid in the storytelling process. When considering a thesis question, this researcher proposes these questions:

Coding scheme

For this study, citizen journalists are defined as any citizen such as a viewer who submits content to a news organization in situations such as breaking news or weather events or content posted on social media outlets by citizens then utilized by professional news outlets with permission of the person who created the post as well as bloggers. Professional journalists are defined as individuals employed by an established organization who have a responsibility for the preparation or transmission of news stories or other information. User-generated content, citizen journalism, or participatory journalism is used interchangeably to refer to content that is created by average citizens then submitted for broadcast to a news station that closely resembles the output of 'traditional' journalists and includes raw video, video segments and full-blown news packages. Oversight or gatekeeping is defined as a part of the news distribution process

where work is vetted by one or more editors who check facts, spelling and grammar to ensure there is a consistent news product.

Some critics believe reports from citizen journalists can add on to traditional news content but not cover all information that is broadly distributed to the public. Sites such as *Huffington Post* mainly offer opinion as opposed to original reporting and ultimately, critics believe it would be unsustainable as a new model of journalism, (Compton & Benedetti, 2010, p. 496). Gunter, Campbell, et al. (2009) state that just 5% of bloggers produce sites with news or current affairs and 56% spend extra time verifying facts before posting content, (p. 194).

While most professional journalists share an ideology that they are providing a public service and should always remain unbiased and objective, this frame of thinking is not always applied by citizen journalists and even some professional journalists, (Bock, 2012, p. 641). Professional journalists typically have established authority in telling the audience a story, (Bock, 2012, p. 644). However, since most citizen journalists must physically be in an area to record video, they are typically seen as authoritative or a witness, as was the case in the Virginia Tech shootings that occurred on April 16, 2007, or the public transit bombings in London that happened July 7, 2005, when citizen journalism reports became part of the reporting from the scene, (Bock, 2012, p. 644).

A useful example of citizen journalism is described by Allan and Thorsen (2009), about Tami Silicio, who was working at Kuwait International Airport and took a picture of flag-draped coffins being loaded onto an Air Force cargo plane, (p. 25). Silicio sent it to a friend who forwarded it to the *Seattle Times*, which published the photo.

An example of manipulation by a professional journalist is *Los Angeles Times* staff photographer Brian Walski. In 2003, Carlson (2009) states that staff photographer Brian Walski sent his editor at the *Los Angeles Times* a photo of a British soldier motioning to a crowd to stay down to avoid conflict that was close by, (p.125). Walski later admitted after the photo was shared with other Tribune Company publications that it had been manipulated using two different photographs, (Carlson, 2009, p. 125).

During Superstorm Sandy, Hill (2012) explains that many manipulated images circulated through the Internet including one of the Old Guard standing watch over the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, went viral.

Interviews will be recorded as part of this research. The researcher will then analyze the responses, using constant comparative method, to see what steps current news gatekeepers are taking in the process of evaluating user-generated content. Following that, there will be an examination of the responses to determine what steps are not being taken. Markers for success would include whether a station has never aired a video or image determined to be fake and how comprehensive the vetting process is. The questions will involve news practices, media platforms used, equipment, social media sites, editorial policies and motivations for generating content. Interviews will need to be set up ahead of time with news management. The interviewees will be informed that their identity will be protected as to allow for truthful answers.

News directors, assistant news directors, and executive producers are generally the people in broadcast newsrooms that have the final decision on what airs in a televised newscast. If there is a question as to whether content can be aired, such as blood in a

crime scene or the face of a young victim, these decision makers are tasked with oversight of material. Getting information on how they review content will help to see what steps are taken before content makes its way to air. This is the best method in evaluating what news outlets across the country can do to curb manipulated content from being sent out to the masses.

Constant comparative is the best method to analyze the data in this study. By reviewing how participants respond to questions, it will guide the research toward the hypothesis and answer research questions. The answers will evaluate the gatekeeping process of a wide variety of news stations and whether more can be done to prevent fake images from making it into the final product or if there may not be more that can be done. It will be helpful to see the practices that some news stations are now employing and what tactics they might use in the future.

Research Design

This study will include interviews with at least 10 news directors, assistant news directors and executive producers, since this group tends to be the decision makers in a news organization. Each market has its own characteristic, so this researcher aimed to seek out employees at cities that fall within similar designated market area or DMA®. The study concentrated on markets 19 to 29 of the top 100 television markets in the United States according to The Nielsen Company (2016). This includes Cleveland, Ohio; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; San Diego, California; Raleigh, North Carolina; Charlotte, North Carolina; Portland, Oregon; and St. Louis, Missouri. A professional acquaintance known to the researcher has helped in acquiring contact information for most of the

potential interviewees. This group of cities is selected because of the similar market size and structure of each market. A total of 35 people were contacted. An acquaintance known to the researcher provided contact information for 11 people of which six agreed to participate. Another acquaintance of the researcher was able to connect one of the subjects for the study. The remaining three participants were scouted by conducting a search of the website, LinkedIn, to search for names of individuals working within each market. Then the researcher turned to station websites for contact information. This group sourced has no prior relationship with the researcher, they are only known through professional contacts known to the researcher. All interviews were conducted separately so that there is no influence over the response. All subjects were contacted through email and those involved completed a consent form that indicated they agreed to participate. Ten was an ideal sample size as it allows for many different perspectives but also limits the amount of data that will be analyzed. Due to the geographical distance between the researcher and the news managers, phone interviews were scheduled at a time that worked best for both the researcher and the subject.

Each interview was digitally recorded with the permission of the interview subjects and transcribed at a later date. All interviews were conducted in a private room to protect the confidentiality of the subjects. Six of the subjects are male, and four are female. The entire process of obtaining interviews and subjects took approximately three weeks with an original goal of one month. Everyone interviewed works for different local television news stations in each market and are employed by different companies. In-depth interviews were appropriate for this study because it allowed the news managers to reflect on their personal experiences without the limitations of “yes” or “no” answers.

The interview was able to flow in any direction through open-ended questions. This led to a variety of different responses. All the interviews were conducted over the phone during a single conversation with the target length of 10 minutes, though the interviews ranged in length from seven minutes to half an hour. The researcher posed a series of broad questions as part of the in-depth interviews to 10 news managers representing a variety of television stations, some of which are central to their operation and others that discuss the industry as a whole. The goal of the researcher was to minimize the amount of information shared between subjects to avoid influencing the answers on any of the questions.

The identity of the interviewees is provided ambiguously, such as “a news director in the San Diego, California market” or “executive producer within the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania market.” This allowed interviewees to feel comfortable in speaking openly. Respondents were informed prior to the interview that their identity is protected. A total of 10 people were interviewed including:

- an assistant news director in Cleveland, Ohio
- an executive producer in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- a news director in St. Louis, Missouri
- a news director in San Diego, California
- an assistant news director in Raleigh, North Carolina
- a news director in Raleigh, North Carolina
- a managing editor in Charlotte, North Carolina
- a general manager in Cleveland, Ohio
- an assistant news director in Portland, Oregon

- a news director within the top 25 markets who wished not to disclose the specific market.

The questions asked were:

1. Do you use citizen journalism in your newsroom and at what frequency?
2. What are your perceptions of user-generated content and citizen journalism?
3. What methods do you utilize to determine if an image is factually accurate?
4. In your newsroom, is there a greater focus on timing to distribute content or validity of user-generated content?
5. Can you think of an example at your station where content in news has been manipulated?
6. How do you think more oversight could prevent fake content from being distributed?
7. What kind of complaints have you heard from the public about your user-generated content?
8. What processes are in place to fact check stories?
9. How do you vet stories-from either staff or user-generated before-it goes on-air?
10. What is your opinion that manipulation of news images can influence journalistic integrity and public distrust of media?

11. If an image is manipulated through editing software such as Photoshop, generating attention on social media, what kind of opportunity do you see for revenue?
12. What factors do you believe are aiding in the proliferation of fake images?
13. What impact do consumers have in driving content?
14. Is there a policy in place at your organization to prevent or preclude fake images from making it on-air?
15. Does your media outlet ever feel pressure to “beat” citizen journalists to a story? Do you wait until a crew is on scene before reporting?

Chapter 4: Results

By reviewing all the interviews, five main themes were found among all the news managers including use of citizen journalism content, gatekeeping process, problems facing local news, relationship with the audience and relationship to the organization. Citizen journalism is a valuable tool utilized by all the newsrooms, some more frequently than others. This researcher was aiming to discover whether there is a process in place to vet citizen journalism before it is broadcast on-air. All of the subjects interviewed reported having a procedure in place, some were more intricate than others. This researcher also wanted to learn about the perception of citizen journalism by broadcast journalists. While all value citizen journalism in some way, they all agree that it must be vetted beforehand. This is not because they do not trust the public but rather a small group of individuals who they believe purposely aim to get manipulated images on-air or even tarnish a station's reputation. It was anticipated by this researcher that the subjects would agree on more oversight helping to lessen the chance of fake images and video making it on-air. While all supported more oversight, it was surprising to this researcher to learn that many believe even with all the safeguards in place, mistakes are still possible.

Use of Citizen Journalism Content

All the subjects confirm that they utilize citizen journalism or user-generated content in some way or another at their station. Some report using it every day such as the

news director in Raleigh, North Carolina, while the news director in San Diego, claims it is used very little. At one Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania station, there is a union and photographers need to be the first to get a chance to capture video, so they cannot instruct citizen journalists to obtain video for them. All involved agree that citizen journalism can be a useful storytelling tool especially in markets with big coverage areas when it comes to events like breaking news or severe weather. An assistant news director in Raleigh, North Carolina, says,

“The positives are we can’t have our cameras everywhere. We try, we try to cover things like a blanket, but it doesn’t always work out that way, especially when there’s a major weather event and you’ve got 20 plus counties in your market, you can’t be everywhere all at once.”

However, all argue that citizen journalism must be vetted before it goes on-air. To do this, a few report that they only take photos from verified accounts or check to see if it is an account that was recently set up. Another way to verify is to talk with the person on the phone and make sure they seem to know about the story and were actually a witness to an event. It helps to have employees in a newsroom that know the coverage area and can determine if something doesn’t look right in a photo such as a mountain in an area that is mostly flat land. An executive producer in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, says,

“There are a select handful of shots of tornadoes that end up circulating any time there is a tornado anywhere and they are from five or six years ago, in Missouri or Kansas or somewhere in the Midwest and people tend to use that opportunity, what their objective is, I’m sure is to say you know, I’m John Smith, I’ll get my name on the news even though I’m sending a picture that’s fake and not applicable to the current situation so I think it’s all subject to verification.”

A general manager in Cleveland, Ohio, echoes that:

“I think it’s a double-edged sword. I think in terms of you know being at the scene of an accident or spotting the tornado, it can be very valuable. I think that

where you have to be careful is just making sure that those things are actually authentic.”

The industry has changed, paving the way for citizen journalists to get involved. Most of the stations reported that citizen journalism is valuable to the overall operation. With the easy access to smartphones, viewers can record video or capture images before a news crew is able to get to the scene. Years ago, the only people with access to this equipment was those employed in news or video production. A news director in St. Louis, Missouri, says,

“Our business is changing. I call them pro-jos, professional journalists and so-jos, social journalists. And you know we couldn’t ignore that everyone was becoming a journalist in some form. They weren’t getting degrees like you or I, and you know getting graduate degrees or doing a thesis, but they are contributing. I felt it’s important that we recognize that but at the same time, understand our role is their role. They’re contributing items and pictures and information but it’s extremely important as pro-jos, we vet that information and make sure that’s true.”

There were only a few stations that had had complaints from the public about user-generated content. It usually pertains to content that could have risks associated with it. An assistant news director in Raleigh, North Carolina, says,

“If for some reason we use viewer video of people driving and taking video of like, let’s say they’re on one side of the highway and the other side of the highway is closed down. If we ever air any video, or put it online where people driving, people just go through the roof, ‘I can’t believe you used that video,’ ‘You shouldn’t air that video because people are driving’ and ‘it’s not safe with them doing that.’ And you know what? They’re right. Since then we, it would take extreme circumstances before we would air video of someone who’s driving taking video.”

An executive producer in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, says,

“Let’s say we’re using viewer video of a fire that’s blazing and burning and unfortunately maybe we found out later that someone had passed away in the fire

so certainly the public has expressed complaints that you know we basically showed someone's dying moments. Although it was unknowing at the time."

Gatekeeping process

All the subjects do not recall a moment when a manipulated image was broadcast on their channels. However, a news director in St. Louis, Missouri, says occasionally the station might post a fake image on its website to "debunk" it and explain the reality behind it. It is never intentional and merely to inform the public, never to make a profit because "things like that are short-term gain because you'll get, somebody will click and if you do it enough they go, I don't trust you, you're not a credible source for me and they don't go to them anymore."

An assistant news director in Portland, Oregon, claims if an unedited image is sent to the station that could be considered offensive to viewers, it will be edited but not to manipulate the image. Each involved in the study claims their news organization has policy in place to prevent fake images from making it on-air. There is a chain of people that an image or video must go through to make sure it is authentic. First it typically comes into the assignment desk via email where the staff there look at it to assess whether it looks desirable for broadcast. Then it is sent to producers who might include it in the newscast. If there are further questions about content, it will go to an executive producer or even news director, but those situations are rare. An assistant news director in Portland, Oregon says,

"The company I work for has a system where at least two people need to see a piece of video before it goes on-air. And so, a lot of times it's an editor and a producer or an editor and a manager."

When any piece of user-generated content comes into the newsroom of one Raleigh, North Carolina, television station, the news director says,

“If it’s an outrageous image, we look at it online and see if it’s for real. We’ve got programs to do that. If it’s simply a story, we talk to the person. We try to vet sources just like we would a reporter story. Also, any picture that we use or any image especially if it’s Facebook or Twitter, we send them kind of a two-sentence wording that they have to agree to that yes, this image is accurate and yes what you’re telling us is factual.”

All the subjects agree the main entry point for all user-generated content is the assignment desk. At each station, the assignment desk has the first interaction with the audience. This comes in the form of emails or telephone calls. When a viewer contacts the station, an assignment editor or person who works at the assignment desk will answer the phone or see the email first. If the call or email requires more assistance, then it would require input from other staff such as producers, or the news director. An assistant news director in Cleveland, Ohio, says,

“The first line of defense goes to the assignment editors. They are kind of the kings and queens of checking material. I think they make most of the phone calls. They get most of the viewer tips, so they will talk and ask questions of the person who’s sending us whether it’s an email or a phone call.”

Every station uses image software to determine whether an image is real or not. They also utilize the expertise of staff. Most of the subjects stated that they do not initially trust content received from viewers and it goes through a process of vetting to determine if the image or video is able to be broadcast on-air. This involves checking it through reverse image search on the Internet or simply using a critical eye to determine if an image looks manipulated. An executive producer in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, says,

“We use experienced people that know the area that might recognize, you know, hey there’s a mountain there but there’s no mountains in this particular area so that’s number one. Number two, there are a lot of online search tools now that we

use, reverse photo, I don't know the exact term but reverse photo verification, you know you run a photo through and you can see where it's appeared before. And those are actually very good and very helpful. One great example of that was about a year and half ago when people started sending pictures out everywhere that there were clowns on the loose and anything you can think of."

Many say it is important to check the source of the information and attribute if necessary. In some situations, a person requests that they do not want to be attributed to a photo or video. When attributing, some reported this helps the viewer to understand that the content is not from the station. For example, it leads viewers to a specific Twitter account where the image is from.

A managing editor in Charlotte, North Carolina, says,

"You can always verify where the source comes from. For instance, if you're using a Twitter feed, if it's a newer account, you typically don't use it. If they're verified. The frequency of which they do these things, then it gives you an idea of whether they're a real person or just trying to make up the news."

All agree that more oversight is important in the gatekeeping process, but it is not foolproof. Even with multiple levels of gatekeeping, mistakes are made mainly because the tools to manipulate have become easier to access and are user-friendly. However, when a mistake is made, it can be devastating to a station's credibility.

A news director in Raleigh, North Carolina, says,

"More oversight equals a better result because you would have less false news out there. With that being said, the tools aren't perfect in vetting it. I mean what people are able to do in manipulating pictures nowadays is pretty incredible. But with us, if we are not almost as sure as can be that that image is not correct, we just won't air it. I mean you can't take back, you can't take back your reputation."

Problems facing local news

It can be difficult to compete with the fast pace of technology. If an error is made, it can spread very quickly. An assistant news director in Raleigh, North Carolina, says,

“So, you make a mistake, how do you get it right from there? Sadly, because of the way that the story has been distributed across multiple platforms, it has taken many, many paths from when you originally get it wrong. And there’s a darn good chance that a lot of the people who have seen the story will only see the wrong story and they won’t see the right story.”

Social media was the top factor among all the subjects of how images and video are able to be spread so quickly. An assistant news director in Portland, Oregon, says,

“Someone will post something on our wall that will say, ‘hey big fire in downtown Portland,’ and we’re like we didn’t put that there. That’s some random person we don’t know. And then when our name credibility is ever in jeopardy, that is of the utmost importance to nip that in the bud.”

When a mistake is made, no matter where it happened, it can have a ripple effect on other stations. There have been examples of professional journalists who distributed false information to viewers. When this happens, some admit it can be difficult to maintain their own credibility. The audience can be distrusting of all news based on the mistake or error in judgement of one station or network.

An assistant news director in Cleveland, Ohio, says,

“It only takes one journalist to make the mistake, and it doesn’t matter where they are. And then people form an opinion and they hate all journalists. It’s unfortunate and especially it’s happened on the network level. When the network makes a mistake, even local media suffers for that.”

These mistakes can have very dangerous effects, according to a news director in San, Diego, California. If the public does not get the full story or interprets an event differently than what it is, it can evolve into something else. For example, the news director in San Diego says an image of actor Sylvester Stallone was recently circulated claiming that Stallone was dead. He was not but many believed it to be true. While most are harmless errors, this kind of misinterpretation could manifest into violence according to the news director in San Diego, California.

“So, I think the danger is substantial. I think most of that stuff is that pop culture quality that’s not really going to affect policy or direction. But you know that can filter into the Arab spring or a demonstration in downtown San Diego where somebody is using other video to portray something that is not happening.”

Relationship with the audience

Viewers are vital to every news organization, according to all ten subjects. Most of the content is created and built around the consumer. Although they do not make the final decision in what goes on the air.

A news director in a top 25 market, says,

“I would say they have a voice in that. I don’t want to say a lot and it would not be truthful to say very little because we as a news outlet, if we don’t broadcast news stories that are of interest to people who are watching then pretty soon, we won’t exist.”

Citizen journalism or user-generated content is another way of connecting with the audience. Social media has eliminated the barrier that was once between the audience and broadcasters. It is beneficial to foster this relationship and make viewers feel that they are part of the process.

An assistant news director in Portland, Oregon explains,

“That’s where we see the value and then kind of sharing the story with us because we’re really, we’re here to inform but we’re also here to tell good stories and connect with the community that way and these viewers, that user-generated content really helps us do that in ways that we can’t necessarily otherwise do.”

Relationship with the organization

All the news managers believed in maintaining the credibility of the station and its brand through verifying pictures and video.

Some of the tactics involve talking with staff and making sure that all understand the policy of the station. A few tell their staff to “question” all the content that comes into the newsroom. Most believe it is best for staff to feel comfortable discussing any concerns with airing specific video or images from a viewer. When content comes in to the assignment desk either through an email or phone call and there is a question about its validity, news managers expressed that they want staff to come to them and talk about it. A news director in St. Louis, Missouri, described a moment where staff almost aired a story that was not properly vetted.

“We had a story that everybody wanted to post and put on the air from BuzzFeed about what, that St. Louis is a great place for businesses and economics and it’s becoming a hot trendy place and everybody should come and BuzzFeed had this, big you know, it’s a credible kind of up and coming site had this article about it. So they sent this around and said this is a good story but none of my people looked at the sourcing on it, yes it was in BuzzFeed but what you didn’t see was it was just a column written by somebody, an opinion written by somebody, from St. Louis and it says ‘these opinions are not investigated by BuzzFeed, this is just one person’s opinion.’ Well heck everybody can do that. So, I didn’t feel comfortable posting it.”

All the stations value being first with a story but say they will never compromise their ethics or trustworthiness with the audience. There is more of a concern with the audience trusting their content as opposed to being first with a story that is completely wrong. A general manager in Cleveland, Ohio, says,

“I think that Twitter in particular has for a while threw newsrooms off balance in terms of if Twitter had something before a newsroom had it, you felt like you got scooped but I think even over the last five years, we’ve come to the realization that somebody is always going to post something before you do, someone is going to reveal information before you do and it’s much more important on local journalism and professional journalism that we be right.”

Staff is trusted more than user-generated content in that they are thoroughly vetted in the hiring process. Many also stated they did not believe their staff would have any

intention of trying to get a fake story on the air and generally most are training and educated in journalism. A news director in the top 25 markets, says,

“We would trust our staff to get it right for lack of a better word or to not bring a bias into the information that they’re giving us, but we would judge it against those things as well. But assume that the content we’re getting from the outside, we cannot automatically assume that it’s right or that it’s not biased.”

Chapter 5. Discussion

Broadcast journalists interviewed for this study said they feel that citizen journalism is helpful and inevitably will be used in the industry. This falls in line with what the researcher anticipated that citizen journalism is useful in newsrooms. Some of the markets cover large geographical areas even multiple counties in a state. For example, if there is a weather event happening an hour away from a station, it can be valuable to get content from citizen journalists since a news crew might not make it in time to capture the best video or pictures. Citizen journalists provide a useful role in newsrooms to obtain content when station staff cannot get to these locations. Citizens are the viewers of these stations and all agreed it is important to respect the role that they have. Ultimately viewers help to tell news stations the kind of information that they want to see but it is also up to news managers to determine what information is valuable. While viewers are important to any news organizations, study participants agree they do not hand complete control of the newscast to viewers. For example, a news director in St. Louis, Missouri, says while some of the public might be interested in the Kardashian family or other pop culture, the mission of the station is to bring local news and events to the community. This goes back to gatekeeping theory in which news stations determine what is considered important to the public and what is not.

Greater access to technology has helped more people to become citizen journalists. Many interviewed say years ago not many people had access to cameras or

editing software the way that society does now. This has allowed more people to be involved in the news gathering process. It surprised the researcher to learn how citizen journalism was used very little by some stations and almost every day by others. With the speed of technology and social media, it seems that broadcast stations must utilize citizen journalism because it is easy to access and provides other benefits such as engaging with the audience. It was also interesting to learn that the public does have concerns with some citizen journalism if it poses a physical or emotional risk to a person.

When discussing how broadcast journalists applied gatekeeping to news coverage, all in the study agree if an image seems “too good to be real,” it probably is. If an image looks like it was not taken in the coverage area of the station or has been manipulated in any way, the station will not air it. Most tend to go right to the source to see if they seem credible. When it is a severe weather situation, the station will verify with the meteorologist on duty if it seems credible. If the station can tell that a photo was taken from a different angle of a breaking news situation, it will use it. Station reputation and credibility were motivators for verifying content. The news managers interviewed say one slip of inaccurate media or information could cause viewers to turn elsewhere for news. This researcher was surprised to learn that many stations have a multi-tier process in place to check content and will put it through image software. The researcher has worked at multiple broadcast stations and has not witnessed this process. There seems to be a lot of energy put into checking content before it makes it to air.

Even with all the checks and balances many stations say that mistakes can happen. This goes back to the researcher’s point of oversight, it would seem that more oversight could help to reduce the number of fake images and video making it to air, but

there is still room for error. There is an extensive process at each station to make sure that mistakes do not happen but there is always the chance of human error. There is no rush to get content on the air. Ideally, most would like to be first with a story, but they would not want to lose credibility with the audience if an image was not completely vetted. At least one subject stated with Twitter, it is hard for stations to be first. Before social media and greater access to technology, this was a standard that was held high. Now content is uploaded fast on social media and will be posted before an evening or morning newscast. It would make sense to the researcher that a station could make a mistake if it felt pressure to be first with a story. However, all study participants did not have that urgency, and none could remember a moment that a manipulated image made it to air. It was valuable to learn that all believe there could be serious implications for their brand if a mistake was made. This confirms the researcher's theory that false information can poorly reflect on a station. Some even stated that an error at another station or different network could hurt them. It shows how these errors can have major implications in journalism.

Just about every person interviewed says they trust their staff to do their job correctly without as much verification as citizen journalists. The subjects feel that staff is trained and educated in best practices and are not motivated to produce false information. This was interesting to the researcher since there have been several examples of professional journalists that did not fact-check a story or even provided manipulated content. There seemed to be no concern by study participants that their staff would ever plagiarize or produce manipulated content. Although reporter stories still go through a multi-tier process to make sure all the facts are right, and the story is balanced. This

usually involves a producer or executive producer checking a script to make sure it has all the necessary storytelling components of who, what, when, where, how as well as viewing video before it goes on-air to review for anything that might be offensive. Only one subject admitted to holding off on a story if it seemed like there were holes in it. A few involved in the study state that staff is put through the same process as content from citizen journalists, but overall staff is trusted more.

When it comes to being first with a story, all would rather be right than first. If a citizen journalist is at a scene and the station can confirm information independently through contacting officials such as police or fire, it will air content produced by a citizen journalist if it matches official confirmed information. While many preferred to get their own content from staff photographers and reporters, they did not dismiss compelling content from citizen journalists.

Implications for Gatekeeping theory

The news managers involved in the study admit that citizen journalists or user-generated content by viewers helps to reach places that they cannot get to due to distance or staffing. According to gatekeeping theory with multiple news events happening in different areas, it can be difficult to cover all at once. The data supports this theory in that all the subjects agree that content from citizen journalists adds to the content since geography in the markets can make it difficult to access numerous events. However, there is also the factor that some stations do not have enough staff to cover an entire area. While stations appreciate the content, they receive from citizen journalists, they also believe ultimately it up to staff to determine what news is covered and what is not. They

believe they have a task to sift through all the news happening in an area and explain to the viewers what is important. In some cases, this can mean that stories are left out or not included. One subject admits that she selects certain stories that will tailor to a specific audience over another as described in gatekeeping theory.

However, there are several gatekeepers that view the content before it makes it to air and deem whether it is newsworthy. Many of the subjects say they question whether there is an “overwhelming” or “compelling” need to air content and if it is necessary to tell a story. Even though staff goes through a copy-editing and fact-checking process, their work is considered more reliable than content submitted by viewers. Gatekeeping theory discusses that in some cases a reporter’s work might be passed through gatekeepers more quickly due to experience or prestige which the subjects agree with. While there are several steps in place to prevent mistakes, it still happens. One station admitted that reporters can make errors and they always try to rectify the situation immediately. Another station admitted it misreported the date of a trial and said these errors can add up to general distrust by viewers. Most feel that even with all the safeguards, there is not much they can do to stop people from spreading false information across the Internet. That is a “gate” that they cannot control. All stated that more oversight would be beneficial to news operations to eliminate mistakes from happening. As a general manager in Cleveland, Ohio, said, “the more eyes you can put on something it certainly helps.” While all have policies in place, they advise that all stations should have a protocol or policy on the chance that a fake image makes it to air or to prevent it completely.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research has shown that citizen journalism is useful and adds another dimension to professional news coverage. However, as the literature review demonstrates some citizens are not abiding by the standards of objectivity and balance that journalists use. It has proven successful in many instances such as providing judicial evidence in the cases of Michael Brown or Eric Garner and prompting society to make changes. Citizen journalists have been blamed for disseminating false information to the public, however, this researcher has found instances of professional journalists making serious errors in their reporting. While most professionals abide by a code of conduct to guide in storytelling, manner and compilation, citizen journalists do not have the same rules. This researcher agrees with the vetting measures taken by all subjects and their respective station. It confirmed the hypothesis that most stations have a procedure in place.

RQ1: *What are the perceptions of broadcast journalists about the future role of citizen journalism in the industry?*

Technology has allowed citizens to be involved in the news gathering process. Broadcast journalists in this study feel that it is an important addition to their content and a relationship that will continue in the future. Staff cannot always be at news events due to staffing or the size of a coverage area. Not only do viewers provide content in the forms of video and images but they also provide tips on stories that could be important to the overall community. Social media has provided a gateway for broadcast journalists to

gather citizen journalism content along with soliciting pictures and video from viewers. For example, during a weather event such as a blizzard or hurricane, news stations will ask viewers to email content from their locations or even let staff know what areas are being most affected. To supplement weather coverage, staff will turn to social media like Twitter or Facebook to see what people are posting and ask for their permission to use this content. Decades ago this resource was not available since there were limited people in an area with access and experience in using television camera equipment.

RQ2: *When have broadcast journalists applied the process of gatekeeping to news coverage?*

When an image or video appears “too good to be true,” staff will put extra effort into verifying it. Even if a viewer calls with a tip about a story idea, staff will call authorities to confirm it is happening before that information is broadcast on-air.

Although all would prefer to be the first station to report on a story, they do not want to compromise the brand and reputation of the station. Many understand that with social media, it can be difficult to be first because a person could post a picture on Facebook or Twitter before their newscast airs. Many try to compete by putting content on their website as soon as it is vetted rather than waiting to show it on a newscast. When a station receives user-generated content, it decides whether it is necessary to air and also ranks the importance of the story in its newscast either placing it near the top, middle or bottom.

RQ3: *How have broadcast journalists applied the process of gatekeeping to news coverage?*

There is a process at each station including attributing to sources, fact checking whether events occurred, confirming with officials and verifying the authenticity of a claim made by a viewer. Image software is used by many of the subjects to check if an image was used in another area and could potentially be inaccurate. One subject mentioned having a company policy that two people must check a piece of video before it goes on-air. Another process utilized is employing people from the area that can determine if an image has been manipulated for example if there is a mountain in a photograph in an area that is mostly flat. Another technique is only using video or images from verified accounts or from accounts that seem to be established for a long time. One process to protect the station from any legal repercussions is sending a two-sentence “wording” to verify from the individual that the image or video they are sending is accurate and factual.

While they all value their viewers, they believe it is ultimately up to broadcast journalists at these stations to determine what the audience needs to know about. Staff will filter through all stories to see which ones need to be told to the public and which are not viewed as necessary.

RQ4: *Are there different standards of gatekeeping for content provided by staff journalists as opposed to citizen journalists?*

The news managers involved in this study all stand by their staff to understand best practices. Many admit that they do not look at content from staff as critically as citizen journalists. Typically, the assignment desk evaluates viewer emails and answers phone calls from citizens. This group of staff is usually the first to evaluate content from citizens and if need be, it will be reviewed by a producer or news director. Regarding

content from staff, a producer or executive producer will usually be the one to copy edit a story. It can be overwhelming to sift through all the citizen journalism as well as looking at content from staff which is why the two groups are delegated with each task. Staff is not always completely trusted. One subject stated that if an employee mentioned a story idea that was based on rumor such as a threat to a school, the station would verify with authorities before it would broadcast the information.

However, it seems that despite the best efforts, there is still the opportunity for fake information or images to make it to air. It would not be intentional, but mistakes can sometimes happen in a newsroom. If further steps could be taken it would be to fully train staff on how to vet material that come into the newsroom from viewers. It also seems beneficial that news managers have open discussions with staff members to provide a comfortable space to discuss concerns over any content. Having a plan in place in case a manipulated image or video makes it to air seems to be a fair approach. Most interviewed agreed that they would admit to the error and try to show the audience that they do make mistakes. This researcher believes being honest with the public ensures that they trust the information that they receive from local or even national news. Many of the subjects interviewed feel that there are a small group of people who purposely try to insert fake information into broadcast news coverage. If even one person makes a mistake at a station, it can affect other local news operations. All feel that it is necessary to do the best job they can and put all measures into place to show critics their commitment to responsible, accurate journalism. Several of the subjects mentioned national news and how it has affected their operation. Specifically, if a network like CBS News puts out a piece that supports or opposes an

issue, viewers might feel that all news stations are similar. If a network like NBC News gets a story wrong, then it can affect the credibility and trust of viewers at the local level. Getting the perspective of those stations would benefit further research on the subject. All claimed that revenue was not their area of expertise. This could be an issue to investigate and see what positions within a news organization would be responsible for such decisions. It would be valuable to look at how the economics of the industry including layoffs has affected the gatekeeping process.

This study only looked at a few markets of similar size. It would be valuable to look at top 10 markets or even smaller markets that are 100 and over. If there were more time, focus could be placed solely on one operation and how it goes through the vetting process. The views of citizen journalists or the public were not included in this study. That could be a valuable area to delve into. All the subjects were not able to answer the question regarding revenue opportunities regarding manipulated images. The geographical distance between the researcher and sources was far but it is the belief of this researcher that the interviews could have been more elaborate had they been in person. The acquaintance that helped the researcher to obtain subjects made the process easier. The news directors knew the acquaintance and therefore trusted the intentions of the study which made them more willing to participate. It would have been slightly more difficult to obtain subjects through cold calling.

Citizen journalism can provide a lot of good for society, providing more access between news stations and viewers. Although this study has shown that many news managers feel it is vital to double and even triple check sources, and content.

This analysis will hopefully benefit the field of journalism. It is the goal of this researcher that newsrooms can use this information as a standard to understand how to better vet information that comes in. While most have similar processes, others have very specific steps that it takes to avoid legal and ethical repercussions. This could also be valuable to viewers to understand how a news operation makes decisions daily and why mistakes can occur.

Going forward, the key points for the subjects are more training with staff, setting a policy for accepting and critiquing content, reminding staff not to fear discussing concerns over content and retract a story with an error and apologizing. Technology and social media are a major concern since it has made the process of gatekeeping difficult. Images and video can be manipulated that many might not spot the errors. The subjects in this study want to continue using user-generated content and citizen journalism because it provides many benefits for news coverage. However, all agree that it is important to be careful in selecting content since one mistake could ruin the reputation of a station and the industry as a whole.

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Appendix

Codebook/Coding Scheme

To aid in research, these codes will be used during data collection so that interviewees understand exactly what the study is seeking to find.

The following definitions are key to this content analysis:

“user-generated content” or “citizen journalism” or “participatory journalism”- used interchangeably to refer to content that is created by average citizens then submitted for broadcast to a news station that closely resembles the output of ‘traditional’ journalists and includes raw video, video segments, and full-blown news packages.

“oversight or gatekeeping”- part of the news distribution process where work is vetted by one or more editors, who check facts, spelling and grammar to ensure there is a consistent news product.

“trust”-the public relying on news organization to provide consistently factual information

“citizen journalists”- any citizen such as a viewer who submits content to a news organization in situations such as breaking news or weather events or content posted on social media outlets by citizens then utilized by professional news outlets with permission of the person who created the post as well as bloggers.

“Professional journalists”-individuals employed by an established organization who have a responsibility for the preparation or transmission of news stories or other information.

Appendix

Transcribed Interviews

Assistant News Director, Cleveland, Ohio

1. Do you use citizen journalism in your newsroom and at what frequency?

“Yes, I mean, and I’ve worked at a lot of different stations, so everyone uses it differently but yes, I think we all use citizen journalism whether it’s news tips, relying on photos or if they are at a breaking news scene or even if there’s weather photos so we rely on all.”

2. What are your perceptions of user-generated content and citizen journalism?

“I think it’s great that they kind of are active and can help us because unbeknownst to a lot of viewers news stations can’t get everywhere so it helps when viewers or people see things and they give us any info or tip about it from there it is our job to kind of investigate whether they are true and whether the video or pictures or whatever they’re sending us really happened and then whether we want to use them or not.”

3. What methods do you utilize to determine if an image is factually accurate?

“If it’s a picture, at my current station, I got here a month or so ago, so I don’t know exactly what they use but I know at past stations I worked at, there is image software that you can use to kind of figure out if the picture is legitimate, most of the time. I think you also can run it through or check on the internet or something but if its breaking news, for the most part because we already have a crew at the scene, we know that’s legitimate so where it comes into question a lot of times is when people send weather photos and let’s

say we're in severe weather and someone is sending you a photo of a funnel cloud or a tornado, sometimes those photos that are sent to us might not have actually happened so then we, the first line of defense is you ask your meteorologist to look at it and ask them well did this really happen? If they tell you no or it may have happened, but the photo looks a little too good to be true then you also kind of run it through that software. I can't think of the name of the software, but it does exist. I can't think of it, I'm sorry but it does exist and like I know when I worked for NBC some years ago, on the network, we would send it to them and they would help with that."

4. In your newsroom, is there a greater focus on timing to distribute content or validity of user-generated content?

"There is no rush. If we are in, and I think it also depends on what the photo is. If they are sending you some cute skyline photo, okay, you know I mean we know what the skyline looks like, it's bright. If they just want to send you a weather photo, okay, you know you can turn that around and use it if you want to. If it's breaking news and like I said, the scene is there, we have crews there you know that's kind of true, we can turn that around quickly if we need to. Certain things depending on what it is, you might look at it and it's like okay thank you, you might want to use them more for an on-camera interview if they were a witness to something, so you just get their information. I don't think there's a certain time that there's like oh my gosh we got to get it on the air, and turn it around especially in severe weather situations, you get hundreds of thousands of pictures so I think it's a matter of you know, taking your time and making sure you're pulling the right ones."

5. Can you think of an example at your station where content in news has been manipulated?

“No not at the places I’ve worked at. I had to think about that. I really don’t think that’s ever happened. I think maybe once and you know maybe it was once before me and that’s when stations started kind of or maybe it happened at another station but you know when things happen at one station across the country, news travels fast and so like if one station may have gotten heat by a bad photo, I think then everyone kind of gets a little bit hypersensitive and starts to really want to make sure that the photos that we are putting on are accurate. And even if like we’re in continuous coverage, we might get calls from people who claim they’re on the scene, you know, we want to see some pre-interviews before we turn around and just put them on the air even as a phoner. I think we want to make sure they are legitimate people.”

6. How do you think more oversight could prevent fake images from being distributed?

“I think it’s just training in your newsrooms. I mean as you get people, and it happens that a lot of people are, different people are in newsrooms, they come from all walks of life and all kinds of vast experiences. Of work experience and depending on where you worked previously you know you may have done things differently. So, I think training is just very important so as the new group comes in you let them know this is how we do things, and if at any point you have questions then you ask, I think that’s kind of the best thing you can do to make sure mistakes don’t happen on the air. I think a lot of times the assignment desk people are kind of the first line of defense when stuff like that comes in because they see it first. And so, I always tell them if you see something and you’re not sure, don’t send it out to the masses because if you do even if you do and you are kind of not sure if this is real. Somebody will put it on the air because they don’t see it, they won’t see the one line that says

don't put it on the air. They'll look at the picture and put it on TV. So, we always say if you have things that are unconfirmed or questionable, don't send it to the entire newsroom, you might want to send it to a few managers to vet, if you need someone else to look at it, but that's about it."

7. What kind of complaints have you heard from the public about your user-generated content?

"I've never heard of any complaints. You know again sometimes, I'm sure somewhere in America, someone feels like oh why, I sent you guys a picture and it never made it on tv. Well you know it doesn't mean that it was an invalid photo or that we hate that person. We get a lot of material and we just have to be choosy in what we decide what goes on tv. And you know a lot of factors are considered like is it newsworthy? If you send us a news tip, we're going to call police or we're going to check a police report or whatever, whoever we need to check with. To see is there something to it before we just come out there and tell your side of the story. There's always different sides to the story. We kind of have to do our due diligence for that and the same kind of goes for user generated material we have to take a step back and say alright this is a great photo. Do we really need it? And if we're going to use it, what are we using it for? Does it just go on our website, does it just go on our Facebook page or Instagram or do we actually put it in a newscast, so I think it just really depends on what it is and what we need it for."

8. What processes are in place to fact check stories?

"The first line of defense goes to the assignment editors. They are kind of the kings and queens of checking material. I think they make most of the phone calls. They get most of the viewer tips, so they will talk and ask questions of the person who's sending

us whether it's an email or a phone call. They'll ask them some questions to make sure a. they're not some crazy person but b. that they have legitimate claims. Then you know it's a matter of ok then we might depending on the story reach out to the other half if they're complaining about a company that did them wrong, we might reach out to them or we might kind of decide as a group, is this something we want to look at and then the reporter does all the work to see if it's a story. And if so then we kind of go after the other half, sometimes we don't always with tip calls, like whoever they're complaining about, because the minute you call is kind of the minute they'll play it up- and then it's like ok maybe there was something to that. But sometimes you have to because you might, you don't know all things, so we might have to call and ask the questions like is. If they're saying they're having problems in their apartment complex like do you know about these problems? Do you, has anyone reported them? What have you done for them and it's up to them to get back to you, but sometimes they do."

9. How do you vet stories from either staff or user-generated before it goes on-air?

"We trust our reporters so when they write their script and put it together throughout the day, someone whether it's an Executive Producer or a News Director or maybe in smaller markets, an Assignment Editor is kind of working with them throughout the day on story development so that they're getting those questions answered that might help them with the broader story. And then before any story makes it to air it goes through a script approval process, so then you know that's where sometimes somebody like the Executive Producer or the Assistant News Director might read the story and say you know we have some unanswered questions here or you know this script isn't really ready for air, we're going to have to pull it because I think we need to give whoever it is

another day to get back to you. So you know those are the kinds of things that happen, You know every once in a while, a reporter makes a mistake, it's not like its intentional, but it does happen and when that happens, it is you know when it's brought to our attention, it is our duty and our job really to make sure that we correct it immediately. And let's say we made the mistake in the 6-o clock newscast. We need to, the first thing is if that story, if we're still in the newscast and we know it's wrong, we try to correct it before the newscast goes off the air. If we find out afterwards, then we correct it online and we correct it in the first newscast that we have again and then the next day in the newscast that it aired wrong, we repeat our correction so that we make sure that everyone knows that and also people don't think we're trying to hide the mistake."

10. What is your opinion that manipulation of news images can influence journalistic integrity and public distrust of media?

"It definitely does. And once that happens, unfortunately in the world we live in now. It only takes one journalist to make the mistake, and it doesn't matter where they are. And then people form an opinion and they hate all journalists. It's unfortunate and especially it's happened on the network level. When the network makes a mistake, even local media suffers for that. And so, what can we do, we can only do the best that we can in making sure we're truthful, we're accurate, we stand by our stories. We admit when we make mistakes and that you're fair to everybody and that we remain unbiased in our reporting, but you know I can't stop CBS news from putting out a report that is pro-Trump or something like that I can't stop that. So, you know you just kind of watch it and think that sucks and like well! I mean but there's nothing that we can do except kind of make our operations run fairly and smoothly and then when people complain, and they want to call us the liberal media, we are against guns and Trump or whoever, you listen

to their complaints because a lot of times people just want to be heard. But at the end of the day we're not going to argue with you, if that's how you feel, that's how you feel. We can only do what we know is right."

11. If an image is manipulated through editing software such as Photoshop, generating attention on social media, what kind of opportunity do you see for revenue?

"No, I mean that's probably a question for sales but at the end of day, we don't want to monetize our news coverage like that. I don't think so. I do think there are some things that are sponsored just because the news station has to make money. But I don't think that we would want to use manipulated photos just to make money. I'm sure there's probably an outlet out there that does it not maybe mainstream media, but I don't know what TMZ or whatever does."

12. What factors do you believe are aiding in the proliferation of fake images?

"Social media is aiding it. One photo whether it's good or bad can get, can become viral in a matter of seconds but it's hard to stop it. And if you don't even know in the beginning who started the photo, but I think that that's to blame. I think there are lot of people that are hiding behind computers and doing things whether to trip up the media or trip up anybody and you know there's always somebody who wants to make someone look bad and I think that's kind of what's behind it all but again I don't know how to stop it, other than when we see it happening, you know news stations making sure that we don't buy into the hype."

13. What impact do consumers have in driving content?

“Consumers have a lot of impact. The main thing we put together newscasts with the viewers in mind so at the end of the day if they don’t like what they see, they stop watching or they watch something else. So, at the end of the day they hold a lot of cards, but can they tell a news media what to report every day? No, they can’t.”

14. Is there a policy in place at your organization to prevent or preclude fake images from making it on-air?

“I believe there is at my current station. If not, I know at some stations it was kind of an unwritten rule that as soon as you realized you may have posted a fake image, you need to take it down immediately if it’s on your digital site. If it’s in a newscast. You need to also stop using it. And also, just like any other corrections let the viewers know that what you just saw like we would air a correction but that would be it.”

15. Does your media outlet ever feel pressure to “beat” citizen journalists to a story? Do you wait until a crew is on scene before reporting?

“If you beat us there, that’s nice but we we’re not competing against you or regular people so no.”

Executive Producer, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

1. Do you use citizen journalism in your newsroom and at what frequency?

“Yes, in terms of frequency, it’s infrequent. It depends on the situation. If there is a breaking situation such as, if there is a breaking news situation such as a fire or weather situation that a viewer has captured great video and sent it to us, then we obviously want to use it especially if it’s the best images from the scene. However, you know also we’re a union shop as well, so we have various rules that we have to follow in terms of our content so for example we can’t basically assign a viewer to go get something. We have

to give our photographers the first opportunity to go get it. So, if someone is sending us a tip without video or photographs attached, we can't say hey go get us video of this, we have to call all of our photographers and give them the opportunity first otherwise we're violating union rules."

2. What are your perceptions of user-generated content and citizen journalism?

"I think it's all subject to verification weather situations are a good one because I don't know if anyone has told you about this but there are a select handful of shots of tornadoes that end up circulating any time there is a tornado anywhere and they are from five or six years ago, in Missouri or Kansas or somewhere in the Midwest and people tend to use that opportunity, what their objective is, I'm sure is to say you know I'm John Smith, I'll get my name on the news even though I'm sending a picture that's fake and not applicable to the current situation so I think it's all subject to verification."

3. What methods do you utilize to determine if an image is factually accurate?

"There's several. One is obviously we use experienced people that know the area that might recognize you know hey there's a mountain there but there's no mountains in this particular area so that's number one. Number two there are a lot of online search tools now that use reverse photo, I don't know the exact term but reverse photo verification you know you run a photo through and you can see where it's appeared before. And those are actually very good and very helpful. One great example of that was about a year and half ago when people started sending pictures out everywhere that there were clowns on the loose and anything you can think of. And just like the tornado situation there were a select few images, if you reverse photo search you can see oh wow

that was a story from West Virginia and you know what, it was fake even then too. So those are very helpful. So experienced journalists that know the area and reverse photo verification.”

4. In your newsroom, is there a greater focus on timing to distribute content or validity of user-generated content?

“I would say validity first. Our news director has a phrase he likes to throw out, first is desired but right is required. Yea we all like to be the first one to break the story but if we get it wrong then that’s not good. Absolutely verifying it and making sure its valid is the first priority.”

5. Can you think of an example at your station where content in news has been manipulated?

“I mean the examples I gave you are kinds that we received the pictures, but we were all sort of smart enough not to use them. So, I mean the clowns we searched and realized that, I can think of a few that were made but I can’t think of any time it was that special that it got that far.”

6. How do you think more oversight could prevent fake images from being distributed?

“The more eyes on anything the better. That’s true not just in images but fact of the story or what not. More oversight is good, it’s putting more eyes on it and that’s helping to prevent it from becoming more of a problem.”

7. What kind of complaints have you heard from the public about your user-generated content?

“There have been people that have said you know let’s say we’re using viewer video of a fire that’s blazing and burning and unfortunately maybe we found out later that

someone had passed away in the fire so certainly the public has expressed complaints that you know we basically showed someone's dying moments. Although it was unknowing at the time. That has happened."

8. What processes are in place to fact check stories?

"Obviously we speak with officials related to any story that we are researching, we go to public documents, interviews, we often try to make sure that there is a balance and then there's the objective view, my rule, I would be the person that has all that information in hand so let's say the reporter is the information gatherer and the producer is the person that will process that information into a script. I as executive producer am the person who is looking at both sides of that and making sure it's as valid and verified as possible."

9. How do you vet stories from either staff or user-generated before it goes on-air?

"By contacting officials related to the story. So, for example a weather-related story we would speak with the 911 center, fire department, police department and what not, just so we can prove that something happened out there. We would also want to speak with the person got the picture and/or video. we would want to know from them what the location was and again we would probably try to get to that location with our own photographer even if we get something user-generated."

10. What is your opinion that manipulation of news images can influence journalistic integrity and public distrust of media?

"I mean it certainly can. It's kind of and it's a higher standard these days because fake news has become the line of the day so my opinion is that it absolutely can happen and it's up to us to be as judicious as possible in terms of deciding what story to use and

then subject it to as much verification as possible to make sure that the story is indeed real.”

11. If an image is manipulated through editing software such as Photoshop, generating attention on social media, what kind of opportunity do you see for revenue?

“That doesn’t really apply to our shop at least. I mean we certainly post stuff on Facebook but for us it’s less of a money-making opportunity than a spreading the word of our brand opportunity. If something is being shared on Facebook then we usually don’t make money that way, it’s a tool to get the word out about us.”

12. What factors do you believe are aiding in the proliferation of fake images?

“I think social media is a big one because people have basically become addicted to getting the shares and the likes and getting their names out there. I mean it doesn’t take as much as possible to become a celebrity at least for a couple minutes, so that’s a big one. I think there’s also political turmoil. Clearly in our country that has led to people generating things that are not true and trying to set them on multiple sides of the aisle which is a shame because truth should be paramount but it’s the world we live in at this time.”

13. What impact do consumers have in driving content?

“We do monitor our story’s popularity on our social media pages and our social media manager is a part of our morning meeting and tells us which ones are doing well and very often the answer is ok that story is doing well so I’m sure we need to follow up on it. So yes, there is a degree to which that is the case.”

14. Is there a policy in place at your organization to prevent or preclude fake images from making it on-air?

“I don’t know if there’s a direct policy about it because our policies are doing everything to prevent it. Should it make it on the air I mean we would probably instantly discontinue the use of it, but I do not know where we would go from there.”

15. Does your media outlet ever feel pressure to “beat” citizen journalists to a story? Do you wait until a crew is on scene before reporting?

“There’s sort of a mix there. It depends on the story and how easily it is to verify in other ways. So, for example if we can verify it over the phone then yea we’ll get it out there especially if it’s major breaking news, but some stories require a reporter on the scene. For example, this past Wednesday night we had a possible teacher’s strike in the city of Pittsburgh and there were negotiations going on all night long and the word that they had reached a deal only came from the superintendent walking out of that building at 11:30 at night. Otherwise everyone would have to wait until the next morning so sometimes you just have to be there.”

News Director, St. Louis, Missouri

1. Do you use citizen journalism in your newsroom and at what frequency?

“Well there’s a lot of definitions of citizen journalism if you’re referring to contributions, what we like to call user generated content, be it pictures or information, outside of our news operation yes.”

2. What are your perceptions of user-generated content and citizen journalism?

“It’s an important of our news gathering now. I did a speech a few years back at Cal State Northridge in California and I said our business is changing. I call them pro-jos, professional journalists and so-jos, social journalists. And you know we couldn’t ignore that everyone was becoming a journalist in some form. They weren’t getting degrees like you or I and you know getting graduate degrees or doing a thesis, but they are contributing. I felt it’s important that we recognize that but at the same time, understand our role is their role. They’re contributing items and pictures and information but it’s extremely important as pro-jos, we vet that information and make sure that’s true. And today as we’re constantly under scrutiny for “fake news,” we cannot allow user-generated content on-air, online that we have not vetted, and know to be true.”

3. What methods do you utilize to determine if an image is factually accurate?

“Well a. attribution is very important in any reporting and say this person is this. Is the Twitter account authentic that’s sending the picture? Can we verify who the person is and that they’re at the scene of the incident where they’re sending pictures? And so, I never feel comfortable putting things, publishing or entering things unless we know for sure they’ve done it. Obviously, we can reach out to them through email, through social media, asking hey could you contact us, we want to talk to you. Get a contact number, say, where are you? And ask a lot of questions to hope that indeed they’re not trying to pull a prank on us because there’s a lot of people who do want to do that, that’s what they do. It’s a cottage industry, let’s see if I can get fake information published. And so, it’s just about, it’s just like vetting. It’s just like we do with anybody. Are they legitimate? Is the picture what they say it is? Is the information what they say it is? And then to a point you know where we, I think it’s important in a breaking news situation to say look this

woman, Ms. Mary Smith, she has a Twitter account, she's posting these pictures, she says that she's at the scene and that's attribution. It doesn't say it's factual, it doesn't say we know it to be true. We do know that there's a Twitter account, we do know her name, we do know what she's posting and then we go from there."

4. In your newsroom, is there a greater focus on timing to distribute content or validity of user-generated content?

"Both are important. We want to be the first in news and information. Look we'll cease to exist if we publish information and pictures a day later. People won't come to us anymore. So, it is important to be first but it's important, more importantly in our newsroom to be factually correct. Because I go back Katie to what I said at the outset of the pro-jos and so-jos, we'll cease to exist if we put bad information on the air all the time. People just won't trust us and we're no better off than the 16-year-old who's blogging and has his YouTube page and he's not held to any standard."

5. Can you think of an example at your station where content in news has been manipulated?

"Probably. I can't think of one off hand. Look people send things to us all the time and we just don't know if it's true. I mean we're getting a lot of things recently. People send us things about school threats now. You know so and so posted this and will send us an email and say there's a kid who's bringing a gun to school and they're shutting the school down. Well what we really find out is a. there's no kid bringing a gun to school. He posted something saying he wants everyone dead, the police and the school have checked it out and they found out he has no intention, he has no weapons but they're

going to you know suspend him or arrest him. And we get a lot of those. We get a lot of this is really what's happening, and we have to vet that and say thanks for the tip, but the reality is, here's what the truth is. Here's what's behind this picture that you are passing around because that's what everyone is doing now with social media. They're just throwing everything around and it becomes like a game of telephone where you know you tell someone something and then they tell somebody, and they tell somebody, and the story gets changed completely. And that's what's happening on social media and our job is to find out is it true and what is factually correct? So those are examples where we were getting a lot of the information that is what I call fake about school threats and then we decipher what they really are."

6. How do you think more oversight could prevent fake images from being distributed?

"I think it's a process. I mean I try to teach our managers and our reporters and our digital people question everything when you see it. Your first instinct should be saying is this real? How do we know it's real? Who's the source on this? Is this a legitimate source? Where is it coming from? Give you an example, we had a story that everybody wanted to post and put on the air from Buzzfeed about what, that St. Louis is a great place for businesses and economics and it's becoming a hot trendy place and everybody should come and Buzzfeed had this, big you know it's a credible kind of new up and coming site had this article about it, so they sent this around and said this is a good story but none of my people looked at the sourcing on it, yes it was in Buzzfeed but what you didn't see was it was just a column written by somebody, an opinion written by somebody, from St. Louis and it says these opinion are not investigated by Buzzfeed, this is just one person's opinion well heck everybody can do that. So, I didn't feel

comfortable posting it, it was just a guy's opinion on it, but everybody centered around thinking look what Buzzfeed is writing about us."

7. What kind of complaints have you heard from the public about your user-generated content?

"Did we check everything on it? That would be it. Can't think of a specific example but I think people would say you should double check, this is somebody's you know story but you know we'll get people will send us videos of fights at schools all the time, you know we'll look at it and go wow what is this or where did this happen? What's the story behind it? And um you know we look at it, and we have to determine really what's going on and I always say well look if we're going to do this story, we need to make sure we find out who shot it, what were the circumstances? You know and then we'll do the story, and somebody will ultimately say that video doesn't show everything, here's what you need to know. We might have to do a follow up on it."

8. What processes are in place to fact check stories?

"We have people here who I mean I can't tell you they sit here all-day fact checking but reporters do, the managers do, assignment desk do and our digital people. We look over them, we have managers for a few stories and ask questions. I can't tell you we're perfect. We sometimes get things wrong, little things like last week we misreported the date of a trial, but those things are important because if you get the little things wrong, how do I know you're not telling me the big things are right, so facts are important, and we spend a lot of time emphasizing that in our newsroom."

9. How do you vet stories from either staff or user-generated before it goes on-air?

“Again, we call, we go online to make sure that the information is correct from a credible source. Someone might claim to be somebody, and we have to verify that. It’s easier today you know with the Internet, and the world wide web than it was 20 years ago. But there’s also a lot of information out there that’s not true. You know it’s like people say, ‘well I saw it on Wikipedia.’ That’s not a good source. It might be a good place to start and look but then you got to vet what’s in there because as you probably know, people can put things in there that are to their own liking and they’re not factually based. It’s like anything that a journalist does. It just has to be factually based and if you need to, I always tell people attribute, put attribution on everything. You know police departments, fire departments, the county executive and if they get it wrong, then you can come back later and say well they told us that and this has changed. You know if we think the figures are wrong or something they tell us, we should question them too say that this doesn’t seem right can you explain it?”

10. What is your opinion that manipulation of news images can influence journalistic integrity and public distrust of media?

“Well definitely it can, again everyday people are trying to do that, there’s nothing better they want to do than to say look I fooled NBC news, I fooled CBS, I fooled you know whoever. Especially after a big breaking news story you know like the shooting in Florida a couple weeks ago, you could go online within a half hour and there’s fake Facebook pages set up for the alleged shooter, there’s information out there from the school. You know fake stories about somebody in the school, it’s out there. We just have to be able to ask is that real? How do we know it’s real? I always ask the question of our staff; how do we know that is true? It’s a question asked. How do we know that it’s true?”

And ask and then if you can answer it credibly and satisfactory then we can publish for air.”

11. If an image is manipulated through editing software such as Photoshop, generating attention on social media, what kind of opportunity do you see for revenue?

“I mean look we’ll put fake things up but say we’ll debunk them. And it probably is, it’s probably good click bait. You’re right. But we think that’s important that we’ll tell people hey this picture you’ve seen out there, look it’s not real and here’s why. This is what we found out, you know what and if revenue comes with it, so be it. That’s less my area but look there’s no doubt, certain stories I will tell you, that we know, stories that are true, are going to drive our audiences online, so we look for those stories. We do but I mean we also have to be legitimate. Some of my competitors do things, write things and you click on it and say wow I didn’t know that. And you know you read it and then I say well that’s not true! But they were doing it just to get eyeballs and I always tell people things like that are short term gain because you’ll get, somebody will click and if you do it enough they go I don’t trust you, you’re not a credible source for me and they don’t go to them anymore.”

12. What factors do you believe are aiding in the proliferation of fake images?

“It’s boredom. It’s people saying look I can be a journalist now. I can fake it and they do. They do it and it makes them feel good, important. There’s not much I can do about it.”

13. What impact do consumers have in driving content?

“They tell us what stories are of interest to them. I always tell people we can see now online what people are reading on a daily basis. We can see it instantaneously. We’ll send something out. We’ll do a push alert on our app and we can see it take off. We can see if there’s some interest in that. So yea they’re definitely helping us, I mean it doesn’t mean we’re not covering important news, but it also does help shape, help us shape our content. So that we’re relevant. That’s our key, let’s be relevant to people’s lives, and if we see that they’re more interested, look a lot of people are interested in what’s up with the Kardashians, that isn’t necessarily our mission here in St. Louis. I understand we might get a lot of clicks or we might get a lot of viewership if we do the Kardashian story of the day, that isn’t our mission. We’re more about local and local information and stories about local people and local things.”

14. Is there a policy in place at your organization to prevent or preclude fake images from making it on-air?

“Yea don’t do it! That’s the policy. I mean look if we made a mistake, we’re going to report it. We’re not going to pass it on. If we find out later we were duped, you know what we’re going to take our lumps. But you know there’s some heavy guidance and discussion with the person who was responsible for getting that on the air. Absolutely so it doesn’t happen again.”

15. Does your media outlet ever feel pressure to “beat” citizen journalists to a story? Do you wait until a crew is on scene before reporting?

“Well sometimes yea. Yea I mean sometimes we do. We don’t report if we don’t have verification. That’s the bottom line. I mean we have a guy here in town who goes and shows up at shootings and such and starts Facebook live-ing and we look at it and we

go oh that looks interesting, we go and record it and we reach out to them and say can we use this? If it looks legitimate and we know what's going on and usually police sources are confirming for us what's going on even though we're not at the scene and we're watching his video. I feel okay using that at that point, but I'd much rather use our information and our people from the scene if at all possible. But I certainly don't you know pass up what I think is legitimate verified citizen journalism and information."

News director, San Diego, California

1. Do you use citizen journalism in your newsroom and at what frequency?

"Our use of user generated is very, very small. Usually the occurrence is a spot news event. Something that is happening that a citizen is able to capture on their phone and then they usually will send it up virally not to us specifically. We'll see it virally and then we'll ask for permission to use it. That's usually the process."

2. What are your perceptions of user-generated content and citizen journalism?

"I really think that they're different. I wouldn't use citizen journalism with user generated content. Most of the user generated content we get is just serendipitous folks who happen to be at a place when something newsworthy is happening and then they capture it, put it on their own social platforms and then news professionals see it. A citizen journalist to me is someone different. It's someone that has a point of view about something or wants to create a visual message, like a school board meeting for instance where they have a specific interest in an issue that comes before the board and they then decide to document it and if we don't have a crew, they'll make us aware of it, that's even rarer. More likely when a citizen journalist. When somebody has an idea about

something they want us to cover, they let us know of their interest and then we go cover it with our own camera crew.”

3. What methods do you utilize to determine if an image is factually accurate?

“The techniques are traditional. One we try to talk to the individual that obtained the visuals as the primary source. And then we would check, we always check through for authenticity. You know what did you capture? Is it authentic? Is it verified by other sources? That’s where we go.”

4. In your newsroom, is there a greater focus on timing to distribute content or validity of user-generated content?

“It’s a very small measure but we don’t put anything on any of our platforms nor put it on our broadcast unless we verified it as authentic.”

5. Can you think of an example at your station where content in news has been manipulated?

“No, I cannot.”

6. How do you think more oversight could prevent fake images from being distributed?

“I think most of that fake imagery occurs on social platforms and not in broadcast. We are primarily a broadcast television station. Our other platforms are ancillary to our broadcast initiatives, so I think most of the fake news if you’ll call it that or fake imagery occur online and everything that is on our platform we vet everything. I don’t care what source it comes from, we’re going to vet it. We will not fly something that somebody passes on Facebook until we are sure that we, not anybody else, but that we have authenticated it.”

7. What kind of complaints have you heard from the public about your user-generated content?

“Zero. It’s just so rare that we use it, so we don’t get any complaints about it.”

8. What processes are in place to fact check stories?

“We have normal gatekeepers, so the first line is the assignment desk, we have producers for each program. We have executive producers that oversee day parts. So, all of those people are gatekeepers. They all have a role in verifying that what we post, or air is accurate.”

9. How do you vet stories from either staff or user-generated before it goes on-air?

“The process is the same. There’s an authentication process that is required by each of the show producers as well as our webmaster. We have a webmaster here and his primary job as a gatekeeper is to instruct his folks that post things to make sure that any video that might be questionable is brought to a higher gatekeeper’s level and then the decision is made at that point. So, you might say as a producer, this seems questionable to me, I’m not sure if this authentic and then you go to your executive producer to get verification of that and if we had to go further, we would go further. It’s rare that something gets to my level, but it does on occasion.”

10. What is your opinion that manipulation of news images can influence journalistic integrity and public distrust of media?

“I think it’s enormous. I think the majority of images that people see are not through traditional outlets like myself but rather on what they see on their phones and the general public has no real way of knowing whether that image that they see is real. Here’s an example, Sylvester Stallone, there was an image that was sent all over of Stallone that made it, you know, he looked really down and out and didn’t look like

himself. It was an image from a movie that he's doing, and people sent that out that he was dead. So, there you go. You've got an image that is not about the story and somebody that decided they just wanted to have fun with it, I guess. And sent out that Stallone was dead. A lot of people thought that Stallone was dead. He wasn't. so, I think the danger is substantial. I think most of that stuff is that pop culture quality that's not really going to affect policy or direction. But you know that can filter into the Arab spring or a demonstration in downtown San Diego where somebody is using other video to portray something that is not happening but that they are hoping will happen."

11. If an image is manipulated through editing software such as Photoshop, generating attention on social media, what kind of opportunity do you see for revenue?

"None."

12. What factors do you believe are aiding in the proliferation of fake images?

"Everybody has a way of sending a picture or video to everybody else. It's the proliferation of the, proliferation and ease of capturing images and sending them to the world. I mean that's what changed. We didn't have fake news in the old days when the only guys that had cameras are guys like me. That's not the way it is anymore. You've got thousands of people with, millions of people with cameras, collecting images, whatever is in their mind at the moment, so even legitimate images can be misinterpreted just by the way the narrative is put together. I think the context, there is no context anymore. Context doesn't exist. When you send a video and send a text with it, like on Instagram or snapshot creates a narrative that may or may not be true based on the image that you sent out."

13. What impact do consumers have in driving content?

“It’s enormous. I think consumers are in charge of the content more than the people that are professionals and I think that’s the problem is that there’s an enormous imbalance between what is valuable, what should be circulated and what shouldn’t and the consumer has no inkling of ethics, training, impact of images or any of it, they don’t care. so, if there’s a guy that’s almost beat to death in a street corner in a downtown area, and they see the guy getting beaten and there’s a cop on scene and they send that out as though it’s police brutality. It may or may not be police brutality but they’re not interested in whether, what they’re sending out is brutality, it looks like brutality so it is, and off goes the narrative and then everybody has to pick up from behind that which can be really dangerous because you can ignite a situation by sending out video like that that is visually powerful but the context of it is not known.”

14. Is there a policy in place at your organization to prevent or preclude fake images from making it on-air?

“Sure, we would do an immediate retraction. We don’t ever want to pretend that anything is not true or not what we purported to be goes out on our air. We don’t want our viewers to ever have to question whether what we’ve offered them is truthful.”

15. Does your media outlet ever feel pressure to “beat” citizen journalists to a story? Do you wait until a crew is on scene before reporting?

“No don’t feel any pressure.”

Assistant News Director, Raleigh, North Carolina

1. Do you use citizen journalism in your newsroom and at what frequency?

“We do use viewers pictures and videos. Sometimes more than others. You know if there’s an event where there’s severe weather, we’ll have a lot more citizen videos and what not that we put on the air.”

2. What are your perceptions of user-generated content and citizen journalism?

“It’s both a positive and a negative if you will. The positives are we can’t have our cameras everywhere. We try, we try to cover things like a blanket, but it doesn’t always work out that way especially when there’s a major weather event and you’ve got 20 plus counties in your market, you can’t be everywhere all at once. So, viewer pictures help us when it comes to severe weather. The negative is we do occasionally have people who want to fake us out with a great weather photo or something like that. It’s not real, it’s from a tornado that happened five years ago in Iowa or something like that or Kansas you know. So, we have to be really careful about the pictures you know that we choose.”

3. What methods do you utilize to determine if an image is factually accurate?

“We start with a gut test. If it’s too good to be true, it probably isn’t real. Really simple things like looking at the photo and just you know do you have a feel for whether or not its real or its true. Raleigh has a lot of hills, is this taken, you know this photo from flat land? Do the shadows look right? You know like for example, I think you’ve seen probably like the shark swimming on the flooded subway and you’ve heard about the doctored photos that actually made it on the air for some people or circulated via social media and if there’s something that really doesn’t look right or feel right or there’s some question about it then it’s time to do a Google reverse image search. I think there are some other tools we utilize too in order to check the validity of pictures but typically if

somebody sees something that just looks wrong that's when we really put it through the pieces. We typically,

like a viewer who reaches out to us and sends us photos or videos, our assignment desk speaks to them, so we also get a gauge of the individual sending out the photo. It's not a perfect science but we are suspicious of everything that comes in and we just want to verify it."

4. In your newsroom, is there a greater focus on timing to distribute content or validity of user-generated content?

"We take time to check it here. We do. It's just you know whether or not we get beat on a photo, it's still more important for this news operation to air something that is correct."

5. Can you think of an example at your station where content in news has been manipulated?

"Well we have received fake weather photos but for the most part I don't remember them airing. Trying to think of something that actually got on air that was wrong. I can't think of an example."

6. How do you think more oversight could prevent fake images from being distributed?

"I wish there was a, okay so maybe better training for newsroom employees on what they ought to be looking for and what tools they have at their disposal that check things. You know a better establishment of a protocol within a newsroom, ok you get a photo, or you get this video, these are the checks and balances you need to go through in order to vet that photo. So, training, protocol, and just more conversations. It's okay to talk about

things you can't rush everything to air because you want to win a competition, it has to be right. So, I think more conversations about your newsroom philosophy and what's most important."

7. What kind of complaints have you heard from the public about your user-generated content?

"You know what's really funny is, if for some reason we use viewer video of people driving and taking video of like, let's say they're on one side of the highway and the other side of the highway is closed down, if we ever air any video, or put it online where people are driving, people just go through the roof, 'I can't believe you used that video. You shouldn't air that video because people are driving and it's not safe with them doing that.' And you know what? They're right. Since then we, it would take extreme circumstances before we would air video of someone who's driving taking video. We really don't allow that anymore. I mean it would like have to be some incredible piece of video that you can't get any other way and this person was literally, there was no one else around them, in a car."

8. What processes are in place to fact check stories?

"I think talking to them depending on what the video is. I talked a little bit about your gut feeling about looking at the photo, looking at the video, making sure that when you talk to them, what they're saying matches what you're seeing. And then you know if it's about an incident like a I don't know, heavy police presence at a gas station where we believe a clerk has been killed and they have photos, just knowing that's in line with what we're hearing from law enforcement, you know calling other sources to verify a news event. If they're shooting a news event, you know but I mean for the most part our

newscasts are still shot by our people, by journalists. And the pictures really come into play when they're making news or when there's a big weather event or there's some place that we can't get to. It's just about going through the checks and balances as you would any other story."

9. How do you vet stories from either staff or user-generated before it goes on-air?

"I do not approach my reporters' stories with suspicion that they are trying to get a fake one by me because we have excellent reporters who I know would never do that. There's a trust factor with the information that they have gathered. You know if they're out reporting on something, I know it's happening and that they're not trying to doctor something, or you know I guess inflate something or make it seem like something it's not. Their stories go through a script approval process before they hit air. However, I immediately approach things that are sent by people who don't work here, weren't employed by us, with an extreme amount of caution. I start suspicious and skeptical. I don't start that way with my reporters' stories."

10. What is your opinion that manipulation of news images can influence journalistic integrity and public distrust of media?

"I think it goes back to any story you tell, if it's wrong, if you get it wrong, then you lose your credibility. And you know that's something we all work very hard to earn. I mean it's not something that's given, you earn it. If you get your story wrong, you lose your credibility with the people you're serving. I think that's a huge impact. I think fake news has always been out there, this wrong kind of news. I think just today in this day and age of you know all this content, it just distributes more quickly and circulates more

quickly. You know there are concerns with getting it wrong, it's not just a credibility issue, it's about how you get it right. So, you make a mistake how do you get it right from there? Sadly because of the way that the story has been distributed across multiple platforms, it has taken many, many paths from when you originally get it wrong. And there's a darn good chance, that a lot of the people who have seen the story will only see the wrong story and they won't see the right story. They won't see the correction. So, if you don't get it right the first time, you're also misinforming people. They're out there thinking the first story was true because they never saw the corrected version of the story."

11. If an image is manipulated through editing software such as Photoshop, generating attention on social media, what kind of opportunity do you see for revenue?

"That's not my area of expertise when it comes to revenue. I'm probably not going to answer that question because I'm not 100 percent sure I have a good answer for you about what different you know what a photoshop picture has to do with revenue, it's just not, I'm not sure I understand the question and I'm probably not the best person because it deals with revenue. I still live in the world where news is news and I'm not worried about revenue."

12. What factors do you believe are aiding in the proliferation of fake images?

"I just think it's the pathways, like once something is out there and it is on Twitter, it is on Facebook, it is on Instagram, people are Snapchatting it and it's on TV and it's on your website so now there's like all these different pathways that the news can go and I think it's distributing more quickly and it's harder if you get something wrong to fix it."

13. What impact do consumers have in driving content?

“I do think that you have to know your audience, who’s watching you and who isn’t and why. So, I do think that sometimes you may pick a story that might cater to your current viewers more than you would another. Here, fortunately it’s never at the expense of other news. But if I have a couple people working on enterprise stories in addition to all the big stories we need to cover, I may pick something that I think might fit a certain audience a little better than others.”

14. Is there a policy in place at your organization to prevent or preclude fake images from making it on-air?

“It would be no different than if we made a mistake on a news story, and we would issue a correction and we do corrections and clarifications and we don’t do them very often. We hopefully don’t get things wrong very often.”

15. Does your media outlet ever feel pressure to “beat” citizen journalists to a story? Do you wait until a crew is on scene before reporting?

“If we can confirm something by phone, we will report the information before our crew is there, but it has to be confirmed information, it is not scanner chatter, it is not based on we’ve seen tweets, or anything like that. We have to have confirmed information that something is indeed going on. The next thing is our helicopter will usually get there before our ground crew and we can confirm, you know if there’s been a car accident because we can see it, once the helicopter gets there, even if we don’t have confirmed information if we can see two cars wrecked on the highway and the highway is closed, we can report that information based on what we’ve seen and then our ground crew would be the third you know once they get there then we report information they’re

able to gather. So yes, we do report things before our ground crew, but it's confirmed information that we get by phone."

News Director in a Top 25 market

1. Do you use citizen journalism in your newsroom and at what frequency?

"I would say yes under some circumstances we do use viewer generated content in our newscasts and I would say it's kind of hard to quantify, on average maybe once a day because again it's difficult to quantify because you might have more viewer generated content around certain stories and none generated around other kinds of stories."

2. What are your perceptions of user-generated content and citizen journalism?

"I think that citizen journalism is a good thing. I think there are citizens in places that we can't be. In other words, we can't be everywhere and there are people in those places and so they're the ones who have a finger on the pulse of their community and can tip us off to stories. So, if you're talking about specifically photos that are generated by viewers, that's one thing but I think in general, we get tips every day, be it from people calling the television station to looking at people's social media pages to receiving emails from people. I think all of that is helpful to us in generating news content or at the very least, I wouldn't say news content, it's helping us generate leads on stories or bring information to people as quickly as it's available."

3. What methods do you utilize to determine if an image is factually accurate?

“We would evaluate who we’re getting it from in terms of trying to contact them, to find out more about it. I would say first off like with anything we would give it a smell test so if it doesn’t seem right then it probably isn’t, so it might be an exaggeration to say that if somebody sent us a picture of a tornado from a place where we know there isn’t one then clearly, we wouldn’t use something like that. That wouldn’t pass our smell test. But then if its something that could legitimately be coming from the scene of something that we know about then we would be going out of our way to verify that it’s legit by trying to contact the person who sent it to us, trying to talk with anyone else who might be on scene who would be able to verify that an image that we received is a true representation of whatever it is that’s going on there. In many cases, it might be a case where we go to, we’re already going to a scene anyway and someone has pictures of video or other images of something that happened before we got there and in that case it’s a lot easier to verify that the image that were receiving is true. For example let’s say we get to the scene of a fire that’s been out for 45 minutes and somebody was right on the scene as it was starting, took video of that and it would be pretty clear to us that that is a legitimate piece of video or photo of that scene and in that case we would have no concerns about using that.”

4. In your newsroom, is there a greater focus on timing to distribute content or validity of user-generated content?

“I would say validity is always the most important thing. We clearly our mantra here is that we would like to be first, but we would rather be right. So, we would never jeopardize our reputation for being accurate and correct to get something on the air before someone else does.”

5. Can you think of an example at your station where content in news has been manipulated?

“I can’t think of one. I mean I guess it depends how you define the word manipulated. Everyone is trying to manipulate everything in the news business so manipulated to the point of us reporting fake news or reporting something that was wrong, no, I can’t think of an example.”

6. How do you think more oversight could prevent fake images from being distributed?

“Well I think if there’s a manager who ultimately makes decisions about how that happens or sets policies and guidance for people to vet these kind of images then I think it would be less likely for them to make it on the air versus a newsroom where it’s a free for all and I’m not saying that there are such places but a newsroom where there really is no guidance and people, that the first line people are the ones who are making the decisions about whether to put something on tv or not. That’s I think where you’re going to be more likely to make mistakes. We like to talk about things here so my marching orders to my staff is that if, we should be having discussions about these kinds of things and if anybody has, if anything doesn’t feel right then we should have a discussion about it.”

7. What kind of complaints have you heard from the public about your user-generated content?

“None really. Again, I think it depends on what you describe as user generated content. You know in this day and age of social media, certainly people can share information with us that perhaps other people prefer they not share with us. They could

share photos with us, I mean people put photos on Facebook that they probably never intend for other people to see but they're in a public domain and if we see them we may use that. So, I would say I can't think of an actual complaint that we've gotten about that but I'm sure that there are cases where people would prefer that things that they perhaps thought were private, but they made public end up on television they may not have intended for that to happen. As with any other victims of crimes, we don't use photos for example that would identify people in a way that would put them in further danger or would expose for example a sexual assault victim, which we don't identify sexual assault victims. So those would kind of be a no brainer for us that we would either not use them or not have discussions about them and recently I had a case where a victim was upset about the use of a photo but it wasn't any case where the person would be put in any danger, any additional danger so we kind of judged the situation against that."

8. What processes are in place to fact check stories?

"I would say that that's the first thing that anybody does and that's sort of journalism 101. We don't take, I mean people call our newsroom all the time or send us emails to say this, that and the other thing are going on. And we always have to explain to them that it's not that we don't believe them, but we can't put their information straight to television without checking it first. So that's a hard one to ask because that's an automatic reaction we have. If someone outside of our station gives us information, the automatic thing is that we're going to check it for veracity."

9. How do you vet stories from either staff or user-generated before it goes on-air?

“We would trust our staff to get it right for lack of a better word or to not bring a bias into the information that they’re giving us, but we would judge it against those things as well. But assume that the content we’re getting from the outside, we cannot automatically assume that it’s right or that it’s not biased. But I would say that we would put the same sort of checklist against those as we do with everything, that we want to check with whatever sources exist that would allow us to confirm that what’s being reported to us is true. And I’m trying to think of an example, let’s say one of my staff members, one of their children heard that there was a hit list in their school, and they reported that to their parent and the parent came to work and said hey my child said that there’s a hit list in his school. Well again that’s not something we would put on television without verifying it with the school district or with local police. So, I think that’s probably a good example of the kind of thing we would be hearing about right now with the current interest around the safety of schools. That’s the kind of report that we might be getting from the community. Same thing if somebody emails us and says, said the same thing, hey my son came home and said there’s a hitlist in school. Again, we would not put that on tv without verifying it with the school district or with police, with some kind of official, who could officially say that that is true. “

10. What is your opinion that manipulation of news images can influence journalistic integrity and public distrust of media?

“I would think probably anyone would say that if a news organization either knowingly or unknowingly aired an image that was manipulated and then that was exposed that it could do nothing but tarnish their reputation. Because then a reader or a viewer would question whether they could trust anything from that news outlet and I

think that's why news outlets have to be very careful to vet images or whatever user generated content they're getting because if we're not generating it then we better be sure that the person who is generating it, is correct. Because ultimately, it's going to be our reputation that suffers if we broadcast that."

11. If an image is manipulated through editing software such as Photoshop, generating attention on social media, what kind of opportunity do you see for revenue?

"No I don't see one."

12. What factors do you believe are aiding in the proliferation of fake images?

"Social media and I think that the speed of the news cycle and social media that people can literally disseminate an image or a piece of information to hundreds of thousand if not millions of people instantly. And some people, I'll back up for a second and say that I teach as well as work as a news director and I've taught some media criticism courses and it amazes me how naïve some people are in terms of vetting their own sources of information. So long way of saying that I think if you disseminated an image or a piece of information to a million people, you have to figure that some of those people will believe it to be true. Because they're not checking the source of it and they're just taking it at face value. So, we get things all the time from viewers who will say somebody emailed me this information and one of my very favorite websites is snopes.com where you can go on there and search and see if the story about the missing child in North Carolina, "please send money" is true or false. But people buy that, they get the email and they believe it and then they send it to us and say you have to put this on the news, this child is missing, and they don't get the fact that, that's fake news."

13. What impact do consumers have in driving content?

“I would say they have a voice in that. I don’t want to say a lot and it would be not truthful to say very little because we as a news outlet, if we don’t broadcast news stories that are of interest to people who are watching then pretty soon we won’t exist. So, we’re here to inform the public about important stories but we’re also here to provide them information about topics that interest them, so I would say in that sense consumers have a lot of influence, maybe a lot isn’t the right word. Consumers do have influence over the kinds of information that we present.”

14. Is there a policy in place at your organization to prevent or preclude fake images from making it on-air?

“We would well first of all we would discuss it among ourselves and probably with our corporate attorneys and all of that would happen within a brief period of time and then we would acknowledge on the air in all likelihood, we would acknowledge on the air that the image was not, that the image was fake. I don’t think we would use the word fake but we would acknowledge it and we would apologize for it. Just as we do for any other mistake that we make.”

15. Does your media outlet ever feel pressure to “beat” citizen journalists to a story? Do you wait until a crew is on scene before reporting?

“I would say no that we don’t feel pressure to report before a citizen journalist does. We have reported information before our crew has gotten to the scene but it’s always been from what we consider to be a reliable source, for example the fire chief on the scene of the fire, somebody that we know that we have called so for example a neighbor

that we have called, that has not called us, that we know to be within viewing distance of whatever it is that's happening now those would be the kinds of things that we might use but just someone out of the blue calling us wanting us to put them live on television to describe what's going on, we don't do that."

Station General Manager in Cleveland, Ohio

1. Do you use citizen journalism in your newsroom and at what frequency?

"We use it a decent amount. Probably less at this newsroom than others I've been in but yea there is some citizen journalism, mostly in terms of user-generated content, you know pictures that kind of thing."

2. What are your perceptions of user-generated content and citizen journalism?

"I think it's a double-edged sword. I think in terms of you know being at the scene of an accident or spotting the tornado, it can be very valuable. I think that where you have to be careful is just making sure that those things are actually authentic. I mean we've all seen those situations now where people photoshop a tornado into something that isn't, people have become more savvy in terms of how to get their own stuff some play and sometimes they step out of the bounds of what you're supposed to do. "

3. What methods do you utilize to determine if an image is factually accurate?

"I think a lot of it begins with the eye test. If it looks too amazing to be real, that's usually a good sign. I was the news director in New Haven, Connecticut during Hurricane sandy and things like that and you know there were a few, I think as you remember there were like pictures of sharks you know going down the streets in new

jersey and all that. Usually if it's so fantastic that it seems amazing that's when you have to start you know trying to see what you can do, going through google images, check other social media to see if pictures have been sent out before or is it making the rounds?"

4. In your newsroom, is there a greater focus on timing to distribute content or validity of user-generated content?

"You know one of the things I believe in is its much more important to be right than first and I think that twitter in particular has for a while at least threw newsrooms off balance in terms of if Twitter had something before a newsroom had it, you felt like you got scooped but I think even over the last five years, we've come to the realization that somebody is always going to post something before you do, someone is going to reveal information before you do and it's much more important on local journalism and professional journalism that we be right."

5. Can you think of an example at your station where content in news has been manipulated?

"Not in this newsroom. I mean I don't remember anything, I do know when I was in Wichita and when I was in New Haven, we did certainly get some weather photos that we had concerns about. I can't honestly tell you if any of it aired or not, but we certainly always erred on the side of caution with those."

6. How do you think more oversight could prevent fake images from being distributed?

"Well like I said I think the more eyes you can put on something it certainly helps. And again, to your point, I don't have to get the image in my email and then post 40 seconds later so I think in general you know certainly the photos that are

going to be the ones that you most want to post are generally the ones that are most at risk of being doctored up so I think usually in terms of oversight having more sets of eyes, having your EP put eyes on it, having another producer put eyes on it just making sure other people look at it and see if it passes the smell test for everyone.”

7. What kind of complaints have you heard from the public about your user-generated content?

“I think obviously the situations where people do find it to be difficult to tell whether it’s real or not that will be something there. You know honestly the public, historically I haven’t had a lot of issues with the public complaining about UGC. Unless it’s something wrong, unless it’s an error but again in terms of user generated content, I would say 95 percent of it is pictures. I mean or people reporting an amount of snowfall at their house or something like that, sometimes with the people who are really into weather you can get into a lot of debates over weather, you know it’s actually 12 inches of snow or 14 inches of snow, things like that.”

8. What processes are in place to fact check stories?

“In terms of something that’s being reported on Twitter or something like that where somebody is saying, you know we’ll split it up, in terms of photos, it’s just what I said, a lot of it is you know common sense on the producers part or a willingness to have that content vetted through other people before we go with it. And looking at the motivations of what publishing that content might be for somebody who submitted it. In terms of things that come up on twitter that a user is saying, we are extremely cautious about that. If there’s an event going on and somebody says 3 people have been shot, we have seen over and over and over again that those things

are absolutely best not reported until we know what's going on, so I would say twitter is used more of a, you know twitter has kind of replaced the scanner in a newsroom. 20 years ago, the scanner was how we found out about stuff and everybody knew that you generally didn't report what you heard on a scanner. A scanner should be a red flag for someone to call the police or call people or to head out and just dispatch to an area to see what's actually going on. Well Twitter is now the scanner. So, Twitter can throw up that red flag that makes you say, 'oh my gosh, something might be happening over on 3rd and main.' But you still got to do all the things necessary to either put your own eyes on it or have someone in a position of trust to tell you that's actually happening before you put it on."

9. How do you vet stories from either staff or user-generated before it goes on-air?

"Well I mean part of the virtue of being a staff is that we have hired people, and most every newsroom hires people who have been educated in all the things you're being educated in right now. So, the level of trust for what a reporter comes back with as opposed to what a general citizen reports to you is certainly different so in terms of our reporters we trust what they say. They still go through an editing process and if there's a question about the veracity of something then we go back to them and work it out. But in terms of UGC, it's pretty much the verification still has to be independent in 99 percent of the cases."

10. What is your opinion that manipulation of news images can influence journalistic integrity and public distrust of media?

"Absolutely it can. I mean so much, we're all tired of hearing the words fake news right? and there is so much stuff like that out there that I think in general it tears

down the viewer perception of the media but I think the local media to this point, local tv stations, local newspapers, they have been lucky in the fact that a lot of the research we see, shows that we're still the most trusted groups. A lot of times when people say they don't trust the media, what they're really saying in a lot of cases is we don't trust social media, we don't trust the national media. One thing about local media is you are much more directly in touch with the people you're covering and that certainly leads to a lot of sense of responsibility."

11. If an image is manipulated through editing software such as Photoshop, generating attention on social media, what kind of opportunity do you see for revenue?

"I mean no is the short answer. You know I mean if we're posting something on social media. Facebook might get some click backs to the website, very few. Twitter doesn't generally generate much in terms of routing back to local news station websites, you know I mean, in terms of the money that a station makes one story really can't, in terms of television stations, or in terms of most newspapers, the amount of revenue that you would see come off of something like that probably would be a drop in the bucket and then when you compare it with the potential loss of integrity or respect, I don't think you're going to have too many stations go in that direction. Not consciously for sure."

12. What factors do you believe are aiding in the proliferation of fake images?

"The software to manipulate stuff has become so much better over time. I was just reading the other day about something that can put different faces on people talking and you know it's just gotten scarier and scarier in terms of what the technology can do so yea 20 years ago, there were probably you know 5 people in a town who could manipulate an image with enough skill that we wouldn't all be able to spot it but now it's

just gotten so much easier to do. So, to me that's the absolute biggest factor is people can do it, so they do."

13. What impact do consumers have in driving content?

"Well they have the most impact you know. Certainly, where they go is where people want to go. Now that causes decision making in terms of a media outlet. You know because is the goal to get as many views or as many people following you or what is your specific mission of what you're doing. You know as local news generators, you know we have to have a mission that doesn't necessarily, while we want to have as many viewers as possible, we don't want to have them at any cost. And so, you know we have to make sure that we're about a brand and we're about a mission and if the content we have matches up with those things that is fantastic, and we will always strive for that but if it goes over the boundaries of responsible journalism then ultimately, it's going to work against us."

14. Is there a policy in place at your organization to prevent or preclude fake images from making it on-air?

"I mean we have policies in place of in terms of any mistake we make. Yea if something made it to air we would definitely have policies in place. We do have policies in place in terms of how to rectify that and how to notify the public that we put something on that may have turned out to not be factual."

15. Does your media outlet ever feel pressure to "beat" citizen journalists to a story? Do you wait until a crew is on scene before reporting?

"I'm all about making sure that we don't feel that pressure. The pressure should be on are we accurately writing this story? I was a news director in New Haven, like I said

and during my time in New Haven, that's when Sandy Hook took place. And Newtown is in the New Haven DMA, the Hartford-New Haven DMA, it's about 20 miles from our station so we had set up the tenets of we're not going to go with what social media says, we're going, all that kind of social content is going to be verified independently before we go with it. And then that day, I don't know if you even remember but the original shooter identified was not Adam Lanza, it was not the kid who ended up being the shooter, I believe it was his brother or step-brother or something like that and there were national outlets tweeting that out and we actually had an internal crew that was talking and feeling that pressure to go on, I mean this is our home market, we got to get on with information and there was a brief moment that some people were like oh we need to get this on and somebody rang the bell and said hey wait! This goes against our tenets and we held off and we didn't go with the name and then we were very lucky because it turned out to be the wrong guy and there were stations across the nation that were in that race to be first, you know got it wrong! And when you look at how life is now, first is not, you know there was a time when the only time news was broken was at 6pm so being first meant you were ahead 10 or 12 hours on people or maybe even 24 hours and first really mattered in a lot of ways but now stuff hits your phone so fast, it's impossible for a professional news gathering agency to consistently be first or even remotely be first. So, our entire focus has to shift from being first to being right. If we are right, there is always going to be a space for what we do and if we are not and we fall into other people's trap of making it about being first then we're going to be out of business pretty quickly."

News Director in Raleigh, North Carolina

1. Do you use citizen journalism in your newsroom and at what frequency?

“We use it every day. I think it also depends what your definition of citizen journalism is, if your definition of citizen journalism is user-generated content using viewer pictures, yes, we use that every day.”

2. What are your perceptions of user-generated content and citizen journalism?

“I think it’s a great tool. That just like anything else in journalism, it has to be vetted.”

3. What methods do you utilize to determine if an image is factually accurate?

“If it’s an outrageous image, we look at it online and see if it’s for real. We’ve got programs to do that. If it’s simply a story, we talk to the person. We try to vet sources just like we would a reporter story. Also, any picture that we use or any image especially if it’s Facebook or twitter, we send them kind of a two-sentence wording that they have to agree to that yes, this image is accurate and yes what you’re telling us is factual.”

4. In your newsroom, is there a greater focus on timing to distribute content or validity of user-generated content?

“I would say that I need right before first. If that’s the question you’re asking. I need right before first. Do I want them to both be together? I do. But I’ll never sacrifice the right for the first.”

5. Can you think of an example at your station where content in news has been manipulated?

“I’m trying to think of a recent example, where it’s gone on air and I can’t think of an example where it’s gone on air. I will say that we usually vet those before something awful happens where it would be on-air. I can’t think of anything off the top of my head.”

6. How do you think more oversight could prevent fake images from being distributed?

“More oversight equals a better result because you would have less false news out there. With that being said, the tools aren’t perfect in vetting it, I mean what people are able to do in manipulating pictures nowadays is pretty incredible. But with us if we are not almost as sure as can be that that image is not correct, we just won’t air it. I mean you can’t take back, you can’t take back your reputation.”

7. What kind of complaints have you heard from the public about your user-generated content?

“None.”

8. What processes are in place to fact check stories?

“Well first you know the basic process is talking to the person and asking them if it’s valid, knowing that potentially they say if they’re lying about it, there could be some legal consequences in that. And then its sourcing it. You know like, if it’s a picture can we tell where it’s from? Do we know that happened? Is it possible that that happened in that area? If it’s you know a story about something happening somewhere then we’re going to multiple sources and going up. Because you know we never are usually one source stations, we’re not usually a, we’re only going to tell a story from one person’s perspective, whatever that story is, even if it’s a weather story and so it’s tracking down multiple sources.”

9. How do you vet stories from either staff or user-generated before it goes on-air?

“Even that goes through a two-tier manager process before its cleared-on air.”

10. What is your opinion that manipulation of news images can influence journalistic integrity and public distrust of media?

“Absolutely can do that. No doubt.”

11. If an image is manipulated through editing software such as Photoshop, generating attention on social media, what kind of opportunity do you see for revenue?

“I think it’s an awful idea and if I’m understanding, you’re capitalizing on fake images just to make a buck. Yea no.”

12. What factors do you believe are aiding in the proliferation of fake images?

“Well I think the first is the politicizing of the media by whoever those voices are, different groups in the country. The second is fake news outlets themselves because fake news outlets capitalize on telling everybody that real news outlets aren’t giving them real news. So, it’s like the pointing fingers. You know I do think that like there is probably people that are internet journalists that are more careless and don’t care about the consequences and easily re-tweet things and that provides for a problem. When you’re not vetting something, and you just want to retweet something and are not sure if it’s right or not then it becomes problematic.”

13. What impact do consumers have in driving content?

“I think that they have a lot of impact. You know we’re not supposed to be telling them the news we’re supposed to be really talking about what’s happening in our community so if viewers are talking about it, we should be able to respond to it.”

14. Is there a policy in place at your organization to prevent or preclude fake images from making it on-air?

“Yes, we take it off immediately. We make a correction depending on what it is, and then we try to correct it. “

15. Does your media outlet ever feel pressure to “beat” citizen journalists to a story? Do you wait until a crew is on scene before reporting?

“No and no. I don’t think we feel pressure from citizen journalists and do we wait until we’re on scene? No. I think that’s when we would take, that’s when we would be helped by citizen journalists. That’s when we would use our contacts to reach out to a citizen journalist and use them as part of our reporting. Because if there’s a person that has, it’s there, then we want to capitalize on that.”

Managing Editor, Charlotte, North Carolina

1. Do you use citizen journalism in your newsroom and at what frequency?

“We’ll use a weather photo on a daily basis. Because that’s a little bit different, when it comes to actual news, we try to get as much video on our own as opposed to out in the field, in a breaking news situation like weather or something like that we will use their viewer video.”

2. What are your perceptions of user-generated content and citizen journalism?

“It’s extremely helpful when it comes to that breakings news/weather type situation. It still infuriates me that more than half of our submissions, people are still using their phones the wrong way even though we always say use landscape not portrait.”

3. What methods do you utilize to determine if an image is factually accurate?

“You can always verify where the source comes from. For instance, if you’re using a twitter feed, if it’s a newer account, you typically don’t use it. If they’re verified. The frequency of which they do these things, then it gives you an idea of whether they’re a real person or just trying to make up the news. We contact them, get some additional information and if they can’t provide real facts, we won’t use it.”

4. In your newsroom, is there a greater focus on timing to distribute content or validity of user-generated content?

“Always validity first. Well we would rather be last and right than first and wrong.”

5. Can you think of an example at your station where content in news has been manipulated?

“No. I can’t.”

6. How do you think more oversight could prevent fake images from being distributed?

“Well I mean the more oversight the easier it is to verify those images. I mean I think what you have is sometimes let’s say there’s a possible tornado sighting and then somebody will send a picture that is so awesome and you’re like well that’s too awesome to be real. So, then you have to go back through and verify. And a lot of times you know it’s not real. So, I think you just have to be skeptical as most journalists, I like to think are.”

7. What kind of complaints have you heard from the public about your user-generated content?

“I haven’t heard any.

8. What processes are in place to fact check stories?

“Well stories go through producers and go through a management team to make sure they’re factually correct and we verify as much as we can.”

9. How do you vet stories from either staff or user-generated before it goes on-air?

“Well we have 3 daily editorial meetings where we go through story ideas. We work with our staff, so we trust them to do their jobs more than when we get something from the public, it’s our job to make sure it’s correct.”

10. What is your opinion that manipulation of news images can influence journalistic integrity and public distrust of media?

“Oh, yea I mean you’re creating fake news. We’ve been battling it for years now.”

11. If an image is manipulated through editing software such as Photoshop, generating attention on social media, what kind of opportunity do you see for revenue?

“I wouldn’t be the best person to ask that.”

12. What factors do you believe are aiding in the proliferation of fake images?

“It’s just society as a whole. Everybody wants to, everybody is fascinated by how many viewers and followers and retweets that they can get that they’re just willing to do almost anything to try and fake it.”

13. What impact do consumers have in driving content?

“They’re critical. They’re the reason we are doing what we are doing. I mean we do multiple studies of what they want to see in a news product. If you just look at the analytics of our daily ratings or our digital numbers. They’re driving the content.”

14. Is there a policy in place at your organization to prevent or preclude fake images from making it on-air?

“We would do a retraction.”

15. Does your media outlet ever feel pressure to “beat” citizen journalists to a story? Do you wait until a crew is on scene before reporting?

“It just depends on what the story is. If there is video that’s out there that we can verify then we’ll absolutely use it. But if we can get video with our own crews then we would much rather do that, the quality would be better.”

Assistant News Director, Portland, Oregon

1. Do you use citizen journalism in your newsroom and at what frequency?

“I would say, I would say no. I mean we do use it on our digital platforms a little bit and when viewers send us pictures like we had a big fire the other day and viewers were sending us photos. You know we have to get their permission to use it. But we really don’t. I would say we don’t put them up as their own reporter or their own source of information. Anything we get from a viewer we have to confirm or if we have reason to believe like the pictures of the fire the other day, we don’t have reason to believe someone is sending us pictures of a fire that happened a year ago that had nothing to do with that day. And so, we want to confirm and verify any information or media we get from a viewer, but I know citizen journalism happens a lot at some stations where they actually either their website or whatever or their Facebook page. We really don’t do much of that there. I think for us the credibility of our own brand, our own platform and our own talent so anchors, reporters is of the utmost importance.”

2. What are your perceptions of user-generated content and citizen journalism?

“I think the way that news especially local news is changing so much, that it’s so important for us to connect with our community. That’s really what it’s all about. If we’re not doing that, then I think failing to do one of our most important responsibilities. So, when people send us content, and we actively solicit content, hey are you around the fire, send us pictures, send us video. So, we want them to send that and when they do, we thank them, and we appreciate it and when we share it, hopefully it kind of validates it a little bit. I had a friend the other day sent us pictures of a fire and then we you know went on the website and said “hey look your pictures are on the web!” and so that’s exciting for them but you know the fact that they’re out at a newsworthy event and doing that I think is also exciting. It’s really an issue of connecting with the community and so that’s where we see the value and then kind of sharing the story with us because we’re really. We’re here to inform but we’re also here to tell good stories and connect with the community that way and these viewers, that user-generated content really helps us do that in ways that we can’t necessarily otherwise do. You know if someone is standing next to that fire and our next crew is 20 minutes away well maybe they’re seeing something now that we can’t, you know that’s something we may miss in 20 minutes. So, user-generated content is important as both a story telling device and a way to connect with our community.”

3. What methods do you utilize to determine if an image is factually accurate?

“We just reach out and say hey thanks for sharing this, can we use? But also, you know we try to fact check as much as we can. Again, you know if it’s a fire and someone’s picture looks exactly like everybody else’s photos but it’s just a different angle, then okay great. If someone says hey check out this guy holding this sign on the street corner, that looks crazy then you know if it’s one of those types of things and we go well we can’t really verify that this happened. We can’t trust them alone to have the best info or whatever so what we’ll do, and this is very common. Several times a day. We’ll get something like that. We’ll say hey police department, somebody sent us a picture of this thing that looks like it might be someone committing a crime is that what it is? Do you have any info on it? You know let us know. And they’ll say yes this did happen on this day at this time and we’ll go oh okay great! And then we’ll make sure we have permission to use the photo from whoever sent it to us but it’s also very much you know again using that to tell a story, but we don’t, we can’t afford to tell a fake story or that ruins our credibility if we don’t vet that out.”

4. In your newsroom, is there a greater focus on timing to distribute content or validity of user-generated content?

“I don’t think so. No. Timing obviously, we want to have the most accurate info, we want to, if it’s something where somebody says hey this is happening right now. Somebody sending a photo saying this is happening right now. And it’s visual, it’s emotional, its urgent then yea we’ll want to hop on that. But if someone sends us a picture of the sunrise, the pretty sunrise this morning, it’s like well great thanks. We may or may not use that or whatever.”

5. Can you think of an example at your station where content in news has been manipulated?

“No, I honestly can’t. I mean sometimes someone will send us a photo. It’s unedited, it’s something we consider offensive and, in that case, we will you know edit it, so that our viewers aren’t offended but we can still tell the story. If there’s a concern about it coming to us fake, yeah. I feel like we generally speaking have a pretty good filter for that, with all of our experience. Kind of a classic example it’s not media per say but it’s information about that airline, the plane that crashed in San Francisco but there was, somebody sent a fake list of names and they were Asian sounding names but when you said them out loud, it was offensive language. You know people lost their jobs on that, but you know they got the list and they checked with the FAA and the FAA said yea that’s right. It was like some intern who said, ‘yea that sounds right.’ So, you really have to vet stuff, out right? The competitive advantage of getting 30 seconds ahead of it to me, doesn’t outweigh the 30 seconds you spend to go ok let me take a deep breath and look through this. And then once you see it, you go oh my this is wrong! I’m so glad we didn’t go with this. So that’s one of those things where that information was being manipulated ahead of time, it was fake, I don’t even know that it was manipulated, it was just fake. It was bad. It was bad information. We don’t deal a lot with that. I think someone like TMZ where they really, they buy it, they buy information, or they buy media, I think they may be in a position where there’s more incentive for people to fake stuff.”

6. How do you think more oversight could prevent fake images from being distributed?

“I should say that the company I work for has a system where at least two people need to see a piece of video before it goes on air. And so, a lot of times it’s an editor and a producer or an editor and a manager. My photographer yesterday, had a soundbite that

was full of expletives and he bleeped it and he said, 'hey can you come listen to this?' it was this is f-ing, bull-blank blank and I was like yep, I mean you bleeped it so it's fine. So, in that way we have a system set up but beyond that I would just say that yea I think every station, I think every management team should have a system in place where they vet video or pictures and they review it. So, I would just say that a lot of times that comes down from the corporate level, I think that's smart, I think that's using economies of scale on the corporate level to say hey, we own multiple stations, this should be best practices because that does happen. There are times where every day, I mean just yesterday there were 3 or 4 different big, you know highfalutin conversations that people look at me and my boss and go, this is why you are managers because you have to make these decisions so it's those types of things but having a policy and a plan helps. And here's one. This is a classic example that you know where we had a little bit different than you're talking about but there were 3 kids like mid age teenagers, 13, 15 and they're suspected of committing a crime. The police did not name them. We got their names from public documents and so the question is do we name them? Well my policy is if there's no, why should we name them? Is there a good reason to name them? And to me, the well because we can, in this case, to me, is not worthy it because we've not named people before and then something happens, charges are dropped or whatever and it's hard to put the toothpaste back in the bottle. And so, in this case I just feel like there was, the phrase I used was, I've kind of developed this phrase that I kind of like, I said I don't see an overwhelming or compelling need to name them. And I think those two words are significant when it comes to using, when it comes to questionable decisions. In this case, I think the burden is on why and I don't see an overwhelming, meaning yea

we got to do it. And then compelling being and we have a really good reason to do it. I think for me when it comes to user-generated info, user-generated content, content that we've gotten that we're not sure about, everybody has to. Every editorial manager, every station, every station ownership has to have a good kind of, gauge, litmus test, rule of thumb, best practices, standard operating procedure, whatever you want to call it, for how these decisions are made."

7. What kind of complaints have you heard from the public about your user-generated content?

"Why? Who would take these pictures? Why would you guys do this? This is dumb. I don't understand the point. But I mean because it's not, we don't do it so much, I don't think we get a lot of complaints about it. I think for us rarely do people know that it's from somebody else. I think if it were citizen journalism where it's like hey John over here is going to tell the story from the fire, I think there would be, there's issues of a brand, brand integrity, information integrity etc. whereas I think when a user shares a picture with us and we say 'hey can we use it' and they say 'sure!' and we use it, I just don't think the scrutiny is there. I don't think people are as aware. I think if you're using UGC as an effective storytelling device, I don't think that where you got it, is as important."

8. What processes are in place to fact check stories?

"Manager oversight is all that is. We get our information from the assignment desk. So, I would say the assignment desk and working closely with managers. You know producers will see something and they'll say, 'hey desk can we confirm this?' so, the

assignment desk does a lot of confirming everything. When they can't or when they can but we're still a little funky on it, that's when our staff gets a manager involved like myself and says hey what are we going to do about this? And then it's truly me going am I willing to risk my job for this? You know am I willing to risk my job? Others jobs? Our FCC license? You know and so fortunately, knock on wood, it doesn't get to that very often. But when it does it's an enormous responsibility, so I think we probably have processes in place that are invisible to me because I've done this for so long and especially here we're also adept at what we do, I think that I take a lot of the processes for granted so I can't quite diagnose it. But I would say generally speaking between the desk and the management, I think we've got a pretty good system."

9. How do you vet stories from either staff or user-generated before it goes on-air?

"Staff know to confirm it. They know to confirm it. So, let's take Nextdoor. Nextdoor is a great example that I think is a crossroads of all things here. So Nextdoor is an app, its free and its how community members talk. I was with a friend last night and she was saying, 'gosh you know I don't watch local news that much' and I said, 'okay where do you get your news from?' 'Well Nextdoor.' So, I said 'that's fine and I totally get it but like Nextdoor is not, like it's literally just people talking.' It's a different place where instead of people actually standing on the road with the kids playing in the cul-de-sac going 'did you hear what happened on main street the other day?' they do it on their app and so, which is all fine may be true but that's how we count ourselves as an informative news source. We are accredited. Our information is accredited, and managed by the federal government, the FCC you know and so for us, we have those, that's sort of what we can lean on. But because of that we also have an enormous

responsibility to confirm stuff, to be accurate, and a big part of that is our own staff knows that and so when staff sees something on Nextdoor, they'll pitch it, but they'll say it's from Nextdoor, so we would still have to confirm it. Here's a great example. One of our producers the other day said 'hey there's this house, it's beautiful, it's in this great neighborhood and they've been working to restore it for years now and somebody went and tagged it with graffiti. And so, I said that's great, that's a great story. So, we sent a reporter. I said what info do you have? She goes oh I don't have any. I said I need to give them something before I send them to the house. She said it's at 39th and Woodstock, and they just need to go there. I went okay! But that's how news happens right? You see it and you go that's what it is, that's where it is. But you don't necessarily, you got to go, you got to go find it for yourself because if we just go on tv and go hey there was graffiti on the house, I mean well a. it's not great tv if you don't have anything of it. You can't just say it. But b. you got to go there and confirm it yourself. Anyway, staff knows to already do that so that's rarely an issue."

10. What is your opinion that manipulation of news images can influence journalistic integrity and public distrust of media?

"Absolutely. Especially as people post on our wall on our Facebook page and that's where it's dangerous. Because someone will post something on our wall that will say hey big fire in downtown Portland and we're like we didn't put that there. That's from some random person we don't know. And then when our name credibility is ever in jeopardy, that is of the utmost importance to nip that in the bud and figure all that out so not only is it a community issue, it's a brand issue. I mean we spend millions a year to keep our brand afloat to stay competitive and when you, when your accountability and credibility

is eroded, that's bad. We're constantly going through those processes. We're constantly explaining to people hey we looked into this."

11. If an image is manipulated through editing software such as Photoshop, generating attention on social media, what kind of opportunity do you see for revenue?

"I wouldn't know anything about that."

12. What factors do you believe are aiding in the proliferation of fake images?

"From what we see on our level, I think it's just people wanting to be involved, they want to have a voice. And I know the phrase, internet troll, is probably a little too casual or a little too, maybe has implications when you use that but there are people who very much want to be a part of the conversation but they either don't feel like their voice is heard or they don't feel like doing it in a normal way and so they put fake stuff on our website or they give us fake information and I think that's born out of a sense of wanting to be a part of something. When I see that, yea it's annoying, its dangerous. But I look at that person and I just think you know you can be a part of the conversation any day when we say hey this is happening in my neighborhood. If you're going to take the energy to tell us, to give us fake information. Spend that energy and give us good information about a real thing that's really happening you know. I think that, I think easy access too. You know social media has made it really easy for people to have closer access to us. Whereas before it was like ooohh I see the news crew driving around, now it's like yea they do that. I think that kind of helps too is that it's made it very easy for people to do that. Social media changed everything, and it's is a double-edged sword, right? Where you can get information faster, you can reach people you could never reach before, it's awesome!

It's free but the price of admission is you're going to have people who are going to try and take advantage of that system just like they do every system, of anything, anywhere in the world."

13. What impact do consumers have in driving content?

"I think it just comes down to supply and demand. I think like any product of any business, you know viewers say I don't like this, I'm not going to do it anymore. Or I do like this, I am going to do it more. And so, I do want more of this, I'm going to demand more of this. So, I just think consumers drive demand in that way. They determine what you know, ratings, that's a good kind of litmus test for us is ratings. That's the way they communicate with us indirectly, is like 'I don't like what you're showing.' That's a big part of it. We're always trying to get more viewers, we're always trying to figure out what it is they want. We're always trying to be cognizant of that, but they use those platforms where we provide them their news, they also understand like don't bother me with this story or whatever. Those are some of the ways in which they do that."

14. Is there a policy in place at your organization to prevent or preclude fake images from making it on-air?

"I would say I probably won't answer that other than I'll just do a generic response. Every corporation, every management team, station, station group, has policies in place or if they don't they should to determine best practices with regard to how they handle any information that isn't confirmed or isn't, the legitimacy of which is in question."

15. Does your media outlet ever feel pressure to “beat” citizen journalists to a story? Do you wait until a crew is on scene before reporting?

“We want to tell the story the most accurately and as quickly and as powerfully as possible and powerfully is a strong word, I think as directly and impactfully as possible. There was a great example when I worked in California, there was a fire. A geyser of a fire, 50 feet, 60 feet into the sky, it was just a giant tower of flames and viewers were sending it to us and saying, ‘hey somethings burning.’ And we went on and we did a cut in online, not on tv but online. And said hey somethings burning in this part of town. Now citizen journalists sent us pictures, they sent us video, we asked if we could use it and they said yes. Now we’re not saying we know it’s burning. We’re just saying ‘hey something is on fire, we don’t know if it’s an emergency, we don’t know if it’s natural but you’re seeing it and we’re now seeing it. Let’s talk about it.’ I think that’s the biggest thing. Let’s talk about it. And you know just like, to me, it’s just like if you’re sitting in a restaurant and everyone is huddled around something. Typically, someone is telling a story or a story on some level is being told whether you’re watching a movie or you’re watching tv, you know humans have this need. We kind of have that pact mentality, right? And so, there’s very much an evolutionary need to know, we need to know information because otherwise, if we’re all a pack of sheep and we know a wolf is in the area, that’s bad. And so, the more we can communicate with each other to go, ‘hey there’s a wolf over there’ then the safer we are right? So, I think on a very primal level, there is a really important need to know. And I think that, and I know I’m going down the rabbit hole a little bit here. I think that, we for us, that’s so important that we provide that service and however we can do it, if it’s with our own crews, if its citizen journalists, we have the responsibility of telling you what we know and trying to inform and protect the

community as much as possible. So, we know that if we're talking pictures or video from a citizen journalist, and it's wrong, that hurts us, that's bad. So, it's really important for us to verify it but again there's a giant fire in the sky just like the other day when we had a fire, we knew what that fire was looking like. We were watching it ourselves on local traffic cameras, on crews we had there. And because of that, we know that we need to verify it and be as, the public needs to have their trust in us."