

## GTN Coding Manual 4.4

### I. Purpose and scope

Our purpose is to measure news quality with appropriate yardsticks derived from journalism's codes of ethics, particularly that of the Society of Professional Journalists. Due to limited resources, we'll routinely analyze the five most popular English-language newscasts (channels 2 KTVU, 4 KRON, 5 KPIX, 7 KGO, and 11 KNTV) as well as the three most popular newspapers (the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Mercury News* and *Contra Costa Times*) during the same news cycles. Throughout this manual you'll notice efforts to level the playing fields between the technologies of print and broadcast, so both can be measured fairly.

### II. Sampling

Sample days will be selected systematically, after a random start date, to create a "constructed week" of nearly equal numbers of fat Sunday and thin Monday newspapers. Our aim is make the sample as representative of the most widely watched and read news product as possible.

Since evening newscasts are the day's best-watched, we'll sample and record early and late evening news programs on an alternating basis. We'll choose the featured stories of the day—all stories in the newscast's first half-hour that are 20 seconds or longer, and all stories in the front and local/metro front pages of the newspaper that run 10 square inches or larger (including headline). (We'll note the topic, but not analyze these very short stories because treating them as briefs indicates the news organization places less value on them. They also depress quality measurements because such stories are generally under-sourced and may lack balance.)

### III. Units of analysis

The basic unit we will analyze is the story, an account of an event or issue denoted in newspapers by separate headlines and bylines identifying one or more reporters or a wire service. In television a story is usually introduced by a news-reader, rather than a headline.

#### *Anomalies*

- For TV *alone*, we'll consider "sidebars"—*contiguous* stories so closely related to one another that they could have been included in the main story—as part of *one larger story*. (TV may break up long stories into several parts to avoid taxing viewers. In print we'll treat sidebars as separate stories if they appear on the display pages; we won't count sidebars beginning on inside pages.) TV sidebars may be separated from the main story or each other by advertisements, but not by stories on a different topic. Sidebars are sometimes identified by terms such as "team coverage." For example, reporting about a heat wave's effects might include stories about fires, health, schools, the electric power grid, etc., but the unifying topic is weather. Answer all coding questions for such combined stories as if it were one large story. (Exception: Sometimes stations will put two unrelated stories together as one, e.g., the weatherman does a light feature on holiday lights, or a festival, or adopting kids before turning to meteorology; treat these as two separate stories.)
- If a story is in Q&A format *and* on a single issue or incident (e.g. a particular traffic problem like failing to completely stop at at stop signs) treat it as one long story. If the

topics vary—as in a column about multiple issues (even if all relate to the same general topic) —treat each as a separate story, applying the 10 sq. inch exclusion rule. Measure the headline with the story it applies to, otherwise with the first story.

- Stand-alone pictures unrelated to a particular story on the target pages shall be treated as separate stories. On TV these may be a photo sequence of a volcano erupting or other video chosen for its aesthetic value. The same may be true of print, or the photo could be related to a story at another location in the paper.
- For TV *alone*, we will combine all stories in the sports and weather segments (those anchored by the sports and weather anchors) into one story. Stories about sports or weather in the *non-sports or non-weather* parts of the newscast, however, will be treated individually like any other news story.
- In general, we won't analyze ads or promos. So *for newspapers*, ignore the masthead—containing the newspaper's logo or section head—as well as teases of inside or coming stories, advertisements, weather box and index of inside stories *For TV*, however, do time the newscast introduction and mark it in the left margin. Time all advertisements and teases of upcoming stories, and record it at the bottom of the preceding story (e.g., ads #1: 150 seconds (convert minutes to seconds)).

Occasionally, a TV story will be reported that begins within, but extends beyond the 30-minute mark of the newscast. If fully recorded, treat it as any other story. If the story is only partly recorded, however, fill out a sheet only if it has run more than 60 seconds. If less than a minute is recorded, don't fill out a sheet.

***The benefit of the doubt rule:** Often you will be asked to classify a story based on whether ¼ or the majority of its content meets some criterion. Always measure these generously in the favor of higher ratings for the story. Cut the news organization up to 5 percentage points of slack. Also, for newspapers, base these decisions only on body text, not total space. You need not count words; the number of paragraphs will suffice as a measure.*

#### **IV. Coding log**

In a notebook keep a running log of points of interest as you code the news. Each entry should include the date, news organization and time of newscast or zone of newspaper and page. Among other things, describe work that might merit special recognition or censure on the website. Comparisons of how different news organizations treated the same story are also helpful. Also look for patterns that seem interesting or significant, perhaps conflicts of interest between stories and advertisers or the news organization's parent company. The code log will be used to generate story and analysis ideas as well as flesh out patterns in the data with examples when we write up "report cards."

#### **V. Filling in the story coding sheets**

Using a pencil, fill out one sheet per featured story. Analyze all types of stories including columns. For any particular newscast or edition, *on the top of the first sheet* write the day of the week, date, and name of the news organization. Staple stories in the same newscast or edition together in order of appearance on TV and from top right to bottom left, front, then local front for newspapers. We won't count the intro in TV—usually teases of the top stories—but begin with the first story.

1. **News organization:** Place the appropriate number for the local media firm in the space provided. Pencil in the name of the zone, e.g., “East Bay,” “Peninsula,” etc., on the first sheet of the edition only. Indicate the time of the newscast, or if uncertain whether it's evening or night (9 p.m. or later). Because the sheets will be stapled you need only fill in #1 once.

2. **Date:** Mark the month, day, and last two digits of the year of the newspaper or newscasts, e.g., 2/6/00. **Topic:** Enter a short description of story, e.g. “infant dies in SF fire.” With TV sidebars, choose the unifying theme of the stories as the primary topic category. For example, if there were three stories covering different aspects of a plane crash, the theme would be what is common to all three—plane crash.

3. **Slug:** The slug is a short label for the story, e.g. “LAMugging,” “carchase,” “SFfire.” Don't put any spaces between words in the slug (but it's OK to indicate separate words by capitalizing the firsts letter if you wish) and don't exceed 10 characters. Slugs should be unique for a particular edition/newscast. Try to make them as informative and intuitive as possible. In print, base them on the headline. Slugs may be shorter than 10 letters.

4. **Page/Segment:** For newspapers, if the story begins on the front page, write 1; if on the first page of the local/metro section, write 2. For TV, list the number of the segment. Segments are the parts of the newscast between the advertising breaks. There are usually 3 to 5 in the first half hour.

5a. **Location:** If the story describes an event, mark it for where it took place. If that's not clear, mark for where the bulk of the story was gathered. This may be indicated by the dateline. When the story is about an issue without a specific location, choose as the location where the majority of the effects are being felt. If the story describes scattered events, mark where the reporter spent the most time. For *sports*, count games played *in* the Bay Area as local, but others where they occurred.

If an event outside the Bay Area is covered, e.g., a plane crash or earthquake, but also covered is reaction within the Bay Area, mark for where the event takes place and fill in question **5b**. If you can't tell the location, mark 5. (It may be helpful to look at a map of California, and the inset on the Bay Area to see which cities are included.) The Bay Area consists of the following 11 counties: San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Benito (Salinas-Monterey), Solano, Alameda, Contra Costa, Napa, Sonoma, and Marin. For the *Washington Post*, count as local (“Bay Area”), all stories located in Maryland and Virginia suburbs as well as the District of Columbia. Count as state, anything in Maryland or Virginia beyond a 50 mile radius of Washington. (I'll code the *Post* or provide a map.)

If a story contains both Bay Area and non-local events (e.g., sports), place it in the category where most of the story's time or space is spent. Mark “4” for stories about space.

5b. **Bay Area related:** If the answer to 5a. is NOT 1 (taking place in the Bay Area), fill this in. Otherwise, leave blank. Mark 1 if Bay Area-related, or 0 if not.

“Bay Area-related” stories can be of two types: 1) about issues and events with direct, non-transient and unique effects on the entire state of California—e.g., laws passed in Sacramento, state-wide elections, court cases setting statewide standards; or 2) stories occurring elsewhere in which *1/3 or more* of the content describes an impact on the Bay Area, e.g., the impact of a new federal law or court decision on the Bay Area, or the localization of a primarily national or international story, such as a plane crash, earthquake, etc. (Although national happenings, such as wars, federal laws and high court decisions, may have direct and lasting impacts on Bay Area residents, they don’t affect California uniquely. So don’t count them as locally related unless criterion 2 is met.) Count out-of-town games by local sports teams as “Bay Area-related.”

6. **Size:** *For newspapers*, measure all text and any accompanying graphics (defined as charts, tables of numbers or text, maps, other informational image or presentation not marked as a separate story by a byline) and photos in square inches. Include the headline and white space between columns, but not external white space, even if it’s boxed with the story. Generally, measure from the widest part of a particular rectangle of text. (It may be helpful to divide an irregularly spaced story into several easily-measurable rectangles.) On the vertical, measure from the top of the headline or series logo to the bottom of the lowest photo or print, including page jump or reporter contact or other information. If the story is set off in a box, measure the horizontal from the widest extent of text, headline, graphic or photo.

When two or more stories share a headline, add the headline space above the text of each story to its total.

Pencil in the number of square inches on the face page and the number on the jump or inside page; enter the sum of the two as the size. Measure each dimension to the nearest quarter inch. For totals, round to the nearest integer (rounding .5’s up).

*For TV*, measure the story, including anchor intro and any (non-banter) Q. and A. between anchor and reporter, in seconds (so 3 minutes and 10 seconds would be written 190). Banter is chit-chat between anchor and reporter that may add emotion or reaction—e.g., “A sad situation for all, Pete”—or humor, but not new facts about the story topic. Do include in the story, however, conversations between an anchor and a reporter or between anchors and the sports or weather person that adds new information about the story being reported. Include reporter identifications as part of the story’s time, e.g., the anchor saying, “that was Robert Handa reporting from the South Bay.”

7. **Size of self-originated part:** This will be either 0 or the same as #6. Generally self-originated stories are those in which the local paper or station’s reporter gathers the quotes and writes the narrative him- or herself.

*In newspapers*, assign as self-originated any story with a local reporter’s byline even if it also contains a wire service cite at the end. (Note in a few cases editors will take a byline and write summaries from wire services; we’ll count these as *non*-locally originated since the reporting was done by outsiders.) When a story carries a wire service byline, or no specific staff member’s byline, and a cite to staff reporting at the end, assume it is *not* self-originated. One exception: If a *Bay Area* story carries no byline, assume it *is* locally originated.

### *Anomalies for newspapers*

- In general, do *not* count stories attributed to paper’s own wire services as self-originated since most are not written by the local paper’s staff.
- With the exception of the *Washington Post*, which is independent, beware of stories attributed to a paper’s Washington—or other city—bureaus *outside the Bay Area*. For the *Mercury*, these are usually the chain’s reporters, Knight-Ridder in this case, not the *Merc*’s. In general, stories attributed to anyone listed on the newspaper’s own website as a staff member count as self-originated.

Exceptions for the *Mercury*: anyone in the Sacramento bureau and Jim Puzanghera and Heather Phillips in the K-R Washington bureau are paid directly by the *Mercury* and their work counts as “self-originated.” Also count as Mercury staffers: Michael Dorgan in Beijing, Maureen Fan in New York, Karl Schoenberger reporting from the Pacific rim and Michael Zielenziger in Tokyo.

Exceptions for the *SF Chronicle*, which is part of the Hearst chain, include the Sacramento bureau and reporters: Zachary Coile, Ed Epstein, Kevin Fagan, Carolyn Lochhead, Glen Martin, Marc Sandalow, and Matthew Stannard.

Exception for the *Contra Costa Times*, another Knight-Ridder paper, is Dan Borenstein and anything from the Sacramento Bureau.

- Include photos and graphics with the story, regardless of origin.

*In TV*, to be counted as self-originated, the story must either: 1) Occur in the 11-county Bay Area; or 2) have half or more of the specified sources interviewed by the station’s own reporters. This is usually indicated by the source speaking into a microphone with the station’s logo, by a shot of the reporter with the source, or coming back to the same source for > 1 quote. If it’s not otherwise clear, assume information coming from sources interviewed *in the Bay Area*, or apparently *in the reporter’s locale*, is the station’s own reporting. Otherwise it’s *not* locally originated. Apply the same reasoning to sports stories. Assume all sports coverage of games played outside the Bay Area originates *outside* the station, unless the station’s reporter is on the scene, perhaps conducting player/coach interviews.

Note that TV stations often implicitly identify a network reporter or one from another station as their reporter. If there’s no mike-logo, the story is outside the Bay Area and the reporter isn’t familiar or listed on the station’s website, assume s/he works for another news organization.

*Reader stories* (those without a reporter visible in the video): Count as local all that take place in the Bay Area. If the story happens outside those 11 counties, assume it is not self-originated.

*Shared reporters*: Even if the station has an agreement to share with a “sister” station or newspaper, outside reporters should not be considered as local originators *unless they are listed on the station’s website and using a logo-ed mic*.

Stations will also go “live” to the newsroom to one of their reporters, or even outside. Treat such reporters as anchors in your analysis, unless conditions 1 or 2 above are met.

### **Anomaly for TV**

For TV stories containing both sources interviewed by the station's reporters and sources recorded by others, count the story as *entirely self-originated* if specifically identified sources interviewed by the station equal or outnumber those interviewed by other news organizations. Otherwise, count the whole story as *non-locally originated*. This creates parity with newspapers when they put their own byline on a story they have relied on other journalists for parts of. If half or more of the specified sources are interviewed by the local news organization, also include non-locally originated sources in the totals. Likewise if fewer than half were generated by the local news organization, questions 11-17 are skipped.

8. **Topic:** Place the story in the single *most appropriate* category. Some stories will overlap more than one category. Generally, choose *the most specific category* and the one where the most airtime or space is spent. (Often it helps to think of why the story was chosen.) A story on the release of treated sewage water into the Russian River due to heavy rains has elements of weather, environment and government action. But if most of the time is spent on the unusualness of the weather, then that's the appropriate category. If more time were spent on the damage to the environment, that would be the appropriate category. If you simply can't decide between two categories, put the second in the right-hand blank.

Evaluate the story *as presented*. A story about the World Trade Organization Protests is an economic story if the reporting is about economics, but it's a criminal justice story if more than half of the reporting is about violence or confrontation, rather than issues.

Treat *historical information* like any other. A story on the history of the Gay Rights Parade, for example, would go in the same category as the parade itself—#9 if presented as a story about gay liberation, but if presented merely as a collection of exotic video, category 15 would be appropriate. Memories of wartime would fall under category 13.

*Protest stories* are popular. If the confrontation with police—shoving, yelling slogans or emotional outpouring—is the focus of half or more of the report, put it in the criminal justice category. If *issues* are the main focus, put the story in the category of the topic of the protest, e.g. protest of the war on Iraq would go under #1, politics, while a protest on a campus about minority admissions would go under #4, education.

Note that stories chosen primarily because they involve famous people could fall in a variety of categories—especially crime, accident, medical/health. Choose the celebrity category (#16) if the story seems clearly selected because of the principal's fame. A hospitalization, murder, drug arrest or auto accident taking place outside the Bay Area would probably not be reported here unless it involved a celebrity. Thus murder charges/prosecutions against star athletes like Ray Lewis or even O.J. Simpson would go in 16 rather than 6.

### **Core topics**

1. **Politics**, including any news about candidates, their positions, political issues, poll results and ballot initiatives or fund-raising or the political system—U.S. or foreign. Also include political careers and leaders' obituaries and memorials for social and political leaders, e.g., Martin Luther King Jr. Profiles of leaders of political, or reform, or social movements go here. Any news about the *process* of people taking political power, losing it, protesting it, or the process of transition fits in this category. Consider action of incumbent politicians in this category only if they are clearly political in nature. e.g. speeches at fund-raisers, what they plan to do if re-elected, etc. Otherwise, place them in category #2.

Unless stories bear on fitness for office or are related to public policy, articles about personal lives should be excluded (other than obits).

2. **Government (executive and legislative branches)** new government policies, reports, actions, deliberation, policy speeches, press conferences and decision-making—from the level of planning commissions, city councils and mayors to county boards of supervisors to state legislatures, directors of state bureaucracies and governors to the president, directors of federal agencies and Congress, and other nation’s governments.

Diplomatic action by any nation, e.g., discussions of inspections in Iraq, the “Roadmap to Peace, etc. including threats of military intervention, but not actual military action, go here.

#### *Anomalies*

*If half or more of a story is not about the deliberations of one of the government bodies above, but about how a government decision affects people or might change lives, and it fits in a category below, choose that category instead.* Thus a city council discussion about police misconduct would go here, but were half or more of the story about the misconduct itself, and non-council discussion, it would move to the criminal justice category. Or if reporters talked to fishermen or builders about a government regulation during most of the story, the category would change to the more specific, rather than government.

Deliberations and decision-making of school superintendents and school boards and supervisors or commissions for police or other public services that are *below the level of city council*, go in the more specific categories below, such as education or crime. Also quasi-governmental boards like an airport or coastal commission or transit authority would be treated in categories such as environment for coastal commission and some land planning, category 9 for a transportation authority. If a transit authority, such as an airport commission, were dealing with an environmental issue, such as filling in part of the Bay, that would go in #8 for environment. *Note that most of these stories would be counted as making a civic contribution in Question 9 because they describe actions of government decision-makers.*

Profiles of government leaders that relate to their fitness for office or actions in office go here, but exclude stories that concern only their private lives.

If a proposal by politicians is introduced as legislation, it goes here. But if it’s merely a political proposal, not yet submitted to become law, place it in #1.

3. **Natural disasters:** earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, avalanches, floods, tornadoes, etc. To qualify, the story must include severe damage—destruction of life, multiple homes or major buildings. Milder weather-related problems go in #12.

4. **Education**, private or public, from pre-school to high school to college to post-graduate, including governing boards of such institutions, e.g., school board, regents, etc. Also corporate training, recruiting, retaining teachers, fund-raising, building/stocking public libraries, museums, zoos, etc. Stories in which at least half of the content is about sports *as part of educational or personal development* belong here, but not accounts of varsity games or articles about varsity sports programs, hiring/firing coaches, etc.
5. **Economic** events and issues, including business conditions—local, national or international—how a company is doing (except health care), labor, employment, stock markets, trade agreements and disputes, civil suits in which one business sues another (criminal and government regulatory business suits, however, go in the next category), etc. Stories about a particular business or industry’s success, failure, problems, legal barriers also go here.

*Promotional stories*—those about a single company that are written from a positive, rather than objective point of view, and contain no independent expert sources—go in category 19, “Other Stories.” Government budgets would go in #2 because they are the concrete expression of government action.

Stories reported primarily from a consumer’s point of view—e.g., about prices—go in #14. Those about government spending, budgets, etc., go in #2.

6. **Crimes/ Justice**, criminal justice system (police, prosecution/defense, grand juries, courts, penal institutions, parole), criminal and civil trials involving individuals, police actions (including FBI, ATF, INS, IRS and Coast Guard—but not rescues unless criminal action occurs also). Also investigations of wrongdoing including grand juries. Aftermath of crimes and courts including funerals, memorials, hospital reports, investigations, imprisonment, parole, cash settlements, etc. Homeland Security stories and domestic (within U.S.) terror attacks, alerts, etc. go here. But if half or more of the story describes the deployment or action of uniformed soldiers, including National Guard, place it in category 13). Supreme Court and other court decisions go here, except for business v. business cases. So do regulatory trials, e.g. Microsoft.
7. **Medical/health/fitness** events and issues, including scientific research and discoveries in these areas and threats to public health or physical safety. Epidemiology—tracking illness, addiction, obesity, depression, etc.-- belongs here. Include worker safety issues. Also include fund-raising for medicine—such as AIDS bike rides. Also medical ethics. Include the business of medicine/health/ nutrition and assessments of medical performance (other than lawsuits). If the threat to public health is primarily environmental—arising from polluted air, water, etc.—mark as #8.
8. **Environmental** events and issues. Include government or private actions to clean toxic waste sites, limit or increase housing density, protect open space or environment, limit urban sprawl, reduce pollution, etc. Also natural phenomena such as eclipses, global warming, El Nino, etc. Also profiles of environmental leaders past and present.

9. **Other important social events, issues or trends**, e.g., race-, sexual orientation-, ethnic-, disability-, class- relations or tensions or programs; transportation/commuting (but not traffic reports), electric power shortages/supply; agriculture, housing, parenting styles; divorce or marriage rates; lifestyle changes, religion, historical info. Also educational cultural events and live plays. If a story fits as well in another, more specific category—e.g., environment or technology, place it there rather than here.
10. **Technology/science** issues and events. Non-medical scientific discovery—physical and social science, e.g. space exploration. History of technology. New social theories. Business aspects of technology companies/services go in category 5.
11. **Major fires, accidents**—auto, air, rail, space and otherwise—or other mishaps, their investigation or their repair, e.g. sewer line rupture, etc.—that involve more than \$25 million in damage, 5,000 or more acres burned, or the loss of two or more lives of Bay Area residents, or five or more lives elsewhere. Also the results of such incidents—hospital reports, funerals, damage reports, investigations (e.g. of the Shuttle explosion), inspections, etc. (Accidents in which half or more of the story describes criminal or civil charges, however, go in category 6.) If there is no damage estimate, assume it’s under \$25 million unless obviously over.

*Be careful with round-up stories summarizing a series of unrelated events, such as accidents, fires, crimes or investigations. If reported as a single story, DO NOT aggregate the injuries or damage to decide between this category and #18. Instead evaluate the most serious incident in the summary and use that alone as a placement guide.*

12. **Weather** (short of natural disasters) and direct effects of weather, record heat or cold or wetness, heavy surf. However, if effects include content that might be placed in another topic category, place the story in the category in which the majority of the time or space is spent. Thus a minor brush fire caused by dry weather would go under category 18 if half or more of the time or space was spent describing the fire or attempts to control it or damage estimates, etc.
13. **Military** actions, deployments, attacks, threats, exercises, accidents, military peace-keeping efforts, aftermath of war—social chaos, refugees, epidemic, and terrorist acts (outside the U.S. only) with a likely political or religious motivation, e.g., the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Al Qaeda, ETA, etc. Also military policies, treaties concerned with weapons or aggression, e.g. NATO, studies of readiness, budgets and weapons. Include US and foreign. Put Homeland Security articles, however, in #6 unless they are mostly about the activities of uniformed soldiers.
14. **Consumer reporting** about commercial goods and services (but excluding medicine/fitness/ health). Generally, consumer reporting must include explicit comparisons of products, price, service or selection with some reasonable standard of quality, or at least one other retailer or manufacturer, or with an average. The tone must be objective, or critical, rather than promotional. Promotional stories go in category 19, “Other Stories.” Include “how to” stories that explain a process an individual might undertake, like paying taxes.

Stories about *what average consumers pay* for gasoline or housing in a region, or over time, also go here. However, if the emphasis is not on consumer prices, but on attributes of corporations such as profit performance, stock prices, or other economic data not directly tied to the average consumer, then choose category 5.

***Non-core topics***

15. **Human interest**, seasonal celebrations/festivals (e.g., Cinco de Mayo, July 4<sup>th</sup>, Thanksgiving, etc.) and entertainment stories, including stories about TV programs, movies, and popular culture. Also fashion trends, style, auto and boat shows, fads, the occult. Stories in this category often focus primarily on amusement, or other emotions: curiosity, surprise, adventure, joy, love, loyalty, sorrow, fear, sexiness, anger, disgust, rivalry—e.g. cute animal or other stories, re-unions, what people are doing on a holiday, features on children, tales of oddities, etc.. These are often light stories meant to bring a smile or tug a heartstring, but can also be sad—such as obits—or serious reminiscences about tragedy or the human condition.
  16. Information about **celebrities** and other widely known persons both famous and notorious. Generally concerns the lives/deaths/divorces of actors, actresses, athletes, authors, etc. Exclude politicians unless story un-related to public's business.
  17. **Sports** and sports-related (including recreation and hobbies), amateur and professional, including equipment and facilities. Stories in which more than half the content addresses the *business* of sports, however, go in category 5, Economics. Also exclude stories about sports facilities where half or more of the content focuses on the use of *public money* or a vote, or facilities in public schools or parks. Also exclude the role of sports in education. These go in categories for politics, government or education.
  18. **Minor fires, accidents, mishaps, power outages, traffic reports/ problems, BART/mass transit delays**—those in which fewer than two Bay Area residents (fewer than five from elsewhere) lost their lives or less than \$25 million in damage was done, or less than 5,000 acres burned. Results of such incidents, e.g., hospital reports, damage, funerals, etc. Misadventures—people hurt or missing or killed in non-criminal or uncertain circumstances—individual suicides.
  19. **Other stories**. Including promotional journalism—stories extolling the virtues of a particular business or product. Otherwise, use this category only if the story can't go elsewhere.
9. **Civic contribution**: These are stories fulfilling the “watchdog on government” role of the press—the making and discussion/criticism of government policy at all levels. Mark 1 if ¼ or more of the story describes politics, actions (related to their official status) or deliberations of government supervisory or regulatory or lawmaking boards or bodies, elected officials or the heads of any agencies of the U.S., state or local governments. Include school boards and regulatory authorities like Valley Transit Authority and Association of Bay Area Governments. New government initiatives and policies also qualify.

Also include court cases—usually Supreme Court, state supreme court and federal district court rulings—that affect society in a direct and lasting way, rather than a small number of individuals (< 10,000 persons). Also include court cases where a public prosecutor brings a case against a corporation (but not individuals) as well as any regulatory court case.

Otherwise mark 0.

This question seeks to measure reporting on the actions of those at the *controls* of our government at all levels, but not rank and file employees who carry out their decisions. So we would exclude actions of armed forces, police, fire, public schools, and other government departments. Exclude actions of governments other than the U.S.

We'd also exclude court cases involving individuals suing other private individuals or corporations. However suits/prosecutions against *governmental* agencies such as police departments, schools, cities, etc. or against public officials would be included.

Include studies (conducted by a governmental agency itself or outsiders) of effectiveness or problems of arms of domestic government. *Include any investigative or enterprise reporting about government or about a private company that focuses on its relationship with government.* Also include any stories in which ¼ or more of the content is public comment about the actions/policies of government, such as a protest of the war on Iraq, immigration policy, state job or budget cuts, or affirmative action at a state university.

**10. Level of reporting:** The essential distinction here is between reporting primarily focused on an *event* for its own sake—a fire, crash, shooting, parade, protest—or on an *issue*, an idea.

Event-oriented reporting is generally episodic—primarily concerned with a particular event at one place and time. Issue reporting, on the other hand is generally *thematic*—primarily directed at an intangible, such as a plan or policy or why something happened, what it may lead to, what it means. Issues can be about *patterns* of events over time or causes and effects of events, or even looking at a single event from multiple perspectives across the Bay Area. Issue reporting is about the connections among events rather than events themselves.

Mark 0 for *event* stories: More than half of the story describes a particular discrete action, or perhaps several actions unconnected, except by category, e.g. a round-up or summary of fires, athletic events, traffic jams, cultural celebrations such as July 4<sup>th</sup>, police actions, criminal acts, etc. Event reporting emphasizes the “what.” Examples include stories about a particular shooting, rape, crash, fire, trial, game/tournament, parade, protest, earthquake or battle.

Even if reporting takes place in several places, e.g. the homes of local victims of an airliner crash, if the principal focus is on a discrete event at a particular time and place, it is generally episodic reporting.

Mark 2 for issue stories: Half or more of the story concerns *issues*—ideas, policies, or areas of concern. Reports usually focus less on “what” and more on “why,” “who” and “how.” Examples include trend stories about educational practice, or transportation or housing conditions, or systematic reporting on the criminal justice system, the environment or economic conditions.

A story, or series of sidebars in TV, about the extent or impact of a heat wave, power shortage, or natural disaster would qualify as thematic if it *systematically* gathered information from multiple communities about the effects of the event. Even a weather report providing temperatures from across the Bay Area would qualify as thematic, so long as it is comprehensive, summarizing the entire region. Election results would, of course, fit in this category. Profiles/obits that examine patterns in a life and their impact would qualify.

Stories focusing on specific problem events here or there, such as traffic jams or accidents, *do not* count as issues. However, a systematic survey showing traffic *across the region*—jams and flows—would qualify, as would trend stories about traffic.

*Issues within events:* Some stories are about issues, but occur within a discrete event, perhaps a government meeting or a corporate press conference, or a demonstration. If half or more of the reporting concerns the *issues discussed*, mark it as issue reporting. Mark it as episodic only if the *event*—the fact that certain people/groups met, or an action was taken, such as a vote, or people demonstrated or clashed with police or rode bikes to raise funds for charity—predominates. An analytical report, audit, survey, or policy should almost always be considered an issue.

*Trials:* Consider most criminal trials against individuals as event-oriented. The court is trying to determine “what” happened and is focused on a particular event—e.g., a murder, robbery, abduction, etc. Regulatory and class action trials, however, might be issue-oriented if they concern a *systematic* examination at a whole set of behaviors—a pattern of events—over a period of time, or a controversy over whether an action is illegal—say whether certain cigarette ads were aimed at minors, whether a company was restricting market competition, polluting the environment, making defective products, or suits challenging the legality of government regulations.

**11. Impact:** Does the issue or event—*as reported*—exhibit the reality or potential to affect a *significant number of persons* in a *direct* and *lasting* way? If not, mark 0; if so, mark 2. A significant number of people in an area that’s home to 7 million would be a minimum of 10,000 persons. (The 10,000 need not be local.) Assume that governmental decisions affecting an incorporated area (town or city) whose size is not indicated meet the 10,000 person minimum.

Most violent crimes, for example, have enormous impact on the individual hurt or killed, on his/her family, perhaps on immediate neighbors, but unless the victim is a political leader it’s unlikely that more than 10,000 people would be affected in a direct and non-transient way.

A *direct effect* is one that makes a difference in people’s lives—it may improve or diminish quality of life. A *lasting effect* is one that endures for at least six months.

By *potential* we mean one could make a convincing argument that the effect was likely, not that it was merely “possible.” The reporting should make the size of the impact clear, unless it could be implied by any reasonable adult. E.g., it’s obvious that the appointment of a new school superintendent or police chief or a political nomination portends the possibility of wide and significant effects on the community, but a policy change might need elaboration to earn a “2.”

*All three* criteria have to be met. A particular weather report or storm may have a direct effect on millions of people's lives, but short of a natural disaster, for most the effect will be fleeting. Sporting events are similar. Tens of thousands of avid fans may be greatly elated or disappointed by a game's outcome, particularly if a championship is at stake, but for most the effects will have dissipated six months later.

Note that the story does not have to include the claim that many would be affected. The coder is responsible for that assessment.

**12. Number of named independent expert sources:** Mark from 0 to 3. Independent experts are those who have some specialized learning or experience that permits them to enlighten us about the topic. They may be doctors (so long as they aren't pushing the product or procedure) professors, or researchers, or book authors, or work in think tanks or research institutes. They may be analysts working for corporations or banks that are neutral or independent of the story topic. They may be auditors or members of blue ribbon public commissions or grand juries. *They must be neutral or at least unaffiliated with parties directly in dispute.* In general they stand apart from the participants in the event or issue; their opinions generate no conflict of interest. Thus, in a story about stock prices, an *investment* company analyst is not neutral, but a *market research* company analyst is because s/he is not trading stocks. Generally, but not always, these sources are presented as having some expertise.

We will also count *documentary sources* that fulfill this function of providing independent expertise. Generally, they will be created by independent expert sources. Also include any scientifically conducted survey or poll of >100 persons or cases as an expert documentary source. Also include outside audit reports and government or university or think tank—but not corporate—statistics as expert sources. If more than three expert sources are present, count additional sources as specific sources.

**General note on sources:** Be sure to include any sources in photo cutlines and informational graphics, including the source of the graphed information if its from outside the newsroom. Be careful to limit sources to those persons or documents actually making a comment. Descriptions of actions—"she opposed term limits"—do not count, only the provision of information. Note that "she *said* she opposed term limits" would count. Generally, if the verb used is a synonym of "said" it counts; otherwise it doesn't. Do not infer a source statement when none is present, even though the information had to come from somewhere. Be sure to include documents such as lawsuits, legislation, indictments, and reports when information is attributed to them. Also include historical documents. Sources must say something; mentions of names of persons who spoke without reporting what they said don't count (except where they refused comment could not be reached.)

**13. Other specific sources:** Mark the number, from 0 to 5. A specific source is always a particular individual or document, never plural. A specific source is usually named (at least by last name, not just "the police chief") but may be expressly granted anonymity, e.g., "an executive who spoke on the condition of anonymity." Include unnamed spokespersons as long as the person or organization for whom they speak is named, e.g., "a spokesperson for Gov. Richardson."

Likewise, a document's specific title is unnecessary, but the authoring institution, department, Web site, news organization, or individual must be named, e.g., "a report prepared by the Public Utilities Commission" or "The *Chronicle* reported..." (unless it's in the *Chronicle*). However, the authoring institution cannot be so broad as "the state" or "newspapers." It's best if there is a reference to a document or record, but if the material is tabular or statistical, include it as well, so long as it's sourced. Count repeated references to a partially specified document—"court records"—as a single source. Also count a specific person who is partially identified such as "Mr. Schultz's wife," or "Mr. Smith's attorney," but not plural sources—"Mr. Jones' children."

Count as a specific source, unsuccessful attempts to reach a source, e.g., "Jones did not return a reporter's phone calls. (Exception to the plural rule: count vain attempts to reach multiple *unspecified* sources, e.g., "Jones' attorneys" as one specified source, since at least one phone call to a specific person or office was required to make the claim.)

Don't count second-hand or self-sources: "Police said Smith said..." "the *Mercury* reported earlier" in a *Mercury* story.

Sources may be quoted directly (") or paraphrased. Sources need not be on air. Do not count *generic sources* such as "police," "investigators," "officials," "supporters," "opponents," "critics," "observers," "attorneys," "scientists," etc. as specified sources.

Do not count any on-camera source who is not identified unless s/he is described as seeking anonymity. We are only recording *specified* sources.

*Special Case:* a scientific poll conducted by the *local news organization* (either alone or with partner news organizations or other institutions). A poll requires a great deal of interviewing or wide survey distribution. Count such a poll as equivalent to 5 specific sources (a perfect score). To qualify as *scientific*, there need be at least 100 persons chosen randomly and a systematic attempt to provide every member of the population to which the poll seeks to generalize an equal chance of being included in the survey. (Note that many polls are *unscientific*, based on people responding to a question on a web site, or random interviews with people on the street. Treat sources in such non-scientific polls as with any other story.)

**14. Apparent diversity of sources** (TV only): Use hatch marks to indicate how many sources fit in each of the categories provided. Identification by race, and sometimes even gender, is problematic. Here we are only concerned with identified *specific* human sources who appear on camera. Mark each even if the number exceeds 5. If a source is described as belonging to a particular group, regardless of appearance, place the individual according to that description. In addition to visual cues, you may take names into account, e.g., a source named Maria Gonzales is likely to be a Hispanic female. If you cannot identify racial/ethnic differences, use the last category, "DK," Don't Know. If gender is also unclear, use the final box.

**15. Fairness:** Mark 0 if only one side of a controversial topic is offered the chance to make its case. Mark 2, if more than one side is represented, but unequally. Mark 3 if more than one side is represented and all sides are given relatively equal *opportunity* for at least one comment. Thus, if side one is directly quoted, side two (and three, if present) must be as well if it chooses to respond. (A refusal of comment or "could not be reached" can justify a 3.) If side one is on camera, so must side two (unless there is some obvious reason it cannot be). *Neither time nor*

*space must be equal, however.* Leave blank if the story is not controversial. Also leave blank for sports stories unless the controversy is bigger than sports—e.g. racism, criminal activity, etc.

*What to do with columns:* If a story is explicitly identified as a column with columnist's photo only consider it a controversy if criterion 1 below is met. Otherwise, leave blank.

Consider as a controversy any story in which a serious claim is made that: 1) accuses a *named* person or institution of mis- or malfeasance or behavior that reflects poorly on them in the eyes of the community; *or* 2) claims as fact something many in the community would disagree with; *or* 3) involves a conflict or contest between two or more parties, e.g. a political race.

*But* profiles of a single political candidate are fair, as long as other candidates get more or less equal chance within a reasonable time. (We'll assume that this happens, unless we can document otherwise.) Also exclude trials in which only one party testifies. (If unsure, leave question blank, but note in explanation space.) Sometimes the other side is not available for comment, e.g., when police are searching for the accused, when s/he is dead, etc. Leave blank in such cases. Arrests, however, should contain an attempt at a statement from the arrested or his/her attorney.

*If one or more sides to a controversy are missing, please note them in the blank space.*

In rare cases, a story may present more than one controversial issue. If so, grade the story based on the principal or most serious allegation (which will usually be high in the story).

*Special case:* Reporters covering an event that is likely to generate only one side of an issue—such as a Gay Right Parade, the convention of a particular political party, a chamber of commerce or Sierra Club awards dinner—should not be expected to get contrary views. In such cases, leave the question blank. One exception: if a serious, credible, defamatory charge is made about an identifiable individual, reporters should seek comment from that individual.

**16. Story type:** Mark 1 for primarily spot news; 2 for primarily feature; 3 for primarily enterprise; 4 for primarily investigative; 5 for other. Put routine TV weather reports in category 5. Weather stories on news pages are generally spot news. Also in this category include stories (more likely, columns) composed of readers' letters and Q. and A. stories where Q's are submitted by readers. In each case, the primary role is played by whichever type of reporting consumes more than half the space or time. Since news organizations win more points for enterprise and investigative stories, any ties in those categories should go in the news organization's favor. For sidebar clusters in TV, choose the category based on which describes the majority of the combined report. Same for items in a newspaper column treated as one story.

*Spot*, or breaking, news is a description of an event of some type that occurred within the last day or so. The reporting style is generally terse and focused on "what" happened, "where," "when," and "who." It may include some contextual information for background, but the focus is on what just happened and (often in TV) reactions from affected individuals.. Include "folo" (or "follow-up") stories here—the latest development in a continuing story, e.g., an arrest in the case of a crime reported earlier. Spot news can be about meetings.

A *feature* is usually *not* about an event that happened within the current 24-hour news cycle and is generally *more entertainment than information-oriented*. (It may, however, be a personal take on a current event, e.g., a sports columnist's reaction to a player trade.) The primary point of a

feature story is to show how interesting something is, rather than how important. Human interest is the usual selling point. Many columns and first-person reports should be recorded here, but only if they fit these criteria. Artsy collages of images and sounds that don't fit traditional hard news mold may also belong here. Features are sometimes referred to as "soft" news. Brief features are sometimes called "brights." It differs from spot news in that the same story could have been written a day or week earlier or later; it's not usually tied to a 24-hour news cycle.

Like a feature, an *enterprise* story is also usually not focused on a particular event in the current news cycle, but at least half the content is information-oriented (designed to help people make sense of their environment rather than amuse/intrigue them). It generally answers a question the public may have about some issue. The focus is usually broader than a single event. Enterprise stories are originated by journalists usually trying to explain or contextualize important happenings or issues. Do count previews of government meetings as enterprise ("city council tonight will decide..."), but merely the early release of a report or document is spot news.

For enterprise, the topic must have some long term importance to the community. A profile of someone who wields power in the community—either through an official role or who attempts to influence issues of public importance—is enterprise, but one about a private individual (or the private life of a person with power) who has a particular skill or hobby is a feature.

*Investigative* stories are enterprise stories that focus on mis- or malfeasance, or unethical acts usually by government, but sometimes also by private industry or others. The investigation must be conducted primarily by the *journalist*, not *law enforcement authorities*. Thus if a prosecutor investigates the police department and issues indictments, that's not investigative. But if the news organization uncovers misbehavior on its own, it is investigative. Count internal investigations conducted by the institution, but *revealed by the press rather than the institution under scrutiny*, as investigative. To count as an investigative story, rather than a gossip report, the story must also contain a total of *at least five* specified sources. Do *not* consider reports of the aftermath of an investigation that reveal no new wrong-doing as investigative.

#### **17. Briefs and ads (bottom margin of code sheet)**

Note topics of briefs that come after the story you've just rated. Also note the length of ads and story promotion (in seconds). Ad breaks include teases for upcoming stories, promotion for the newscast or its journalists, and occasionally a weather or stock graphic inserted among the ads and promos. (Because any news is such a brief part of the commercial break, include it in the ad total.) Often the beginning of a break is signaled by the station's soundtrack.