

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: AUTHOR'S RESPONSE

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First, thanks for the opportunity to respond to the two articles appearing in this issue of *National Weather Digest* that are following up on my study appearing here in Dec. 2006-“Seals of (Dis)approval: Television Weathercasters Debate the Value of Voluntary Credentials.”

I'm glad to see new research being conducted on the important role television weathercasters play in our society. As my paper concluded, good places to begin to find about more about attitudes towards the AMS and NWA seals are with news directors and the audience. I'm not surprised to see the findings of these 104 news directors who say they prefer the AMS seal as that as what I've often seen in ads and heard in conversations, or that a seal is not “the most important criterion for hiring.” What's especially illuminating as new data in this paper (“Comments on Seals of Approval”) is how strongly news directors agree that they would “hire experienced (weathercasters) without the ability to earn the seals.”

I think this study is a good place to start in exploring the range of attitudes news directors have about the seals, but as the authors note this study has a very low response rate (13%) and it is dangerous to extrapolate to the larger universe, but still an ambitious beginning. The data referenced from a 1992 M.S. thesis about audience reactions to the seals also suffers from a low response rate (16%), but I appreciate the new citation and will add it to my summer reading and reference

it for future research. I think so much has changed in both the media and meteorology landscapes that a new study that builds on that 16 year old data would be an excellent contribution to the sparse literature we have on how audiences respond to TV weather. With so much emphasis being placed on the revamped seal programs today it would be interesting to see if the audience notices those credentials any more than they did back in this 1992 study.

My only comment to the second paper clarifying the degrees and certificates offered by Mississippi State University is that the section in my paper describing the program there was the verbatim text provided to me by a reviewer of my paper and since that person was affiliated with the MSU program I did not make any changes to that description. I apologize for any confusion that may have created and appreciate the clarification on the MSU programs for reference in future research too.

Finally, I would add that I'm working on a new national survey of TV weathercasters and their reporting on science to build upon another recent study that appeared in the January 2008 issue of *Public Understanding of Science* (“Television Weathercasters as Potentially Prominent Science Communicators”). If a survey crosses your email in box, I hope you will take a few minutes to respond so we can continue to grow the literature in this important field.