

**Letting the Media In—Linguistic aspects of television news that shape our world**

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## Introduction

*Reality exists outside language, but it is constantly mediated by and through language: what we know and say has to be produced in and through discourse.*

—Stuart Hall (1999: 511)

*Instead of television being a more or less accurate reflection of some external reality, it has become the reality against which the real world is compared.*

—Richard Harris (1999: 2)

“Reality,” to which Stuart Hall and Richard Harris refer above, takes many forms. We perceive items and events differently than might our neighbor or our children, but this does not change the fact that we refer to both instances as “reality.” Even in the case of “hard facts,” there can be disagreement among individuals. “Reality” is less an immutable object than an elusive shadow of certainty.

Think of some things you “know” about the world. Then, think of how much of that knowledge you have actually verified with your own five senses. Chances are a large portion of your “real world” knowledge is not the result of direct experience, but of vicarious learning and experience. Not having confirmed personally everything one knows about the world should not be cause to discount all of the unverifiable knowledge; however, it does illustrate that our perception of “reality” and the “real world” is largely based on our faith in innumerable institutions that make that knowledge available.

The construction and perpetual remodel of social reality is a necessary by-product of our interactions with these institutions, such as the education system. While students learn about math, geography and civics, they also absorb information about the “real world” that is used to construct the reality of the world inside and outside their immediate grasp. What is learned in the classroom is confirmed through social interactions in a continuous process of affirming a communal “reality.” Occasionally, events occur that challenge preconceived notions about “how

the world works.” In these cases, communities and societies undergo the convulsions of collective re-programming together, legitimizing the new reality and re-affirming their faith in the institutions that hold sway over official reality.

These convulsions have occurred many times in recent history, most notoriously in the case of the abolition of slavery and the recognition of equal rights for all people in the United States. Even further back, there is the case of a flat Earth suddenly discovered to be round and the social and political upheaval that resulted from that shift in perspective. In contemporary times, advocates for same-sex marriage question the reality of what is natural and what is not. In all cases, institutions such as the government, the judicial system and the media ease the transition by negating the old reality and (eventually) ratifying the new one.

This paper will examine a similar process of reality construction by one of the most powerful global institutions: the mass media. Global communication and the ubiquity of the media have altered the face of “reality:” sound and images are transmitted at breakneck speed from one corner of the globe to another, allowing the reader in Omaha, Nebraska to read about the day’s events in Nigeria with only the slightest of lag times. But, this ubiquity is also deceiving. The overwhelming amount of available information brings with it the perception that *all* information is available: that is to say, if an event does not occur in the media world, it might as well not have occurred at all.

The perception of an all-encompassing media gives the various arms of the mass media tremendous power over the reality its consumers hold to be true. Media effects researchers have highlighted “agenda-setting” as one of the most salient effects of mass media on contemporary society. The agendas of mass media consumers tend to be similar or equivalent to the agenda of the mass media. Events or issues that appear frequently in the media are considered more

pressing than those that appear infrequently or not at all. Given the nature of the mass media as an institution designed to connect the consumer to events in the world around them, it is not surprising that effects such as agenda-setting have come to pass.

As the mass media was made possible by the invention of the printing press 500 years ago, the development of radio and then television in this century has given birth to the contemporary mass media. Since their inception, radio and television have become two of the principle conduits for the global exchange of information. More recently, the advent of 24-hour news stations and the Internet has made it possible for the consumer to access the media world on the slightest whim. However, despite the popularization and globalization of the mass media, it remains a collection of media that “mediate” the presentation of reality to the mass media consumer. This is a fact that is oftentimes forgotten, as Richard Harris noted in his statement at the beginning of this chapter, but nonetheless an inherent feature of the institution itself.

Thus, we come to the conclusion that what appears on our television screen and in our morning newspapers is not reality itself but a particular presentation of reality. The media acts as a filter that, as Kenneth Burke (1966) might say, selects, reflects and then deflects the concrete reality of the five senses as it is packaged for delivery to the consumer. However, there is even another level of mediation that exists above and beyond the mass media. Language, writes Stuart Hall, is the ultimate mediator of reality. Meaning comes to us via discourse and discourse is made possible by language. The concrete reality of a sunrise becomes the mediated reality of a sunrise *described* the instant we put the sun’s early morning rays to words. When the mass media is involved, this mediation of reality becomes a two-step process: first, reality is mediated by the language used to capture it; secondly, the description of reality is mediated by the instruments of the mass media. We almost neglect to notice the mediation at all. Language is a

tool so personal and so innate to our identity as human beings that its mediating function is a distant afterthought.

Having made explicit the mediating function of media and language, there appears no reason why these effects could not be countered with a simple raising of one's consciousness and constant reminder of the nature of mediated reality. But, like most topics worth studying, it is never that easy. In this paper, I will begin by investigating current frameworks for studying and thinking about media effects. This influx of mass media and spread of mass media culture is possibly the most extensive, longest-running uncontrolled experiment of the modern era and scholars are scrambling to quantify and qualify the effects unfolding before their eyes. Looking at the frameworks, we will see that "media effects" are as varied and ambiguous as the media consumers themselves.

In the second chapter, I will present my findings from a linguistic content analysis of three weeks of nightly network news broadcasts. From these findings, we will see that there are indeed aspects of media language that indicate the existence of a underlying layer of subtle linguistic cues that shape mediated reality. Finally, I will discuss the pragmatic evidence for the power of media language (especially that on television) to affect our ideas of reality. In addition, pragmatics will provide many tools for answering the \$64,000 question: how does the media get in our heads and how do we get it out?

### **Notes on conventions**

This paper combines data from many fields, including media studies, discourse analysis, pragmatics and cultural studies. I have tried to present each concept with enough background explanation to allow readers to understand regardless of their academic specialty. However, should I have failed, the bibliography lists several easily accessible texts on all of the topics.

All of the data on specific news segments is from the evening news broadcasts of the three major American networks: *ABC World News Tonight with Peter Jennings*, *CBS Evening News with Dan Rather* and *NBS Nightly News with Tom Brokaw*. I will refer to these programs as simply “ABC,” “CBS” and “NBC,” respectively. Whenever necessary, I have provided the transcription conventions along with the excerpts themselves. However, in general boldface type signifies emphasis, “...” signals a pause (though this is no indication of relative length) and one line in a transcript is equivalent to an unbroken utterance.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Media Effects and Influences: An Overview**

#### **I. Introduction**

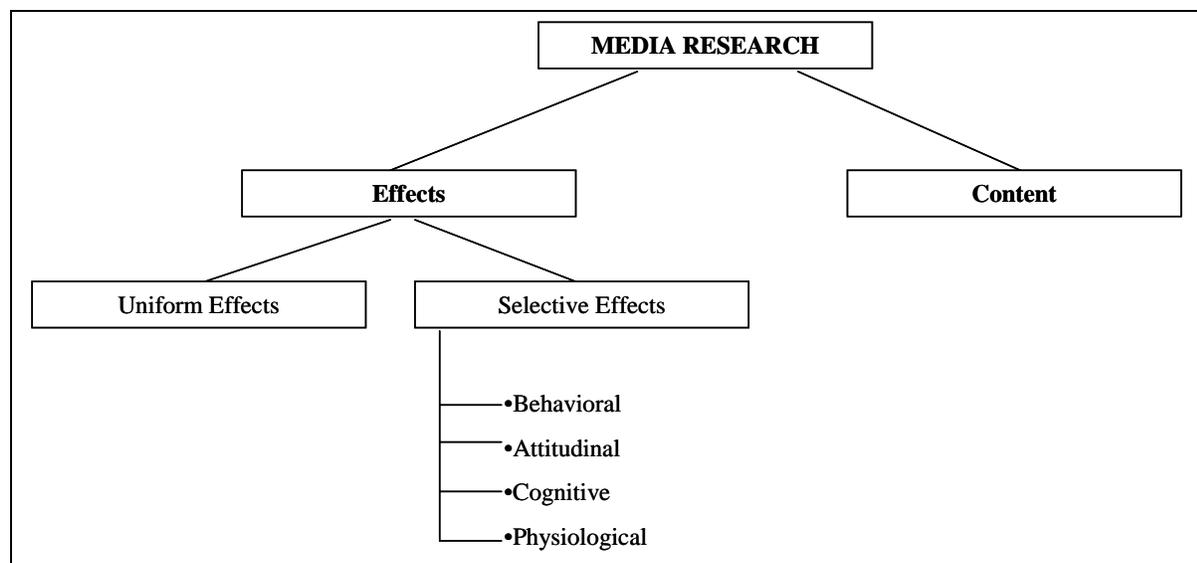
In the contemporary world, reality is mediated in a two-step process. In this chapter, we will explore previous research on one of these steps in constructing a mediated reality: the mass media. To the individual user, the mass media may appear as simply a disjointed collection of objects in their living room: a television, a radio, some magazines. These are our interaction points, the interfaces through which we access the mass media. But although we may seem to interact only individually with the mass media, we also engage with it as a society. The mass media is one of the most ubiquitous conduits for communication, used for transmitting information to the “masses.” By picking up a newspaper, turning on the radio or sitting down to watch a minute of television, we connect ourselves to a global network of media that educate, inform and entertain us. The media also assists us as a society by surveying the environment in which we live and correlating for us the different aspects of that environment. In addition, the media is one of the great transmitters of social norms and customs (Bryant and Thompson 2002: 128). This is to say that the media tells us what is out there, how the things out there relate to one another, and how we should relate to the things out there. Thus, the media plays quite an important role in our modern society.

Owing to the prominent role of the media in society, we must also acknowledge that the mass media affects our society and the individuals within in significant ways. However, the mass media is only one of many complex social and environmental factors that shape perceptions of reality; because mass media is only one of many other factors that affect individual and societal perceptions of reality, some scholars have suggested that the term “media influences”

may be more appropriate than “media effects” (Gauntlett 1995 in Giles 2003: 21). However, to conform to the overall literature, I will continue to use the term “media effects.”

## II. Media Research

As a general field, media research can be divided into two categories: studies of media effects and studies of media content. Within the category of effects, there are two major divisions. One is the model that dominated discussions after World War I and through the 1950s: the Theory of Uniform Effects. This theory assumes that individuals perceive and react to media messages in similar ways; under this framework, media messages function as a “magic bullet” or “hypodermic needle” that affect the individual in the manner intended regardless of other considerations. Although this is still the position most frequently adopted by outspoken media critics, the idea of Uniform Effects has been largely discarded by serious scholars. Current theories argue that media messages have “selective effects” that are based on differences in individual audience members. These theories take into account that the different life experiences of each viewer significantly affect how media messages are interpreted (Harris 1999: 17).



**Figure 1.1** Areas of contemporary media research

The idea of “selective effects” can be further divided into four categories: *behavioral* effects that lead to an alteration in the viewer’s behavior; *attitudinal* effects, which affect how we perceive and interpret the world emotionally and intellectually; *cognitive* effects, or those that change what we know or think; and *physiological* effects, which account for changes in physical properties such as heart rate and body temperature (Harris 1999: 18-20). Most selective effects theories incorporate two or more types of effects to synthesize an overall concept of how the mass media affects individuals. In addition, all of the following theories draw upon and relate to one another. In other words, there is no “correct” theory of media effects, but a sizable number of intertwining attempts to explain the effect of the mass media on individuals and societies.

### **III. Theories of Selective Effects**

#### **a. Social Learning Theory**

One of the first theories of selective effects was Social Learning Theory, otherwise known as Observational Learning or Modeling Theory. Social Learning Theory was first introduced by the social psychologist Albert Bandura in the 1960s for use in research on the relation of violent media content to violent behavior. Social Learning Theory asserts that humans learn behaviors through observation and imitation of others. Social Learning Theory was one of the first theories to explain how social interactions are affected by the mass media. These theories are now known as “socialization theories.” Theories of socialization have been used in many other prominent studies of media effects, such as Neil Postman’s account of the influence of the mass media on the homogenization of human developmental stages (1982, 1985). The intensity of socialization effects varies by how long and how often an individual is engaged with the mass media. It has been found that “socialization effects are especially strong in

frequent viewers who have few information alternatives and relevant life experience available” (Harris 1999: 23).

## **b. Cultivation Theory**

Another socialization theory that has figured prominently in media research is Cultivation Theory, which was developed in the 1990s by George Gerbner at the University of Pennsylvania. Cultivation Theory “looks at the way that extensive repeated exposure to media (especially television) over time gradually shapes our view of the world and our social reality” (Harris 1999: 21). We learn “facts” about the mass media world, which are then stored in memory for use when formulating beliefs about the “real world.” One of the results is a “homogenization of perspectives” by which audience perspectives gradually become similar through extensive interaction with the mass media. Because our perception of reality is shaped by the influence of the mass media to which we are exposed, perceptions held by members of society will necessarily tend towards similarity rather than difference if exposure is high. As the mass media seeks to reach the widest possible audience, incorporating as many viewers as possible from all walks of life, it follows that these perceptions will be homogenized towards the “center” of the political spectrum rather than to the radical right or left. These effects are tempered, however, by the amount one interacts with the mass media. Heavy viewers are influenced the most because of the overwhelming proportion of time spent interacting with the homogenized media world instead of the diverse “real world.”

Cultivation Theory argues that heavy viewers experience other effects as well. Gabriel Weimann writes, “massive exposure to the mass media’s highly distorted presentations of reality can result in distorted perceptions of reality among the audiences” (2000: 15). Heavy viewers tend to develop worldviews similar to what they see on television. This has led to the

identification of what is known as “mean world syndrome.” Gerbner et al state that due to the high percentage of violent media content, “heavy exposure to the world of television cultivates exaggerated perceptions of the number of people involved in violence in any given week” (Gerbner et al 2002: 52). This perception of reality causes the viewer to imagine the world as a “relatively mean and dangerous” place (52).

Although many studies of the effect of media violence on society have used Cultivation Theory as a foundation, it has also received a fair amount of criticism. Much of the criticism has focused on the socio-demographic variables of the studies, claiming that controls of these variables can lead to a lessening of the cultivation impact. Other scholars have criticized the assumption in Cultivation Theory of a uniform television message and universal acceptance of this message as reality by viewers (Harris 1999: 22).

### **c. Uses and Gratifications Theory**

In contrast to Cultivation Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory emphasizes choices by the individual viewer. In Uses and Gratifications Theory, use of the mass media is active and goal-driven. News anchor Peter Jennings is a “dinner guest” and morning show host Katie Couric, a “breakfast companion.” In this sense, viewers actively make choices regarding who and what they want to see, oftentimes forming “parasocial relationships” with television and other mass media personalities (Harris 1999: 23-25). Parasocial relationships can affect viewing habits by motivating viewers to consistently elect to “spend time with” their favorite television personalities. This is especially apparent with news anchors, with whom viewers form long-term, trusting parasocial relationships.

Uses and Gratifications Theory states that individual viewers have *motives* for media use and *needs* that are gratified by the media. The five assumptions of Uses and Gratifications Theory are:

- Media use is goal directed and purposeful...
- Media is used to gratify wants and needs
- Effects need to be studied through a filter of personality (individual differences) and environmental factors
- There is competition between media use and other forms of communication...
- Most of the time, the user is in control (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch 1974 in Giles 2003: 23)

The individual viewer is endowed with an agency used to direct their interactions with the mass media. From this individual agency, Uses and Gratifications theorists also derive that media effects will be different for each viewer depending on the choices they make. The social and psychological make up of the viewer is “as responsible for the effect of media messages as the messages themselves” (Bryant and Thompson 2002: 127). This is in contrast to more uniform theories of media effects, such as Cultivation Theory.

Uses and Gratifications Theory generalizes about the effect of media on society as well. Within Uses and Gratifications Theory there is the “dependency theory” developed by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976). In their view, people have become dependent on media for information about the world. They cite weather and sports news as examples of dependencies in daily life. Furthermore, the media

provides information that enables us to understand the world...it enables the creation of identities by allowing us to interpret our behavior and compare ourselves to others.... [We] depend on media for *orientation*, either in terms of action...or interaction (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach 1989 in Giles 2003: 23).

Dependency on the media for information, or for gratification of our need for information, has in turn led to a dependency on the media for the formation of our own identities. Information

provided by the media is based on a specific national and cultural orientation that viewers absorb part and parcel with the information itself. This orientation is essential to the formation of social identity because it provides examples of what one is and, more importantly, what one is *not* (Harris 1999: 23). In this sense, the media greatly assists in building meta-communities of individuals who would otherwise remain physically or socially distant. Through the eye of the media, individuals can engage in a constant comparison of their own behavior and attitudes to those of others. Using these similarities and differences as criteria for their own group-identification, individuals can come to share an orientation and social identification.

#### **d. Theories of Persuasion—Elaboration Likelihood Method**

Some media effects models look specifically at the persuasive element of the mass media. One of the most salient theories, the Elaboration Likelihood Method (ELM), individualizes the process of persuasion by media messages. Developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), ELM states that prior knowledge affects how individuals are persuaded by media messages, much in the same way that Uses and Gratifications Theory acknowledges the role of individuality in media message interpretation (Perse 2001: 88). However, ELM focuses on the external factors that combine with prior knowledge to affect persuasion or attitude change, rather than individual agency. In addition, Petty and Cacioppo concerned themselves mainly with the *process* of persuasion, not the ability of a certain message to persuade an audience.

ELM assumes that:

- people want to hold correct attitudes;
- people have a limited capacity to process persuasive messages;
- processing of persuasive messages can take place via either the central or peripheral routes (in Perse 2001: 85-86).

Petty and Cacioppo argue that there are two possible cognitive “routes” for persuasive messages to follow: the central route and the peripheral route. Processing through the central

route requires cognitive effort and is therefore the ideal pathway. In this situation a person would listen closely to all of the arguments and then evaluate the message as a whole. This is

an effortful cognitive activity whereby the person draws on prior experience and knowledge in order to carefully scrutinize all of the information relevant to determining the central merits of the position advanced (Petty, Priester and Briñol 2002: 165).

Evaluation via the central route means that the individual is picking up on central cues, which require active generation of positive and negative thoughts about the message.

The peripheral route, however, leads to an evaluation based on “peripheral cues,” which allow for favorable or unfavorable attitude formation without meaningful cognitive activity. If a viewer is not motivated or unable to process the “issue-relevant information,” s/he can be persuaded through the peripheral route (Petty, Priester and Briñol 2002: 168). Messages processed peripherally are processed on the basis of “simple” or “peripheral cues,” which are:

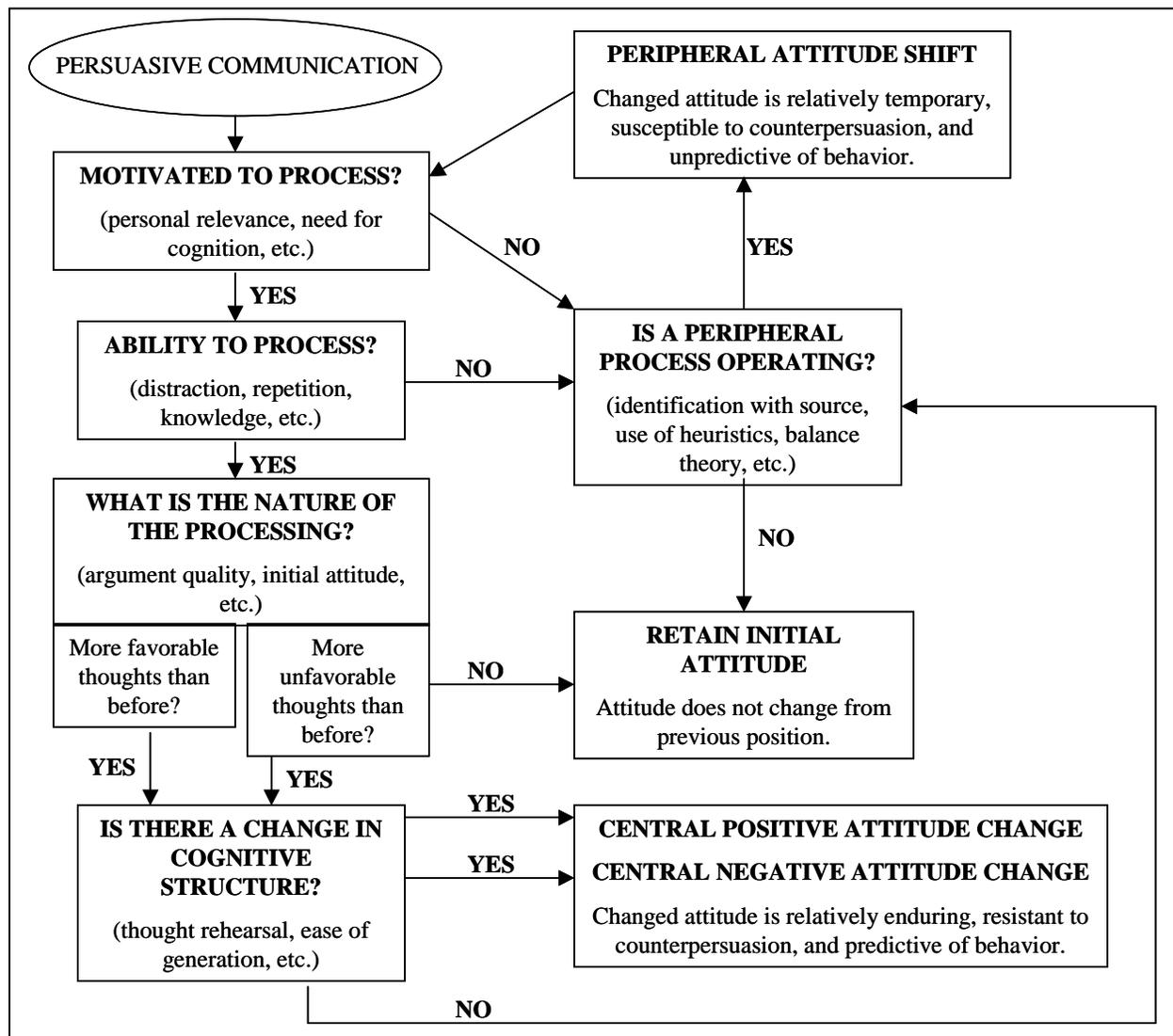
- the likeability/attractiveness of the message source;
- the credibility of the source;
- the number of arguments the message contained;
- how long the arguments were;
- how many others were perceived by the viewer to agree with the position (bandwagon) (Bryant and Thompson 2002: 160-161).

Messages processed via the central route have more long-term effects, while peripheral messages tend to lose their strength over time (Bryant and Thompson 2002: 158-159).

According to Petty and Cacioppo, the determining in whether a message is processed peripherally or centrally is “elaboration.” “Elaboration Likelihood” refers to the likelihood that a viewer will cognitively “elaborate” on a media message, or actively process the quality of the persuasive message. When the likelihood of elaboration is high, the message is processed through the central route and central cues are most effective. This is the ideal situation, achieved by having a minimum of distractions to allow the viewer to focus their full attention on the

arguments. Conversely, when the likelihood of elaboration is low, media messages are processed peripherally and peripheral cues are the most persuasive. Unfortunately, this is frequently the situation: a plethora of distractions that prevent elaboration and bolster the impact of peripheral cues.

ELM proposes that attitude change caused by persuasion is more or less permanent depending on the route used for processing of the persuasive message.



**Figure 1.2** Schematic depiction of possible results of exposure to persuasive messaging. Adapted from Petty, Priester and Briñol 2002: 166.

The central route leads to more permanent attitude change because attitudes are well-considered and easier to access cognitively, which makes them more resistant to change. Attitudes changed peripherally are less resistant to change because they are less accessible cognitively. Because the viewer has not carefully considered the judgment, s/he has made fewer associations with prior knowledge and therefore has a looser cognitive “grasp” on the reasoning behind the judgment (Petty, Priester and Briñol 2002: 168-9). Other factors that affect persuasion or attitude change are:

(a) frequency of repetition; (b) how difficult a message is to understand; (c) the number of arguments contained within a message; (d) the use of rhetorical questions to engage receivers; (e) the number of sources presented within a message and the environment within which a message is presented (Wicks 2001: 60).

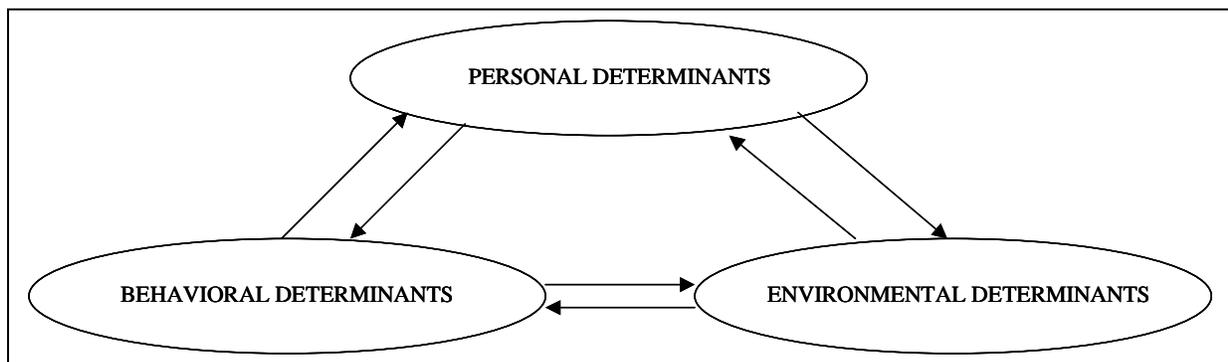
Petty and Cacioppo found that, in addition to the aforementioned mentioned factors, trustworthiness of the source and personal relevance were two of the most important issues affecting the likelihood of evaluation. Sources that were deemed less trustworthy engendered *more* elaboration than those considered trustworthy. As the viewer recognizes the possibility of falsehood in a message, s/he pays closer attention to the message itself, increasing the likelihood of elaboration. Also, relation to the individual viewer is paramount—if the message has no impact on the individual watching, that person will likely pay little attention to it. When personal relevance is high, good arguments are more effective and weak arguments less effective because there is a greater tendency for elaboration. When personal relevance is low, the likelihood the cognitive elaboration will occur also decreases (Petty, Priester and Briñol 2002: 172, Bryant and Thompson 2002: 159). As a persuasive medium, peripheral cues dominate television because the sheer number of distractions effectively prevents cognitive elaboration on central cues. Complementing the number of distractions is the lack of time available to stop and

think about what is being said. As the viewer cannot generally pause the broadcast to ponder the media messages, there is not sufficient time for central elaboration. This increases the efficacy of peripheral cues as persuasive arguments (Perse 2001: 90).

### e. Social Cognitive Theory

In this transactional view of self and society, personal factors in the form of cognitive, affective and biological events; behavioral patterns; and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants that influence each other bi-directionally (Bandura 2002: 121).

These “personal factors” can be influenced by the media, owing to the “vicarious capacity” of human beings to learn. Albert Bandura continues, asserting “virtually all behavioral, cognitive, and affective learning from direct experience can be achieved vicariously by observing people’s actions and its consequences for them” (126).

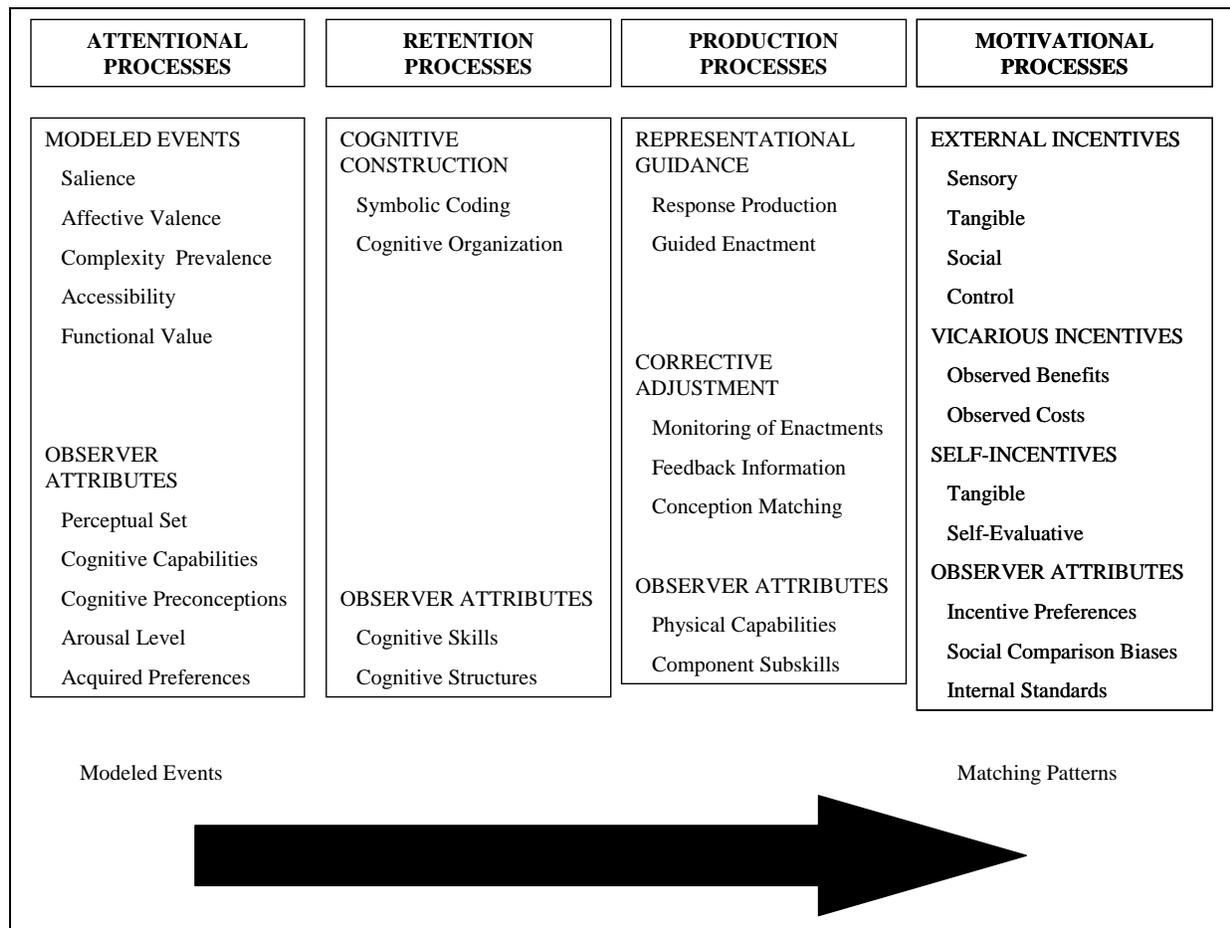


**Figure 1.3** The causal model of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura 2002: 122).

The mass media and television in particular function as a tool for socialization by providing a wealth of episodic examples of “life’s little lessons” that are absorbed into an individual’s mental toolbox for later use. Social Cognitive theorists argue that not only does the media play an educative role, but that this role has become a necessary part of contemporary human society because it provides such an effective platform for vicarious learning. Human development would be greatly retarded without the ability to learn from the mistakes or successes of others. Vicarious learning provides us with models for mores, values, language

practices and other social skills that are necessary for membership in human society. Often these models apply to situations we have yet to experience; vicarious learning makes it possible for human beings to act “appropriately” outside of their usual interactions because of the cognitive training it provides.

The movie *Titanic* is a good example of one type of “social situation training” the mass media offers its viewers. The plot of the movie, pre-iceberg, revolves around the lower class Jack Dawson’s foray into the world of the early twentieth century upper class, a heavily regimented and etiquette-centered environment. In one scene, Molly Brown takes Jack under her wing and explains to him how to use the array of silverware at his place setting.



**Figure 1.4** “The four major subfunctions governing observational learning and the influential factors operating within each subfunction” (Bandura 2002: 128). An individual sees a “modeled” event and, depending on a multitude of variables, may or may not “match” or repeat that event/behavior.

For those audience members who were not familiar with the protocol for using all six dinner forks, this scene and others like it became a platform for learning about “proper” dining etiquette.

Social Cognitive Theory is based on two principles. Principle One, known as the “Sufficiency Principle,” states that judgments are based on the retrieval of “sufficient” background knowledge. People do not search their memory for all information relating to an issue, but search only for a relatively small amount of data that will suffice to pass judgment. Principle Two, the “Accessibility Principle,” says that the information retrieved is the most easily accessible information. The small subset of information that comes to mind most quickly is the subset that will be declared sufficient (Shrum 2002: 71-2).

“Accessibility” is the cognitive ability to retrieve information stored in memory. The accessibility of a given memory or construct can be increased or decreased by several factors. The more frequently a construct is activated, the easier it becomes to activate in the future; conversely, constructs that are rarely activated decrease in accessibility. Secondly, the vividness of a construct can positively affect its accessibility. Vivid constructs tend to be more easily accessible, possibly due to the impact of the original event on the mind. For example, news stories contain mostly episodic, vivid examples because they leave more of an impression than simple statistics or thematic series (Shrum 2002: 75). Finally, the accessibility of other associated constructs can alter a given construct. As the accessibility of a particular construct increases, so does the accessibility of other closely related constructs (72).

Accessibility has many intangible yet real effects. When judging a person, we tend to use the constructs that are most readily accessible from memory, regardless of their truth value. In this manner, frequent portrayals of a given ethnic group in news stories associated with violent crime or poverty, for example, can lead to stereotyping in the “real world.” Other basic

attitudinal and belief judgments may also be affected in a similar manner by basing these judgments only on a “sufficient” number of the most readily available constructs. In addition, accessibility can lead to an overestimation of the frequency of certain events by basing the probability of an occurrence on the accessibility of a relevant example (Shrum 2002: 74). As in “mean world syndrome,” violent stories and constructs are most easily accessible for those who are exposed to a proportionally higher amount of violent content than someone who mainly interacts with the “real world.” According to principles One and Two of Social Cognitive Theory, heavy viewers will base their judgments on a small amount of the most easily accessible constructs, leading to a view of the world as a violent and dangerous place.

Judgments are not made without some reflection, however. Human beings are endowed with a “Self-Reflecting Capability” to verify between accurate and inaccurate thinking. We have available four methods of verification: enactive verification, vicarious verification, social verification and logical verification. By enacting scenarios based on our thoughts, we are able to verify the accuracy of these thoughts (enactive). Alternatively, we can observe other people’s transactions in a given environment and take note of the effects they produce (vicarious). Without engaging in any dubious actions, we can check the veracity of our thoughts against those of others in our communities (social). Lastly, humans can check for fallacies in their own thinking through logical deduction (logical) (Bandura 2002: 124-5). After verifying our behaviors or beliefs, we can extrapolate from our experiences and those of others to form general rules or abstracts that provide models for proper behavior and attitudes. It is through these abstracts that people create models for categorization standards, linguistics rules, thinking skills and personal standards, among others (131).

#### **IV. The Role of Media Producers**

In the previous section, we documented several frameworks for media effects research. One common theme among the various theories of selective effects is the role of prior knowledge on attitude formation and judgment. Additionally, the interplay of news content and prior knowledge oftentimes accounts for the worldview of viewers, such as in instances of “mean world syndrome.” But, how do conscious decisions by news producers affect perceptions of reality and the worldview of the viewer? In this section, we explore the concepts of “agenda-setting” and “framing” to examine how decisions made long before we turn on the television can have drastic effects on our reality.

##### **a. Agenda setting**

Over the years, researchers have found that public concern regarding a particular issue is frequency correlated to the amount of coverage the issue receives in the press (Jamieson and Campbell 1988: 67). In the oft-cited “Chapel Hill study,” researchers found that public concern was almost directly linked to salient media topics—the public and media agendas were nearly identical. This phenomenon is known as “agenda-setting.” McCombs and Gilbert (1986) identified this function as “the ability of the mass media to structure audience cognitions and to effect change among existing cognitions” (in Harris 1999: 25). Heath and Bryant (1992) described agenda-setting as the “creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media” (in Harris 1999: 25).

In short, agenda-setting is the role the media plays in providing us with topics of which to be conscious. Issues that appear frequently in the news are assigned a higher priority in our minds than those we see infrequently or not at all. The Zen-like effect of this function can be illustrated as follows: if a protest happens in Dubai over civil rights but does not receive

coverage in the Washington-area press, does the protest form part of the reality of the Washington viewers/readers/listeners? How we think about events is the realm of the previously surveyed media effects frameworks, but even before we consider *how* to think about events, we must know *what* to think about. This “what” is formed of the items/events/agenda that receive the most attention in the media, the “what” that the public will deem most pressing and therefore worthy of deciding “how” to think about them.

McCombs and Reynolds (2002) describe the actual “setting” of the media agenda as if it were an onion. On the outermost layer, there are the extramedia agents and newsmakers, such as the president and other “celebrities” who are in the privileged position of being able to create news events by virtue of their status. On the innermost layer, the core, are the journalistic mores and norms that govern the professional life of journalists and reporters (13). These include complex matters such as philosophical questions of professional ethics and also simpler pragmatic concerns such as the number of reporters available to cover the events of a given day. In this manner, news-making is a “social process” of interactions between reporters, officials, editors and perceived audiences (Weimann 2000: 377).

Content analyses have determined certain characteristics of news events, or the stories that make the news. Jamieson and Campbell (1988) cite five characteristics of what they refer to as “hard news:”

- personalized—it happened to real people;
- dramatic, conflict filled, controversial, violent;
- actual and concrete, not theoretical or abstract;
- novel or deviant;
- linked to issues of ongoing concern to the news media (in Bryant and Thompson 2002: 234).

In addition to these characteristics, Jamieson and Campbell identify several traditional dichotomies that are frequently the basis for news narratives. These include “little guys versus

big guys,” “good against evil,” “efficiency versus inefficiency” and “the unique versus the routine” (1988: 27). Harns (1999) found “secondary characteristics” that must also be satisfied for a story to appear in the news. Stories must be:

- inoffensive;
- perceived as credible;
- packageable;
- oriented toward a local angle (in Bryant and Thompson 2002: 235).

Galtung and Ruge (1973) also completed their own analysis of “news values,” formulating a list of values that are considered when producing a story for the news. This list represents the different considerations that inform the selection of the news agenda. Each news story is not required to fulfill every value, however the more values that are satisfied the more suitable the story.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| (F <sub>1</sub> ) Frequency                   | (F <sub>6</sub> ) Unexpectedness                   |
| (F <sub>2</sub> ) Threshold                   | (F <sub>6.1</sub> ) Unpredictability               |
| (F <sub>2.1</sub> ) Absolute intensity        | (F <sub>6.2</sub> ) Scarcity                       |
| (F <sub>2.2</sub> ) Intensity increases       | (F <sub>7</sub> ) Continuity                       |
| (F <sub>3</sub> ) Unambiguity                 | (F <sub>8</sub> ) Composition                      |
| (F <sub>4</sub> ) Meaningfulness, shared “we” | (F <sub>9</sub> ) Reference to elite nations       |
| (F <sub>4.1</sub> ) Cultural proximity        | (F <sub>10</sub> ) Reference to elite people       |
| (F <sub>4.2</sub> ) Relevance                 | (F <sub>11</sub> ) Reference to persons            |
| (F <sub>5</sub> ) Consonance                  | (F <sub>12</sub> ) Reference to something negative |
| (F <sub>5.1</sub> ) Predictability            |  |
| (F <sub>5.2</sub> ) Demand                    |  |

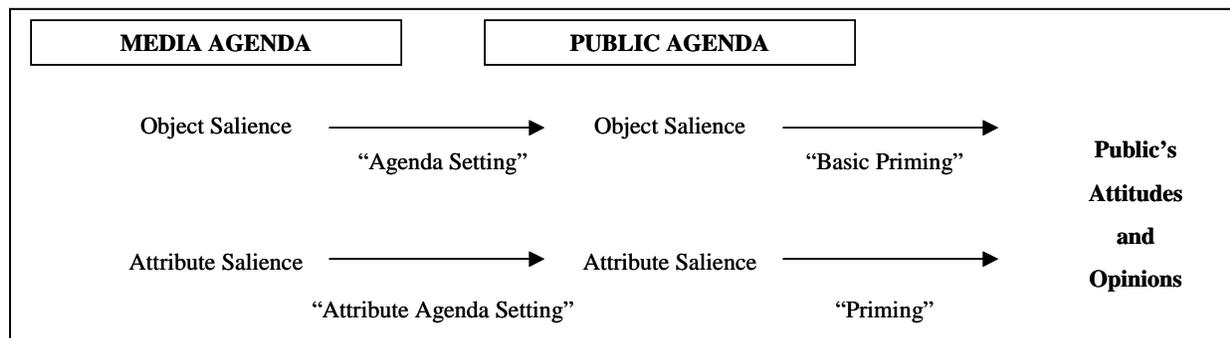
**Figure 1.5** Galtung and Ruge: “news values” (in Fowler 1991: 13-14).

Through news items, which have been chosen according to the above formula, viewers learn about the relative importance of topics and issues. Although some scholars assert that the principle of selective exposure will limit our viewing to only those topics we find personally appealing, the sheer quantity of exposure to media is presumed to override any of these effects on agenda-setting (McCombs and Reynolds 2002: 2-3).

Secondly, objects that appear in the agenda are assigned attributes, which are then accessed in memory when the objects or issues are discussed. McCombs and Reynolds (2002) write,

An important part of the news agenda and its set of objects are the attributes that journalists and, subsequently, members of the public have in mind when they think about and talk about each object (10).

When these attributes influence the public it is known as “second-level agenda setting.” Objects that appear in the media agenda appear concomitant with attributes that are assigned by the “tone” of the coverage. These objects then reappear in the public agenda with their assigned attributes, thus shaping the nature of public discussion.



**Figure 1.6** Schematization of second-level agenda setting (McCombs and Reynolds 2002: 11).

A concept similar to that of accessibility that appears in discussions of agenda setting is the concept of “priming.” “Priming” is the manner in which media message content is connected to related thoughts (Bryant and Thompson 2002: 88). For example, the “chad” controversy caused the word “chad” to be primarily associated not with an African country, but with a now notoriously problematic type of ballot. This shows how focused media attention can cause viewers to create cognitive associations that color their perceptions (87).

**b. Framing**

Once the agenda has been “set,” the agenda issues are then “framed.” The “frame” is the central organizing idea behind the story (Bryant and Thompson 2002: 309). These frames are

the “persistent patterns” of presentation used by journalists used to give each story a place in recognizable schema (Capella and Jamieson 1997: 45). Frames can be identified by what is included in the story, what is left out, and by how viewers are encouraged to think about the events portrayed. This seems to leave significant overlap with the concept of agenda setting. Another way of thinking about framing in contrast to agenda setting is provided by Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967): *what* is said (agenda-setting) versus *how* what is said is said (framing) (in Capella and Jamieson 1997: 40).

Framing is the context that directs the activation of prior knowledge (Capella and Jamieson 1997: 41-42). When a node of prior knowledge is “activated,” associated nodes are activated as well. Repeated activation of nodes and their associated nodes can create activation patterns or “schemas.” This is known as “cognitive priming” (61-62). As with accessibility, cognitive priming can affect judgments by creating stored “frames” in the minds of viewers that are activated by certain types of stories, regardless of message content.

“Learning,” argue Bransford and Johnson (1972), “is futile without a properly understood context” (in Giles 2003: 213). Framing is the key to understanding how the media functions in an educative role of the news media. News events, which are presented episodically rather than thematically, require a context to make them easily understandable. If the anchor were required to explain what makes an “underdog” story an underdog story every time one was aired, news programs would run far longer than thirty minutes. Frames are, essentially, cultural capital that is developed and adhered to by the news media in order to facilitate the presentation of “the news” to a largely uninformed public. Because of this, frames themselves must be easily recognizable (although not necessarily consciously). This is accomplished by assigning frames several general characteristics. Frames must have “identifiable conceptual and linguistic”

features and must also be “readily distinguishable from other frames” (Capella and Jamieson 1997: 47). Some common frame types are: game/strategy<sup>1</sup>, conflict, personality, human interest, and culturally defined story line (e.g. the underdog) (47). These frame types are all quite general. Subframes can be distinguished from one another by small differences, such as wording changes. In one study cited by Capella and Jamieson, narration that included words associated with World War II received greater support than the same narration with words associated with Vietnam (43). The small wording changes that signaled a “Vietnam” frame versus a “World War II” frame were significant enough to result in a different audience response.

It is important to note, however, that the presence of frames does not ensure framing effects on the audience. True to theories of selective effects, individual history and experience affects node activation and schemas, thus frame effects are distinctly individual. Human beings are also endowed with the cognitive ability to think “through” frames (Hall’s “oppositional position,” see Chapter 3) and/or create their own frames (48-50).

## **V. Conclusion**

In this chapter we have investigated media effects from two angles: the effects of the media messages themselves and effects resulting from the actions of the news producers. However, the multivariable calculus of social effects and influences prevents absolute identification of factors and their concrete effects. For this reason, the contemporary theories of media effects embrace and are ultimately pre-empted by the powerful variables of individuality in media consumption and the effect of prior knowledge on cognition. In the next two chapters,

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<sup>1</sup> One of the hallmarks of contemporary journalism is the replacement of issue-based reporting by reporting on who is ahead and behind, facilitated by frames based on winning/losing, the language of war, games and competition, or stories with performers, critics and audience.

we will look at specific media content and utilize linguistic evidence to forge a theory of media interaction that accounts for individuality without being overwhelmed by it.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Words, Conflict and the Nightly Network News: a case study**

#### **I. Introduction**

How does the mass media frame “reality?” While dramatic programming, fashion magazines and advertisements all influence perceptions of reality, we can look to the news media as one of the most clear cut examples of an influential mass media institution because it is the institution responsible for bringing us the “facts” about our world. Some news media biases are on the surface: residents of any given town know which newspaper is “the liberal one” and the political beliefs of television news personalities, such as Fox’s Sean Hannity, are often the part of the program that appeals to viewers most. However, much of news media practice is below our cognitive radar at the time we engage with it. One of the most subtle of these subsurface practices is language use.

In order to examine the specific linguistic structures and framing patterns in news narratives, I studied 15 nightly network news episodes over the period October 6-31, 2003. I recorded five distinct weekday episodes for each network and analyzed each on both the quantitative and qualitative levels, paying specific attention paid to those segments that revolved around conflict. The quantitative study is concerned with the number of words used, which words are used and in what syntactic constructions they are used. The qualitative aspect refers to what the words and phrases convey to the viewer and how the words, phrases and syntactic constructions frame the issues in manners that influence the viewer’s perception of reality.

I chose television news, and specifically network news, for several reasons. In a 1995 survey, 67.3% of those surveyed said they watched national network news (Perse 2001: 16). Furthermore, it has been shown that most Americans think they get the majority of their information from television news (Weimann 2000: 4). Thus, it seemed prudent to examine a

news medium that has such a pronounced hold on the American populace. Secondly, collecting data from network news was more practical than attempting to record its cable counterparts. As cable news runs 24 hours a day and is not packaged as a 30-minute “program,” it would have been difficult to decide which 30 minutes to record. Thirdly, while cable news has become more common in the last few decades, and certainly more watched since the 1991 Persian Gulf War, it is still a premium service that is only accessible to those who wish to pay for it. Network news is available to all who own a television—one does not even need to be literate to understand the images and narration on the screen.

**Table 2.1** Episodes recorded by week. ABC = ABC World News Tonight; CBS = CBS Evening News; NBC = NBC Nightly News

| <b>Week</b>  | <b>Monday</b> | <b>Tuesday</b> | <b>Wednesday</b> | <b>Thursday</b> | <b>Friday</b> |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1 (10/6-10)  | ABC           | X              | NBC              | CBS             | NBC           |
| 2 (10/14-16) | Holiday       | CBS            | X                | NBC             | X             |
| 3 (10/20-24) | CBS           | ABC            | CBS              | ABC             | CBS           |
| 4 (10/27-31) | NBC           | NBC            | ABC              | X               | ABC           |

Television news has other unique characteristics that distinguish it from print and radio news. It is a visual medium, which means that the camera becomes an extension of the human eye, transporting the viewer to the scene of the event. The word television itself means, “to see far,” and it does allow the viewer to see beyond her immediate world. However, the nature of the camera is to direct attention to particular elements of a scene at the expense of other elements and the overall picture itself. If the viewer were present at the scene, she would be able to take in all 360 degrees with just a turn of the head. In contrast, because the viewer is watching the scene through a proxy eye, she can only see what she is *shown*. There is always the possibility of any number of interesting actions occurring outside of the scope of the camera lens of which the

viewer will never be cognizant. This narrowing effect of television is key to understanding its impact on the construction of reality.<sup>2</sup>

The camera also allows the viewer to develop a personal relationship with those who bring them the news. Many viewers are devoted to one network and may feel as if they are inviting Peter Jennings, Dan Rather or Tom Brokaw into their homes every evening around dinnertime.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Todd Gitlin noted in 1986 that Walter Cronkite was considered the most trusted man in America (27). The ability to sit “face-to-face” with the reporter creates the perception of a bond between viewer and producer. Looking someone in the eye is often thought of as a way to determine whether or not the person is telling the truth, and this most certainly has an effect on the perceived trustworthiness of news reporters and anchors. It is possible, then, to consider that news watched on television is more likely than print or radio news to be treated unquestioningly as fact.

Another feature of television news is the plethora of stimuli and distractions that prevent viewers from processing the “central” cues of the segment. In their study of processes of persuasion, Petty and Cacioppo (1981) developed the Elaboration Likelihood Model to describe the likelihood of the viewer elaborating on the central cues, such as quality of the argument and various other contextual considerations. When distractions or other stimuli are plentiful, the likelihood of central elaboration drops and viewers are more susceptible to peripheral cues, such as the attractiveness of the host, the number of arguments made and the credibility of the source (Bryant and Thompson 2002: 158-161). Television news is rife with distraction, from complicated visuals to background music and graphics. By overloading the viewer with distractions, the central cues of the message are lost and the viewer is only cognizant of the

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<sup>2</sup> For more on the effects of cameras on perception, please see: Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing* [VHS]. Part 1. BBC Productions: London, 1974.

<sup>3</sup> For more on parasocial relationships, refer to Chapter 1: Uses and Gratifications Theory.

peripheral cues. As a result, factors such as lexical and syntactic choices can have a subliminal effect on the perceptions of viewers because they are not “elaborated on,” but accepted at face value.

## II. Numbers

To measure exactly how important each individual word really is, I began with counting the number of words in each segment and its lead-in. For the purposes of this study, I have defined a “segment” as a pre-produced section of the nightly news. Generally, these are indicated by the anchorperson saying, “CBS News’ Jane Smith has the story,” and then the videotape and voice-over roll. The lead-in is the anchorperson’s narration before the segment, usually 30 seconds of background or scene-setting that explains to the audience why the segment is important and prepares them for what is to come. In certain instances, there is no pre-produced segment and all of the information on a particular news item will be presented by the anchorperson with only some graphics in the background. In these cases, I counted the whole story as lead-in because there was no way to judge the line between lead-in and story.

| <b>N=33</b>    | <b>Average Length (sec)</b> | <b>Maximum Length (sec)</b> | <b>Average # of Words</b> | <b>Maximum # of Words</b> | <b>Words/minute</b> |
|----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Lead-in</b> | 27                          | 71                          | 69                        | 140                       | 143                 |
| <b>Segment</b> | 99                          | 215                         | 179                       | 316                       | 108                 |

**Table 2.2** Average length and number of words for segments and lead-ins (compiled with data from 33 segments).

As shown in Table 2.2, the average length of a segment was 99 seconds, accompanied by an average lead-in 27 seconds long. On average, the narration of a segment was 179 words and the lead-in, 69 words. All words spoken by the reporter or anchorperson were counted. For example, the phrase “Today in Baghdad, a car bomb killed five American soldiers,” counts as 10 words. Material that did not originate with the reporter or anchorperson (interviews, taped press

conferences) was not included. While sound-bites are certainly an interesting and important part of the news segment in its entirety, statements from “talking heads” are not created by the news team and therefore out of its control. However, the news team does choose which 10 seconds of interview to air and also provides the narration, which frames the interviewee’s statements. This framing gives the statements meaning within the context of the story; therefore it was the narration that was made the focus of this study.

Overall, I found that the average minute of nightly network news contained 116 words of narration per minute. In itself, this number is not shocking. However, when you consider that this one to three minutes of news functions as the background *and* foreground of the issue at hand for a majority of the population (Perse 2001), these 116 words per minute take on a whole new character. With only 60-316 words to describe an event, the reporter has to make each word count.

### **III. Emphasis**

Of these 116 words per minute, some were given more emphasis than others. This can be attributed partly to the style of reporting for each network—it was much more pronounced in narrations by ABC News reporters than those by NBC staff—but it cannot be written off completely. Emphasis causes certain words to stand out over others and, by highlighting certain words over others, narrators add descriptive color to their segments. These words become “key words” that the viewer can use to mentally file the information presented. These keywords also help the viewer to identify the frame of the segment.

There are many varieties of emphasis, but two forms are used so consistently in broadcast news as to require comment. The most common form is simply accentuating one or more syllables, thereby making the word sound louder and/or heavier than the surrounding words. I

use “accentuated” to indicate unusual stress, increased volume or an elongation of syllables, speech patterns that can work separately or together to “accentuate” a particular word. In a CBS Evening News segment about a lawsuit filed by the Federal Drug Administration against companies that import cheaper prescription medications from Canada, accentuated words functioned to highlight the role of the FDA in stopping the flow of cheaper medication. In the following transcription, bold formatting indicates the word was accentuated over others.

Excerpt 1 (CBS: 10/9/03)

1. RATHER [lead-in]: ...It’s the FDA’s big push in court:
2.           to try to **stop** imports of cheaper drugs from **Canada**.
3.           CBS’s Cynthia Bowers investigated and has the **inside** story.
4. BOWERS: It may not look like much, but this kiosk in a Tulsa strip mall is on
5.           the **front line** of the ongoing battle over the **high cost** of prescription drugs.
6.           Rx Depot helps mainly senior citizens, like Fred and Bernice Gibbon,
7.           who order drugs from **Canada** at a savings of about **500 dollars** a month.
8.           It’s **not** gone **yet**, but in federal court in Tulsa this week,
9.           the FDA was **attempting** to **shut down** this Rx Depot
10.          and more than **80** others in **26** states.
11.          But, the defense argues that by going after Rx Depot,
12.          the FDA is **discriminating** against **Americans** who don’t live **near** the Canadian
13.          border.
14.          **Tulsa** probably isn’t the first place that comes to mind when you think of a
15.          **revolution**,
16.          but this ruling could have a **profound** and **immediate** impact on **millions** of
17.          Americans.
18.          And that’s a huge **worry** for Michael Albano of Springfield, Massachusetts,
19.          who recently became the **first** mayor in the **country** to buy **Canadian** drugs for
20.          **city** workers.
21.          The **court’s** ruling, expected sometime next month,
22.          undoubtedly **won’t** be the last word.

23. But **where** and **how** it continues is what is **now** at stake.
24. Cynthia Bowers, CBS News, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Words such as “stop,” “shut down,” and “discriminating” were emphasized by elongated vowels, stressed syllables and increased volume, making them stand out during the narration. In addition, the reporter encouraged the viewer to identify with the story by “bringing it home:” emphasis of the words “Americans,” “revolution” and “millions” in the context of the possible results of this ruling indicate to the viewer that they could be the next victim of FDA lawyers and high cost prescription drugs.

The other type of emphasis I found to be prevalent in television news reporting is pausing between words, in effect allowing the air to clear before pronouncing the following word as would a musician when transitioning between loud and soft themes. The deliberate pause, which occurs outside of the natural cadence of the narration, draws the ears of the audience to what follows. This type of emphasis would be best examined using spectrographic analysis to get an exact measure of the pauses and accents. However, lacking a sound spectrograph, this analysis was done with the naked ear. In his lead-in to a story on violence in Iraq, NBC’s Tom Brokaw exhibits a particularly striking case of accentuation and pausing, which has a marked effect on the tone of his statement. Once again, accentuated, stressed or unnaturally loud words have been bolded. Pauses have been marked with “...” though this is not an indication of their relative length.

Excerpt 2 (NBC: 10/10/03)

1. BROKAW: In other news tonight, the **continuing bloodshed** in Iraq.
2. There’s been another round of **fighting** and more U.S. and Iraqi **deaths**.
3. And this...**latest** battle, American forces claim they were...**ambushed**. . .
4. a style of attack that is becoming ...**alarminglly common**.

5. If it seems like it's . . . **open season** on American soldiers,
6. there is **reason** for that.

In the first half of the lead-in, simple accentuation is used for the words “continuing,” “bloodshed,” “fighting,” “deaths,” and “latest,” which emphasize the violent and ongoing nature of the event. In the second half, the focus changes from violence to the manner in which the violence is being perpetrated against American (another deliberate choice of words) soldiers. In this case, deliberate pauses combined with accentuation increase the impact of the anchor’s words. The phrase (line 3) “American forces claim they were ambushed,” is in fact spoken as “American forces claim they were . . . **ambushed**,” the bold type indicating elongation and more stress on the first syllable of “ambush” than one normally hears. Brokaw breaks the rhythm of his speech to bring out the word “ambush,” a word that is rife with connotations of cowardice and deceit. This is followed with an elaboration on ambushes (line 4): “a style of attack that is becoming...alarmingly **common**.” In this case, the word “alarmingly” itself is not accentuated, but preceded by a deliberate pause and followed with an accentuated word. The deliberate pause cues the attention of the viewer because it is a disruption of the cadence the speaker has established. Brokaw is pausing before he speaks, an indication that something important is about to be said. In one more instance, Brokaw pauses and accentuates “open-season” when describing the precarious situation of American soldiers (line 5-6): “If it seems like it’s... **open season** on American soldiers, there is **reason** for that.” Much like the previously emphasized word “ambush,” the phrase “open-season” carries with it a whole host of associations. The most obvious connection is with hunting, in which hunters with guns prey upon animals. By using the phrase “open season” at all, especially by emphasizing it, Brokaw is doing much more than speaking in colorful prose. Open season has the tendency to shorten the lifespan of only those

animals that cannot defend themselves. Thus, Brokaw has redefined U.S. soldiers not as heavily armed members of the world's most powerful military machine, but as nearly helpless victims of a faceless enemy.

#### **IV. Word Choice**

In describing events, the words we use to reflect our experiences necessarily reflect our own viewpoints. This "spin" can take many forms, but in the most basic sense it is as Kenneth Burke observed in his seminal work, *Language as Symbolic Action*:

Even if a given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must also function as a *deflection* of reality (1966: 45).

One of the ways in which "deflection" is affected is through word choice. For example, the phrase "courtroom battle" makes the situation seem much more combative than would the word "trial." In other cases, word choice can be used to obscure otherwise explicit information.

Deliberate word choice is one of the most prominent linguistic factors in war reporting. In his year 2000 study of the media in the first Persian Gulf War, Gabriel Weimann remarks on the tendency of the media to use euphemisms and jargon when reporting on events on the ground. Words like "collateral damage," "engage," dropping "ordnance," "assets," "friendly fire," and the infamous "smart" bomb replaced their more colloquial counterparts: civilian/innocent victim, fight, dropping bombs, people, killed by our own guys, and laser-guided bomb. "Such discourse concealed the lethality of the destruction and the effects of the bombing and provided a false picture of surgical, precision bombing," writes Weimann (292). In this instance, "cleansed" language and euphemisms served to conceal or re-package the potentially disturbing consequences of the U.S. bombing campaign in Iraq.

During the second Iraq War, the media and military were even more cooperative. From the beginning of combat in March 2003, reporters from the major news networks were “embedded” with actual military units on the ground and allowed to report from the front lines. However, as these highly valuable “embedded” positions depended on the good will of the United States military, it is impossible to ignore the distinct possibility that journalists who reported in an “unfriendly” fashion would soon find themselves alone in the Iraqi desert, cut off not only from the unit in which they were embedded, but also denied access to the daily press briefings by U.S. Central Command or even subject to a revocation of their U.S. military-granted press credentials. In fact, military control over press access during the 1991 Gulf War did lead to blacklisting of certain reporters who provided coverage critical of the war (Weimann 2000: 287).

The second Iraq War and the crisis that has ensued since the end of major combat in May 2003 provide fertile ground for an examination of contemporary media discourse of conflict. The conflict was in its seventh and eighth months at the time the news episodes were recorded. Reporters are no longer embedded, but do broadcast almost daily stories from Baghdad and other sites of conflict. Included in the fifteen 30-minute episodes of recorded news broadcasts were twelve segments that were either broadcast from Iraq or dealt directly with the events on the ground, providing a sizeable amount of data with which to examine conflict reporting. These segments were updates on the casualties or activities of that day and generally describe scenes of chaos, punctuated with at least one sound bite from a U.S. military spokesperson. In rare cases, Iraqis from the governing council and bystanders were given air time, but none were given the aid of a translator. Their remarks came either in accented English or were paraphrased by the journalist as part of the voice-over. While this fact has little to do with word choice, it is important to note that because the voices of Iraqi bystanders and “persons on the street” were not

heard through a translator and none spoke native English, the power to describe events and explain their significance to the Iraqi people was placed entirely in the hands of the on-scene reporter. In this situation, the reporter is in possession of tremendous editorial power.

Still, it is hard to argue that a reporter is doing much more than her job: describe the scene and the events to the viewers back home. What is it about the words used to describe events that can affect the overall tone of the segment? What do the words transmit besides their dictionary definition? A look at the active verbs used to retell actions by U.S. forces and those by the generally unspecified “enemy” is a telling piece of the puzzle.

The active verbs used for U.S./coalition actions, Table 2.3, are more “rational” and on the whole not that descriptive. The reportage here is very dry. However, the verbs in Table 2.4

**Table 2.3** Active verbs used to describe U.S./Coalition actions in Iraq.

| U.S./Coalition |          |           |         |
|----------------|----------|-----------|---------|
| Suspect        | Withdraw | Come back | Move in |
| Take           | Topple   | Claim     | Kill    |
| Say            | Rig      | Destroy   | Die     |
| Tell           | Think    | Return    | Find    |
| Make           | Declare  | Arrest    | Leave   |
| Blame          | Argue    | Believe   | Fear    |
| Invade         | Rush     | Admit     | Realize |
| Lose           | Shoot    |           |         |

**Table 2.4** Active verbs used to describe “enemy” actions in Iraq.

| “Enemy” |          |        |           |
|---------|----------|--------|-----------|
| Demand  | Protest  | Hurl   | Refuse    |
| Smash   | Say      | Gather | Target    |
| Knock   | Drag     | Shoot  | Plan      |
| Predict | Battle   | Use    | Open fire |
| Hide    | Hit      | Score  | Complain  |
| Know    | Detonate | Claim  | Strip     |

are more the kind one might find as part of a written narrative in which the author is trying to create an image of the scene in the mind of the reader. The verbs used to describe “enemy” actions are descriptive verbs that draw pictures in your mind. “Smash,” “drag,” “battle,” and “demand” are all physical and violent-sounding. Even “demand,” which in and of itself is not a violent verb, can acquire angry connotations. The complete phrase, a fragment, was: “Former officers of the Iraqi intelligence service demanding jobs and back pay,” accompanied by a clip of young Iraqi men shaking their fists and shouting. Clearly, the situation had escalated beyond a mere request; however, had the reporter used a verb with the connotation of a request (i.e. something that can be refused or complied with without any threat of negative consequences) instead of “demand,” which carries a definite sense of “or else,” the impact would have been entirely different.

The language used by reporters is partly the result of the actual situation on the ground. Surely, many Iraqis were angry and distraught by the state of their country and their lives. However, it is not the question of true or false here that I am concerned with so much as the larger question of overall structures used by the media to create the “between the lines” that exists at a more subconscious level than the mere words themselves. In this case, one instance of a descriptive verb would not stand out. Most likely, the viewer does not even register each occurrence because it is natural for the reporter to describe the scene in the most image-evoking and entertaining manner possible. However, taken on the whole, this pattern presents one way in which the reporter’s narrative can connote a sense of “chaos” on the ground that is the result of the chaotic, violent and irrational actions of the “enemy.”

This picture becomes more compelling when one notes the subjects that are the agents of these active verbs. Who is “the enemy?” Who is “us?” As can be seen in Table 2.5, with a few

exceptions, subjects in “U.S./Coalition” sentences are modified with adjectives or nouns that ascribe an association to some recognized institution or government. “American,” “Pentagon,” “U.S.” and “Coalition” in front of nouns like “soldiers” or “authorities” let the viewer know that these agents are acting within clearly defined hierarchies and power structures, within “the system,” so to speak.

In contrast, the “enemy” tends to be unaffiliated. In the rare instances when the enemy is affiliated, it is with people or organizations that are not recognized by the international community as legitimate. Thus, the “enemy” tends to be described by his/her actions as opposed

**Table 2.5** Subjects of sentences with active verbs.

| <b>U.S./Coalition</b>                 |                                   | <i>“Enemy”</i>                                    |   |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| American intelligence                 | Americans                         | Former officers of the Iraqi intelligence service | Several members of the Ansar al-Islam terrorist group |
| American soldiers                     | American commanders               | Angry Shiites                                     | Former soldiers                                       |
| American military                     | American forces                   | Locals  | Looters   |
| American or Iraqi officials           | Coalition officials               | The crowd   | Angry Shiite Muslims                                  |
| Pentagon officials                    | The Pentagon                      | A suicide driver                                  | Terrorists  |
| The Pentagon’s director of operations | U.S. forces                       | Suicide bomber                                    | Bomber  |
| U.S. troops                           | U.S. officials                    | Gunmen  | One of the attackers                                  |
| U.S. soldiers                         | U.S. military                     | Guards  | Adversary   |
| U.S. commanders                       | The U.S.                          | Iraqi guerrillas                                  | Guerrillas  |
| U.S. authorities                      | U.S. military and                 | Sheikh al-Saudar                                  | Saudar’s people                                       |
| Western security experts              | The commander of coalition forces | The Sheikh’s followers                            | Iraqis  |
| The top U.S. military                 | The general                       |   |   |
| Two dozen soldiers                    | Soldiers                          |   |   |
| A quick reaction force                | One U.S. commander                |   |   |
| The military                          | Task Force Bullet                 |   |   |
| General Sanchez                       | President Bush                    |   |   |
| Troops                                | Investigators                     |   |   |

to his/her associations. “Looters” (people engaged in looting), a “suicide bomber” (he/she who commits suicide by bomb), and “gunmen” (men with guns) compose the otherwise nameless, faceless “enemy” responsible for almost daily American casualties and general chaos.

The repeated combination of an unnamed enemy and image-evoking verbs adds a level of chaos not present in the individual phrases themselves. One could also argue that it is this very chaos that creates the impression of a need for the continued occupation of Iraq by coalition forces. This would be unremarkable if it were accurate, however there is one significant piece of missing information that would simultaneously give legitimacy to “the enemy” and put in question the need for an occupation: the structure under which “the enemy” is operating. As noted above, subjects in phrases describing actions by the enemy are rarely, if ever, given an affiliation to a legitimate organization or institution and thus the enemy acquires a “faceless,” arbitrary nature. This is possible not because “the enemy” is in fact operating sans legitimacy, but because the reporters’ narratives fail to mention the single legitimizing factor: occupation.

In twelve segments regarding the status of the occupation of Iraq, the word “occupation” or its derivatives are only mentioned twice. Since the occupation is the story, it is quite odd that this word rarely turns up. In place of “occupation,” “coalition” appears ten times in reference to actions of the overarching occupation administration. For example:

American intelligence suspects the cleric and one of his aides were involved in anti-coalition activities (NBC: 10/8/03).

More heavy losses and one more reason, say these Iraqis, for them to turn on the coalition (CBS: 10/9/03).

This is an unexploded artillery shell and all it would take is a bit of wire, a detonator, and maybe even a timer to turn this into the sort of explosive device that has been used to kill coalition soldiers and civilians alike (NBC: 10/10/03).

But coalition officials fear such militias would never disband and could eventually split Iraq along ethnic lines (CBS: 10/22/03).

The U.S. coalition has printed new Iraqi dinars, but the dollar is the currency merchants prefer (CBS: 10/24/03).

The “U.S. coalition” prints money, enemies engage in “anti-coalition” activities and “coalition officials” have fears about the future of Iraq. Whenever reporters reference an actual event, it is almost always something that happened to or was done by U.S. soldiers and reported as such. As a result, the ten instances of the word “coalition” are a quite noticeable change in rhetoric, taking the focus away from the United States and placing it on the fuzzy concept of the coalition in charge of occupying Iraq.

The effect of avoiding the word “occupation” cannot be underestimated. As noted above, “enemy” actions are placed outside of the realm of legitimate power structures and therefore appear to be random and irrational, not to mention illegal. However, each “enemy” action is an act not against the “Coalition” or “U.S. forces,” but against *occupation*. Were the Coalition referred to as “the Occupation,” the “gunmen,” “foreign terrorists,” and “angry Shiite Muslims” would instantly be operating under a recognizable framework and would cease to be irrational; they would be “resistance fighters.” “Resistance fighters” have a goal and a reason for their anger and thus are not perpetrators of chaotic and irrational crimes. The whole situation would take on an entirely new character.

Even without specifically referring to the “enemy” as a “resistance movement,” use of the word “occupation” would provide much more background to the events on the ground than discussions of foreign terrorist involvement or implications of a clash of civilizations. But by continuously avoiding the word, the “other side” remains a complete enigma whose motivations appear to consist solely of a desire to blow things up. Although I have no doubt that the dependence of the press on military briefings for information is responsible in no small part for

the adoption of the word “coalition” over “occupation,” whether or not this is deliberate is irrelevant because the frame is the same.

## **V. Conclusion**

The previous examples provide much insight into the ways in which word choice can affect the tenor of news broadcasts, and it would not be surprising to find these patterns repeated elsewhere in other segments regarding less obviously controversial topics. There is much information to be garnered “between the lines” of the narration of news segments and most of it is absorbed almost subconsciously. One by one, the instances of colorful verbs or unaffiliated subjects are innocuous; together they present compelling linguistic evidence for the existence of underlying structures and patterns that frame the news and possibly our perceptions of reality as well.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Through the Eyes of the Beholder: the pragmatics of news narratives**

#### **I. Introduction**

In the previous two chapters, we surveyed theories of media effects and examined linguistic aspects of news coverage from Iraq. How can we tie these specific linguistic occurrences to the effects they may have on an audience? What does this mean for the construction of reality? Most of the theories of media effects rely on the idea of “frames,” “schemas” or patterns of association for their argument. In short, most scholars agree that it is not the single instance of media interaction that leads to certain media effects, but the creation of cognitive patterns stemming from long-term exposure to mass media. Thus, it is not the one instance of de-legitimatization of Iraqi resistance fighters that is notable, but the constant implication of the illegitimacy of Iraqi resistance that frames the issue as one of chaos versus order. This type of dichotomous narrative is a staple of television journalism that leads viewers to develop cognitive schema. Within a general category of “chaos versus order” schema, narrative cues activate a sub-schema in the viewer’s mind, such as “war zone chaos.” The audience then watches the story through the lens of this schema, altering a few variables depending on the narrative in question. Along with prior knowledge and experience, these schemas frame how a viewer will perceive and process any given news story.

But, what of “intelligent” media watchers? While we cannot deconstruct the media every time we interact with one of its manifestations, there are those of us who make the attempt. Why does this not disarm the effects of framing and priming? Additionally, how can we account for differences in opinion? If interpreting the news were only a matter of developing frames, schemas and activation patterns, why do we still find disagreement amongst even the heaviest of viewers? Cultivation Theorists have noted that a homogenization of perspectives occurs (Gerber

et al 2002), but this is not a complete homogenization. Individuals will always maintain their individual opinions on matters of public discourse.

## **II. Encoding/Decoding**

Stuart Hall confronted this tendency towards “sender-receiver” models of communication in his article “Encoding/Decoding” (1999). He posited three “positions” from which viewers can interpret media messages: the *dominant-hegemonic* position, the *negotiated* position and the *oppositional* position. According to Hall, media messages are created with a certain “code” in mind, a dominant cultural order that becomes the basis for all “common sense” assumptions associated with the message. These “encoded” messages are then transmitted to the audience. Upon encountering these encoded messages, viewers “decode” the messages based on their position. For example, a viewer decoding from the hegemonic position is one who subscribes to the dominant cultural order that was used to encode the message. This position most compliments the “magic bullet” theories of media effects in that the viewer receives and interprets the message exactly as the producers would have her do it—Hall refers to this as “perfectly transparent communication” (515). Viewers using the negotiated position are able to shift back and forth between national/global/hegemonic positions and their own local or situation positions. In this case, the viewer accepts the dominant cultural code in the global sense, but retains a more oppositional code for interpreting events at the local level. Finally, the oppositional position is the one to which I referred above, the position adopted by those who insist on “deconstructing” the media every time they interact with it. Decoding from the oppositional position is done using the viewer’s own codes. Hall cites viewers who read every account of “national interest” as “class interest” as a possible oppositional decoding position (517).

Hall's argument against the sender-receiver model of communication was well-received, or at least given due attention, in a field that needed a new model. Furthermore, his "positions" put to rest any lingering hope of a simple, binary model for media message interpretation. However, there remains the question of actually accounting for individual interpretation. Hall was concerned with exposing the hegemony of the dominant paradigm, or the dominant cultural position, by asserting the impossibility of not being affected by it when one interacts with media messages. Other theories of media effects all argue that the media affects perceptions of reality in different ways. However, both positions neglect to consider the actual portal through which these effects might occur. This is to say that in all this discussion of frames, socialization, positions and schemas, I find that what is lacking is the link between the actual media content and its supposed effects.

How does the media grab our attention, keep it and engage us (just) enough to embed nuggets of information in our minds? If one watches all news coverage from the oppositional viewpoint, what is the point of watching it at all? Every individual has unique prior knowledge and experience; if all socialization theories are based on this individuality, how can we discern any coherent media effects? When do we get "too individual" to be affected on a grand social scale by the mass media? I assert that we do manage to make meaning from the news that we watch and that this meaning inevitably effects our perceptions of reality, regardless of our prior knowledge or experience. Before the aspects of individuality so central to socialization theories become relevant, there is a point at which all viewers must participate in shared meaning making with the producers. Individuality aside, basic linguistic realities will require news viewers to adopt the position of the news producer *at some cognitive level*. In short, from the minute we turn the power on, we cannot help but let the media and media reality into our heads.

### **III. The “door”**

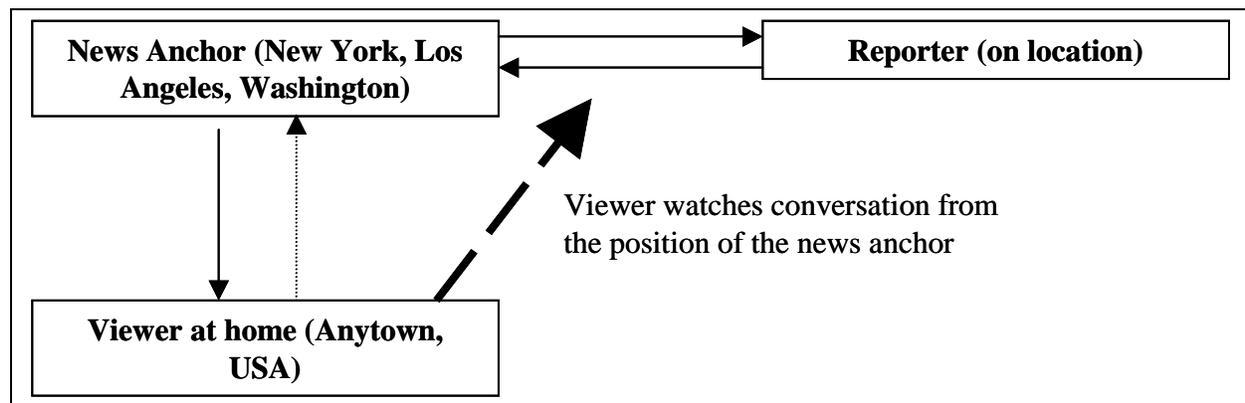
All communication requires context to create meaning, a context that is both retrospective and prospective. In media effects studies, the “context” is often called the frame, prior knowledge or the activation pattern. However, there is a more basic level of contextualization that occurs before larger contexts such as these can be constructed. This is the utterance-by-utterance context of shared meaning making.

Interactional sociolinguists and discourse analysts have written many a book investigating the construction of context, the common ground in a conversation. Features of conversation, such as indexicality and cooperation, are frequently cited as examples of intra-conversational context, what I call the “micro-context.” These same factors can carry over to become part of a larger inter-conversational context (“macro-context”) that remains in place from one conversation to the next, facilitating further communication. However, these sociolinguistic studies have confined themselves to the realm of face-to-face conversation, examining the interactions between conversation participants.

Television news is not face-to-face conversation: there is no real time interaction between the reporters and the audience. However, this is not to say that interaction between the news producers and the news consumers does not occur, only that the medium of television prevents its occurrence in “real time.” The feedback is long-term: the producers receive feedback from the consumers and vice-versa via a lengthy process of opinion polls and ratings surveys, which then affect advertising revenues and may or may not lead to an alteration of program content or style. But, despite the lack of real time feedback, the nature of narrative itself combined with the visual stimuli that television provides gives television news segments certain qualities of face-to-face conversation. These features of face-to-face conversation enable the process of shared

meaning making to occur between participants (anchor, reporter and viewer), opening the proverbial “door” for media effects and influences.

The viewer is party to the real time interaction on the screen between the anchor and the reporter (Scollon 1998). Oftentimes, the anchor greets the audience at the beginning of the show, introduces the topic at hand and then passes the conversational “turn” (Tannen 1993a) to the reporter on location. Since the audience has already been invited into the conversation via the anchorperson’s greeting, the viewer continues to eavesdrop on this next conversation between the anchorperson and reporter. Or, rather than use the term “eavesdrop,” we can say instead that the viewer listens to the conversation from the standpoint of the anchorperson; the anchorperson “anchors” the viewer to one end of the conversation, providing a spot at their side as a legitimate participant in the on-screen interaction.



**Figure 3.1** Schematization of television news “conversation.” The viewer is party to an ongoing conversation between the anchor and the reporter.

In his book *The Hidden Dimension* (1966), the influential anthropologist Edward T. Hall embarked on his study of “proxemics,” noting that the distance between two people says much about their relationship. An interaction with someone whose face is a few inches from yours is entirely distinct from one with someone across the table. Hall established four “distances” that are crucial to understanding face-to-face interaction: intimate distance (touch to 18 inches),

personal distance (18 inches to 4 feet), social distance (4 feet to 12 feet), and public distance (12 feet to 25 feet) (in Scollon 2003: 53). Sociologist Erving Goffman then expanded Hall's idea of interpersonal distances to include them as one of the many resources we use to display our intentions or desired relationships during interpersonal interaction. We often find ourselves forced into to stand very close to strangers on elevators and public transportation, which causes discomfort because we do not have the intimate relationship with these strangers that our physical positioning suggests. However, Goffman wrote that the distance at which we feel most compelled to make conversation is at "personal" distance, implying that a crowded elevator might in fact be more comfortable than a relatively empty one. In this situation, the presence of another person three feet away would compel most people to at least offer a weak greeting, though this is a highly culturally-dependent observation.

More important to our study is that sociolinguist Ron Scollon (2003) has taken Hall's and Goffman's work and argued that despite the mediation of photography or television, for example, mediated images can maintain or project the same characteristics of a relationship in person. For example, a picture of a person can be taken at great distance (showing the entire body), from nearby (showing the waist and above), or from a distance of a few feet (showing the head and top of shoulders, a "head shot"). Each of these frames has a different effect on projected relationship between photographer and subject, and viewer and subject. In addition, Scollon remarks that these distances are "indexical" in the sense that "over there" has the gloss of "over there [in your personal space bubble]" while "over here" means "over here [in my personal space]" (2003: 54).

In the case of television news coverage, the anchorperson is frequently filmed from the shoulders or mid-chest and up. On-site reporters are generally filmed further back to allow the

viewer to see more of the scene behind the reporter, but in this case as well the typical frame captures the reporter's upper body only. This type of framing puts the viewer within "intimate" to "personal" distance of the anchor/reporter, facilitating the transportation of the viewer from her chair in the real world to a place next to Dan Rather in the television pseudo-world. This personal setting is also reinforced by the formation of "parasocial" relationships (see Chapter 1). Viewers may feel as if they actually know the person on the screen or that they are intimately connected by virtue of spending so many dinner hours together.

In addition to visual clues, we can also apply evidence from interactional sociolinguistic studies of face-to-face conversation. As I stated previously, mutual understanding of context and shared meaning making is essential to successful communication. This is true in any linguistic encounter, whether it be reading, listening or speaking. Referencing Duranti and Goodwin (1991), Deborah Schiffrin writes in her 1994 survey of discourse analysis, *Approaches to Discourse*,

Language and context constitute one another; language contextualizes and is contextualized, such that language does not just function 'in' situated interactions, language also forms and provides for these interactions (369).

The idea is that context is necessary for mutual understanding of language and language is necessary for the creation of a mutually intelligible context. The chicken and the egg of sociolinguistics. Given the necessity of context and shared meaning making, we can apply these concepts to other realms. Language requires viewers to share the context of the news producers, and because this endeavor takes on certain characteristics of face-to-face conversation, television has a great power over our perceptions of reality.

"Context" itself can be understood in many ways. Context can be the overall background of a story (macro-context) or it can be the information garnered from the previous sentence

(micro-context). For this endeavor, I will consider “context” within the realm of continuous news discourse and more specifically the news narratives/stories themselves. Within this range, we can look at indexicality and cooperative communication as evidence of a continuous process of context building and shared meaning making.

#### IV. Indexicality

“Indexicality” is the property of certain words or concepts to point to other words or concepts, i.e. the “encoding of points of reference” that occurs in language (Grundy 1995: 209).

For example,

- (1) My father went to the store.
- (2) I also went with him.

In sentence (2), *him* indexes the pronoun *my father*. Indexing can be carried out over the span of a few sentences or paragraphs. In the context of continuous news discourse, words such as “more” and “again” index previous news stories of similar events. In the lead-in to all of the twelve segments on Iraq analyzed for this study, the anchor indexes a history of violence against United States soldiers in Iraq. The following fragments are examples of indexical words in segment lead-ins.

- (3) ...three *more* American soldiers lost their lives (CBS: 10/24/03)
- (4) ...Tom Asfell on this *latest*, dramatic escalation... (NBC: 10/27/03)
- (5) *Another* American soldier was killed today... (NBC: 10/28/03)
- (6) ...the *continuing* bloodshed in Iraq (NBC: 10/10/03)
- (7) ...U.S. troops were ambushed *again* (CBS: 10/20/03)

In addition to indexical words, the news narratives also include indexical statements, such as the following:

- (8) *Today the U.S. military said that there are now on average 33 attacks against U.S. or coalition forces a day, a major increase from the 12 to 13 daily attacks reported in mid-September (ABC: 10/29/03)*

These statements and words that index continuing news events serve to indicate to the viewer that the news event is ongoing and that the context of this particular story is based in part on previous stories. Even if the viewer were completely in the dark about prior happenings, these words and statements would give them enough clues to be able to construct a context for the current story.

### **a. Anaphora**

There are indexicals in the micro-context as well. Schiffrin (1994) writes,

“...utterances are indexical: this indexicality locates utterances not just in a world of social relations..., but in a world of other utterances. Furthermore, each utterance in a sequence is shaped by a prior context (at the very least, and most typically, the immediately prior utterance) and provides a context for a next utterance (again, for a very next utterance) (235).

These micro-context indexicals are the ones that require the viewer to be constantly cognitively participating in the story. In the excerpt below describing the murder of a Spanish diplomat, micro-context indexicals known as “anaphora” are used. Anaphora are words that reference an object or person from a previous utterance. Listeners must follow along with the narrative in order to understand who and what is being talked about because once an object or person is introduced, they are most often replaced by an anaphoric word. Consider the following example:

Excerpt 3 (CBS: 10/9/03)

1. In another part of Baghdad,
2. gunmen targeted a Spanish military attaché.
3. One of the attackers, dressed as a Muslim cleric,
4. knocked on the diplomat’s front door,
5. and dragged him outside, where gunmen shot him dead.
6. This unarmed security guard was powerless to stop it.

This excerpt is a good example of how anaphora have indexical properties. The viewer has to pay attention to the linguistic details of the narrative, a process identical to that which a (good) listener follows in a face-to-face conversation, except that in this case the viewer cannot ask questions should they get confused. In the first sentences (lines 1 and 2), the speaker establishes the *who* (“gunmen”), *what* (“targeted a Spanish military attaché”) and *where* (“In another part of Baghdad”) of the story. However, in the second sentence (lines 3-5) the viewer must rely on her knowledge of the context, in this case the previous sentence, in order to correctly interpret the anaphora. “One of the attackers” is understood to be part of the agent “gunmen” and “the diplomat” is clearly the “Spanish military attaché” under attack. Finally, in the third and last sentence (line 6), the context of the entire tale is necessary to make meaning of the anaphoric direct object “it.” What was the security guard powerless to stop? “It.”

#### **b. Deixis**

Deixis is “the property of a restricted set of demonstratives such that their reference is determined in relation to the point of origin of the utterance in which they occur” (Grundy 1995: 208). Deixis is another aspect of indexicality, but it differs from anaphora and other indexical words in that it signals a referent *and* it relates that referent to a common ground shared by the speaker and the addressee (30). Typical deictics include *this*, *that*, *here*, and *now*. All of these words have the ability to situate the speaker and hearer in relation to one another and to the world around them. For example, *I* is a deictic pronoun because it signals the speaker as the referent and it also relates the speaker of *I* to the other participants (as in, *I = not you*). Another characteristic of deictics such as *I* and *you* is that their referents change constantly depending on who is using them. Whereas *The White House* always signals the home of the President of the United States in Washington, *I* refers to me when I say it and refers to Hank Aaron when he

says it. In this sense, speakers and hearers constantly adjust their internal registry of deictics to keep up with the conversation. This is a process that may seem so subconscious and automatic as to not require further discussion; however, as a linguistic process it is really quite incredible all of the information we can arrange and cognitively absorb in the span of a few sentences.

The key to deixis in our particular case is the notion of “deictic center,” through which shared meaning making is made possible. Early pragmatic scholars proposed deixis as being speaker-centered (Levinson 1983). Under this matrix, the speaker is always the central person; central time is always the time the speaker produced the utterance; the central location is where the speaker produced the utterance; the discourse center is the speaker’s point at the time of the utterance; and the social center is the speaker’s status and rank (64). Until recently, this was the dominant paradigm for understanding deictic center. It was not a framework that allowed for much fluctuation at all; in fact, it conformed quite nicely with the “sender-receiver” model of communication in that all of the power for creating meaning rested on the side of the speaker.

However, more recent studies have highlighted the fluidity of the deictic center from one utterance to the next. How does use of deictics create a common ground for conversation participants and how does that common ground shift? William Hanks (1992) grapples with the same question in his article, “The indexical ground of deictic reference,” challenging the idea that deixis is always speaker-centered. Through an examination of various relational and indexical “types” that can be associated with any given deictic word, Hanks argues that it is best to consider several possible deictic centers rather than default to an “egocentric” one. The cooperative cognitive negotiations required by this fluidity lead Hanks to label verbal deixis as a “central aspect of the social matrix of orientation and perception through which speakers produce context” (1992: 70). Deciphering the intended referent and determining the deictic center is a

cooperative process in which both speaker and hearer must engage themselves to achieve successful communication

Hanks argues that relational and indexical types define the ways in which deictic words relate the “figure” to the “ground” upon which the relation is centered. He points out that by their very nature as deictics, these words encode “a relation between the referent and the indexical framework in which the act of reference takes place” (51). Because each deictic relates a referent (“Denotatum Type”) to an indexical framework (“Indexical Type”), it signals at the minimum two objects: the referent and what Hanks calls the “indexical origo” or the “zero-point” of the conversation, which is to say, the deictic center. For example, *that* can signal “the one distal to you” or, alternatively, “the one distal to you and me.” In these examples, “the one” is the figure denoted by “that.” “You” or “you and me” constitute the “ground” that harbors the “indexical origo.” Hanks asserts that this “Figure-Ground” relationship is central to understanding deixis: the variable nature of the ground gives deixis its wide-ranging functionality.

**Table 3.2** “Some relational structures of deictic reference” (Hanks 1992: 52).

| <b>Form</b> | <b>Denotatum Type</b> | <b>Relational Type</b> | <b>Indexical Type</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| this =      | “the one              | Proximal to            | me”                   |
| that =      | “the one              | Distal to              | you”                  |
| that =      | “the one              | Distal to              | you and me”           |
| this =      | “the one              | Visible to             | me”                   |
| that =      | “the one              | Visible to             | you and me”           |
| here =      | “the region           | Immediate to           | you”                  |
| there =     | “the region           | non-Immediate to       | you and me”           |
| I =         | “the person           | Speaker of             | this utterance”       |
| you =       | “the person           | Addressee of           | this utterance”       |
| now =       | “the time             | Immediate to           | this utterance”       |

From this study of the variability of the Figure-Ground relationship, Hanks produces four “typical” deictic centers: “common ground” (sociocentric), “speaker” (egocentric),

“addressee” (altercentric), and “other” (non-Participant in current speech event) (68). Thus, deixis is a fluid framework for organizing the context of the conversation by using a limited set of indeterminate words whose meanings are derived from that conversational context.

News narratives show many examples of deixis, most of which locate the indexical origo with the on-site reporter. Deictic words such as *here*, *this*, *these* and *now* appear frequently in reports from Iraq. When listening to these reports, the viewer and the anchor must actively process these instances of deixis in order to follow along with the narration. The deixis in the narration is generally speaker-centered because the indexical origo is Iraq, a specific Iraqi city, or the immediate location from which the reporter is broadcasting. In some cases the concept of “ego” in egocentric is expanded to include the production team, i.e. “speaker” in the sense of “those of us who have produced this segment” in contrast to the studio team or the viewer at home.

In the following excerpt from a CBS Evening News broadcast, we can see several examples of deictics.

Excerpt 4 (CBS: 10/20/03)

1. The Americans arrested three suspects, but they made many more enemies here,
2. when the soldiers shot back at the gunmen hiding in these houses.

“Here” (line 1) and “these” (line 2) are two deictic words that locate the indexical origo with the on-site production team. These lines are a voice-over accompanying video footage of the village in which the attack occurred. Listeners (viewer and anchor) know that “here” does not mean in their own living room, although that is the point from which the television sound is emanating, but that “here” refers to a location proximal to the speaker. In the same manner, “these houses” is understood to refer to the houses in the video footage.

This type of production team-centered deixis is in contrast to deixis used when the reporter is on-screen (i.e. not a voice-over).

Excerpt 5 (NBC: 10/28/03)

1. But it's clear the situation here could grow far worse
2. before the U.S. even has a chance to win it.

In this case, “here” is equivalent to “here in Iraq” or possibly “here in Baghdad” due to the context of the previous few sentences, in which the reporter interviews a U.S. general regarding the current situation on the ground. It is clear to all involved that “here” does not mean “here the area that can be seen on the screen around the me [the reporter].”

Another example of deixis is the use of temporal markers, especially since Iraq is separated from the United States by several time zones. When news narratives from Iraq include references to time, listeners must process those references as speaker-centered. Several lines from a news story regarding five successive suicide bombings show how the deictic temporal center can shift.

Excerpt 6 (NBC: 10/27/03)

1. ANCHOR (in U.S.): Now the other major story of this Monday...
2. REPORTER (in Iraq): At 8:30 this morning...
3. a few minutes later...
4. At 8:55, a third suicide bomber strikes...
5. And twenty minutes later...
6. Then a fifth bomber...
7. American commanders could not say who was behind today's bombings...

In line 1, “this Monday” references Monday in the United States and more specifically, Monday today not Monday last week or next. However, a few seconds later the anchor passes the conversation to the reporter in Iraq who promptly says “8:30 this morning” (line 2). Since the news is broadcast in the evening in the United States, it is conceivable that the reporter is referring to 8:30am Eastern Standard Time. However, world knowledge combined with

conversational know-how alert the listeners to the shift in indexical origo. The deictic center is now with the reporter and therefore the conversation is now on Iraq time.

Lines 2-6 are a chronological account of the five bombings. They are on “narrative time” in the sense that the reporter is recounting a series of events that have already happened. Thus, we know that the story starts at 8:30 *this* morning and that all further references are centered on that point. As such, “twenty minutes later” (line 5) is understood to index the previous bombing at 8:55. Similarly, “then” (line 4) marks that this event occurred immediately following the event previous. However, in line 7 the reporter abruptly switches from “narrative time” to “Iraq time” when he says “today’s bombings.”

Although there are no examples of non-egocentric deixis in these news accounts, it is conceivable that they would occur during the course of an on-screen interaction between anchor and reporter, as sometimes is the case during a live broadcast. Even if deixis remains egocentric, the role and scope of “speaker” can change hands within a narrative, depending on the immediate topic. As such, listeners are required to keep an active catalogue of deictic references and other indexicals so as not to lose the train of conversation. This is in contrast to written narrative forms in which the reader need only return to the previous paragraph to refresh their deictic catalogue. When listening to news narratives, whether on television or the radio, the listener must listen *actively* or be left behind. Television expands the deictic possibilities by adding a visual aspect to communication and therefore requires more subconscious linguistic effort from the viewer/listener than would radio. In a radio narrative, “here” would never refer to a picture in the hand of the reporter, whereas on television “here” can refer to whatever the camera records or to the physical location of the reporter, depending on the context.

## *II. The Cooperative Principle and Filling in the Blanks*

Now that we have established that watching the television news requires cognitive participation regardless of your politics, I would like to take the argument a step further and apply H. P. Grice's *Cooperative Principle* and *Maxims of Conversation* to news narratives in order to uncover why the television news is so effective in constructing our social realities. The previous section on indexicality demonstrated the subconscious nature of language and the extent to which language is a tool that is used actively, whether one is speaking or listening. There can be no "solitary producer" or "solitary receiver" because both ends must be engaged in cooperative meaning making.

One of the first scholars to explore the idea of cooperation in conversation was the philosopher H.P. Grice. In a series of papers and lectures beginning in 1957 and continuing for several decades, he laid out what has come to be known as the Cooperative Principle, or CP. The CP has since become the cornerstone of Pragmatics, a field that concerns itself with non-conventional meanings or meanings that derive not from the definition of the words used but the manner in which they are used.

Before deriving the CP, Grice explored the concept of meaning. He divided possible meaning into two categories: natural meaning and non-natural meaning, or "meaning-nn." Natural meaning is the meaning that comes from the syntactic combination of lexical items, i.e. it is the literal meaning. For example, the sentence *Today is Monday* has the natural meaning of saying that today is in fact Monday. However, there are some instances in which appearances can be deceiving. It is these cases that Grice intended to investigate when he said that there exists as well a "meaning-nn."

Levinson (1983) summarized Grice's explanation of meaning-nn as follows:

*S meant-nn z* by uttering *U* if and only if:

- (i) S intended U to cause some effect  $z$  in recipient H
- (ii) S intended (i) to be achieved simply by H recognizing the intention (i) (16).

And by way of explanation:

Such a definition is likely to be opaque at first reading, but what it essentially states is that communication consists of the “sender” intending to cause the “receiver” to think or do something, just by getting the “receiver” to recognize that the “sender” is trying to cause that thought or action. So communication is a complex kind of intention that is achieved or satisfied just by being recognized (16).

According to Grice and Levinson, communication occurs when the speaker tries to communicate something and the hearer acknowledges that the speaker is attempting to communicate. When the speaker wishes to communicate something other than a literal meaning, meaning- $nn$  is involved. For this reason, meaning- $nn$  is also known as “intentional communication:”

[Speaker] says X with intent to mean Y;  
[Hearer] understands X as Y (Schiffrin 1994: 191).

From this basic framework, we can see how metaphors, irony and other forms of “non-literal” communication can have meaning outside of their simple dictionary definitions. A common example given is a version of the following:

- (9) A: What time is it?
- (10) B: The mailman just came by.

Clearly, B’s statement does not answer A’s question. However, because A recognizes that B is attempting to communicate, A will recall that the milkman generally passes by around 3 in the afternoon, therefore it must be around that time. It is this concept of the cooperative nature

of communication that led Grice to develop the Cooperative Principle and the four Maxims of Conversation that uphold the CP (Levinson 1983).<sup>4</sup>

**The Cooperative Principle**

*make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged*

**The Maxim of Quality**

*try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically:*

- (i) do not say what you believe to be false
- (ii) do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

**The Maxim of Quantity**

*(i) make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange*

- (ii) do not make your contribution more informative than is required

**The Maxim of Relevance**

make your contributions relevant

**The Maxim of Manner**

be perspicuous, and specifically:

- (i) avoid obscurity
- (ii) avoid ambiguity
- (iii) be brief
- (iv) be orderly (adapted from Levinson 1983: 101-2)

Obviously this is not how the majority of conversation occurs; if it did, linguists the world around would be looking for work. However, Grice was not trying to explain how to converse in the most efficient and rational manner possible. Grice knew that in fact most communication does not proceed as his Maxims dictate. But, he saw the maxims as representing the deeper structure of or assumptions behind all conversations. Without some basic rules or fundamental principles, the varied styles of our elegant conversations would not be possible. Grice asserted that while at first glance these maxims may seem ridiculous, they become necessary when conversation does not proceed in an efficient or logical manner. In these instances, the hearer continues to assume that these maxims are being adhered to on a deeper level. The hearer will then make efforts to understand what is being said based on these

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<sup>4</sup> Levinson notes that Grice's theory of meaning-nn is not generally treated as being related to his development of the theory of implicature. However, when one looks at the two theories it is impossible not to see a connection (1983: 101).

principles. This is why B is able to communicate the time to A by saying the mailman has just passed by. A assumes that what B is saying is relevant to the conversation, that B is relating enough information to answer A's question, that B is telling the truth and that B's statement is clear enough for A to understand what B is trying to communicate. A does not disregard B's response as non-cooperative, but instead makes attempts to preserve the principle of cooperative conversation by finding the implied meaning in B's statement.

The "implied meaning" or "implicature" was what Grice was after. The CP and Maxims form the foundation for his Theory of Implicature. Grice argued that implicature arises when one of the maxims is flouted. The reason why a flouted maxim leads to implicature and not to unsuccessful communication is because the participants are assumed to be cooperative partners in conversation. Schiffrin gives two more examples of maxims flouted but communication achieved:

(11) You are the cream in my coffee.

(12) I went to the store and I put gas in the car (1994: 195-6).

In the case of (11), a person cannot be literally cream in someone's coffee. But, this blatantly false statement is under the auspices of the CP and the hearer will look for meaning-*nn*, in this case quite a positive metaphor (depending, of course, on the hearer's perception of the speaker).

(12) is a little different because it involves the implicature of temporality. In this case, the speaker does not explicitly state that she put gas in the car *after* going to the store. However, "and" is understood by both parties to imply "and then." This implicature comes from the Maxim of Manner, specifically the command to be brief and orderly. If a simple *and* would do the job, there is no need to say *and then*. In addition, the hearer assumes that, unless otherwise

indicated, the speaker will organize their narrative chronologically. Thus, speaker and hearer use the four Maxims and the CP to fill in the logical blanks in the conversation.

Surely, the next question is what does this have to do with the news? I have argued that television news shares many characteristics with face-to-face conversation (interpersonal distance, shared meaning making through deixis and indexicality, parasocial relationships, etc.). Now, I also argue that the Cooperative Principle and the Maxims of Conversation apply to television news broadcasts.

As pseudo-participants in a conversation between the anchor and the reporter, viewers assume that the CP applies and thus the four Maxims apply as well. Viewers (for the most part) assume that the speaker is telling the truth to the best of their knowledge, that they have included sufficient information and not too much information, that the information they have included is relevant and that they are speaking in a logical and clear manner. This is not to say that reporters have a golden key that provides them access to the blank slate of the viewer's mind. In light of the recent *New York Times*/Jayson Blair scandal, there may be many a viewer who questions the veracity of news media claims to objectivity and truth at all costs. It does, however, explain how viewers can claim to understand stories that are often illogical or simply confusing. The viewers expect what the reporter says to make sense, thus they will subconsciously struggle to make it make sense.

From the twelve Iraq news segments, I found a few examples of illogical narratives. In order to comprehend the story, implicature is required. In other cases, the subject is left ambiguous. The viewer's knowledge of conversational implicature and occasional visual cues are what is used to fill in the blank. In both cases, the assumption by both participants that the CP is functioning is essential to successful communication of the news story.

The first example is from a NBC Nightly News broadcast.

Excerpt 7 (NBC: 10/8/03)

1. Hundreds of angry Shiites protesting the arrest of their leader, this man, Moriad Kasraji  
[3 lines cut]
2. Although there have been clashes with protesters and American troops here in the past,
3. today a deal was made with the organizers to keep things peaceful,
4. And the Americans withdrew.
5. But their departure didn't satisfy the protesters,
6. and, instead of leaving, the crowd continued to grow.

This excerpt can be divided into two segments: lines 2-4 and lines 5-6. Line 1 is the context for the excerpt, given a few lines before line 2. Lines 2-4 describe the beginnings of a protest. From line 1 we understand that Shia Iraqis are angry about the arrest of a leader and that is the impetus for the protest. Lines 2-4 provide some historical context (clashes in the past with American troops) but also state that the American troops met with protesters and an agreement was made to prevent violence, allowing the American troops to withdraw. Working backwards, we see that the Americans withdrew because there was no threat of violence, which was assured through a deal with protest organizers who were protesting because of the arrest of a Shia leader.

Line 5 is an interesting “and then” in this story. The conjunction *but* is sometimes referred to as a contrastive conjoiner (Longacre 1996: 55-59) because it contrasts two logically conjoined clauses or concepts. In this case, “but” follows the conclusion of the first half of the excerpt and is the beginning of the second half, signaling to the viewer that line 5 will contradict conclusions drawn in line 4. According to line 5, the protesters are not gratified by the withdrawal of American troops. “But” is a linguistic cue that this is an unexpected turn of events. However, from our dissection of lines 2-4, we know that the protesters were never concerned with the presence of American troops at the protest as long as there was no violence. Thus, line

5 is unexpected, but only in the sense that it is logical leap into thin air: American withdrawal was never meant to “satisfy” protesters.

The end result of this excerpt is that the crowd grows, supposedly against expectations. After examining the transcript it is clear that this was not a logical progression, but what of the viewer at home watching in real time? Although it cannot be proven without opinion polls and extensive studies, I propose that the viewer understands this illogical progression to be a flouting of the Maxim of Manner. As such, the viewer subconsciously connects the dots with implicature. Exactly what is implied in this case is uncertain; however, one could draw many conclusions about the trustworthiness of Iraqis who make deals with the U.S. military.

Another example of a misplaced *but* follows the same pattern, although in this case the implication is clearer.

Excerpt 8 (CBS: 10/14/03)

1. Pentagon officials tell CBS News, U.S. forces in Iraq
2. have captured a senior leader of a militant group with suspected links to Al-Qaeda.
3. But, in Baghdad today,
4. there was another suicide bombing, the third in a week.

As a contrastive conjainer, “but” (line 3) is meant to contrast conclusions drawn from the preceding statement. Lines 1 and 2 make no explicit conclusions about anything, other than to note the capture of a possible Al-Qaeda leader in vague terms. “But [despite the previous statement]” in line 3 we see that there has been another suicide bombing in Baghdad. In addition to noting the curious use of a contrastive conjainer, Grice’s Maxim of Relevance can also be applied in this situation. According to the maxim, we assume all utterances will be relevant to the topic at hand. Thus, we will strive to make them relevant in whatever way possible (Grundy 1995: 13). That lines 3 and 4 appear to be completely irrelevant to the preceding lines 1 and 2, thus flouting the Maxim of Relevance, causes the listener to then search for the implicated

meaning of the utterance. In this case, it seems quite possible that the news producers wish to imply that Al-Qaeda is responsible for recent violent outbreaks in Iraq.

One possible explanation for confusing statements such as this is that “Al-Qaeda” is such a popular media buzzword that writers will throw it in at the slightest hint of a connection. Another explanation resides in attempts by administration officials to push the case for Al-Qaeda involvement in Iraq to justify the use of military force against Saddam Hussein. However, it is not my intention to perform a massive fact-checking study of the U.S. news media; such an endeavor would take a lifetime. The goal of the present study is to highlight possible structures and linguistic frameworks that contribute to the construction of a social reality that may or may not cohere with concrete reality. In this case, as in the previous and following examples, lexical choices by news producers can be seen to have effects beyond the actual words spoken.

An example of another category of illogical narratives comes from CBS Evening News. From this story about recent violence in Iraq, I have selected an excerpt about Iraqi attitudes towards the U.S.-led coalition government.

Excerpt 9 (CBS: 10/9/03)

1. Locals in this poor Baghdad neighborhood called Sauder City were quick to blame Saddam [for a recent suicide bombing against Iraqi police],
2. because his loyalists have carried out similar bombings.
3. And because this area is predominantly Shiite,
4. traditionally Saddam’s enemies.
5. More heavy losses and one more reason, say these Iraqis, for them to turn on the coalition.

This illogicality of this example does not rest on a single word, but the series of statements themselves. Listeners to lines 1-4 should draw the conclusion that the Shiite Iraqis in question are against Saddam Hussein. In line 1, the reporter says that “locals” have already blamed Saddam for the recent bombing, with line 2 following as an explanation for why. Then,

in lines 3 and 4, the reporter provides further support for the “locals” pointing the finger of blame at Saddam Hussein. However, suddenly in line 5 we learn that “these Iraqis” are in fact using this event as a reason to oppose the coalition government. As in the previous example, the reporter appears to have taken an illogical leap. However, in this case it is the lack of the contrastive conjoiner “but” that causes the illogicality. The conclusion of line 5 is so counter-intuitive as to make one wonder if the translation of the Iraqis’ comments was simply incorrect; barring a mistaken translation, viewers apply the CP, assume the reporter is not in fact logically impaired, and follow along with the rest of the story. The reporter concludes that:

Excerpt 10 (CBS: 10/9/03)

6. Join the American coalition and you risk violence...
7. and death.

This conclusion would be completely out of line had not the reporter made the case for Iraqi violence against U.S. soldiers. This was in turn justified not by the reporter’s actual statements, but by what was implied between the lines. The viewer is primed to absorb the between the lines communication because the Cooperative Principle has jurisdiction over face-to-face conversational encounters, even if they are mediated and/or observed from a non-participant role. Just as the reporter would surely not report nonsensical observations to the anchor, she would neither report them to the viewer at home.

## **V. Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have seen how the study of pragmatics can provide insights into the nature of language and how this affects audience interactions with news narratives. Indexicality and the Cooperative Principle of conversation mandate that both conversational parties engage actively in the conversation. Viewers, who are watching a conversation between the anchor and

reporter, must also participate cognitively in the conversation from the side of the anchor in order to follow the conversation. This gives the narrator the freedom to create implicature as she would do in normal, face-to-face conversation. Furthermore, the audience understands the implication of what the reporter says on some cognitive level, otherwise viewers would be unable to follow the news narrative. The examples of illogical or poorly structured narratives that we have studied in this chapter provide strong evidence for the existence of another level of implied communication beyond the mere words themselves. Although the viewer may accept or reject the implications made by the reporter, they must first participate in the shared meaning making and context from which the reporter is narrating. In short, accepting the position of the news producers for some period of time, be it nanoseconds, minutes or hours, is inevitable.

## Conclusion

Stuart Hall once said, “Nothing is meaningful outside discourse.” Discourse, specifically language, is the tool we use to shape our reality and share it with those around us. As we experience innumerable thoughts, feelings and events, we also package them in language so that they are readily transmittable to others. The “packaging” is what led Hall to remark on the necessary role of discourse in meaning making because the linguistic packaging gives form and function to an otherwise amorphous idea.

However, the packaging does not come without “spin.” Each lexical choice necessitates *not* choosing another word of the same category or general meaning. We say “hot” because we mean “not cold” and “not lukewarm.” Similarly, we take “lukewarm” to mean “not hot” and “not cold.” In this manner, “terrorist” might signify “not soldier” and “not legitimate,” and “coalition” could be understood as “not unilateral” and “not terrorist.” The actual signification of choosing one word over another is difficult to quantify, but, by looking at the lexical category as a whole, we can begin to see how meaning is conveyed both by the word chosen and by the words disregarded.

On the sentential and super-sentential level, we find more numerous and varied implications made possible by the existence of long-term discourse between individuals or within communities. Narratives are understood within a *context* that is defined historically and by the present situation. The context can be as wide or as narrow as is necessary for the interaction. As a result, participants must engage in a process of *shared meaning making* to assure successful communication. This is a continuous engagement that extends throughout the interaction, requiring the participants to maintain a cognitive focus on the conversation as it

occurs. The context becomes the reference point used when deciphering implied meanings and other ambiguities.

In my analysis of news narratives pertaining to Iraq, I found several very specific, reoccurring patterns that signaled the frame of the news story. Lexical choice patterns—descriptive, violent words for “enemy” actions and dry, rational words for U.S. actions—are one device that presents the context and provides the framing parameters to the audience. The frame is further defined by the emphasis of key words in the story.

Only a small percentage of audience members will have had real life experiences with Iraq, Iraqis or violent conflict in general. Thus, the “reality” of war in Iraq presented by the television news will have a strong, formative effect on their perceptions of reality simply because it is one of only a few access points to events in Iraq. This is compounded by the perception of the news media as an objective institution. After all, the camera does not lie. But, the accompanying narrative does influence how we interpret what we see on the screen.

Mere exposure does not equal effect, however. Given the varied nature of prior experience and knowledge, individual audience members will interpret media messages in very distinct manners. Much of contemporary media effects research has been stymied by this fact: acknowledging the power of prior knowledge and experience to influence interpretations, but, by the same token, pre-empting the development of a concrete theory of media effects.

The study of pragmatics can provide the basis for a concrete theory of media effects. The nature of indexicality and cooperative meaning making requires conversation participants to cognitively engage in the dialogue in order to communicate effectively with a minimum of confusion. Anaphora and deictic words reference previous utterances and the context, while flouted Maxims leads to conversational implicature. The viewer listens to the anchor, and then is

party to the conversation between the news anchor and the reporter as if she were standing by the side of the anchor. As this “conversation” between anchor and reporter displays some of the same characteristics as face-to-face conversation (indexicality and cooperative meaning making), in many ways aided by the video feed, it is governed by the same pragmatic rules that govern other conversations. The viewer then must cognitively follow along.

This is to say that once the television has been turned on and the viewer begins watching, it is impossible to avoid adopting the position of the news anchor at some cognitive level. Regardless of personal politics, linguistic necessity demands that the viewer engage herself in the ongoing process of meaning making; if not, she would be unable to follow along with the narrative. Being affected by the mass media is inevitable once we choose to engage with it. We can always reject the perceptions that are formed in our minds after the fact; however, the sheer number of messages that bombard us daily effectively ensures that our perceptions of reality will be shaped in large part by the mass media.

## Appendix A: News Transcripts

*NBC Nightly News*, 10/8/03

1. BROKAW: ...and an Iraqi translator were killed last night by roadside bombs.
2. Two of the unidentified soldiers were from the 82<sup>nd</sup> airborne, the other from the 3<sup>rd</sup> armored
3. cavalry regiment.
4. And, in Baghdad itself today, there was more violence and angry protests against the United
5. States.
6. We have that story now from NBC's Tom Asfell in the Iraqi capital.
7. TOM: Gunfire and panic in central Baghdad this morning. A bomb at the foreign ministry.
8. [sound bite]
9. At the same time a half a mile away, more turmoil.
10. Former officers of the Iraqi intelligence service demanding jobs and back pay.
11. Hurling insults at U.S. troops guarding occupation headquarters here.
12. This, as an even more serious confrontation grew in Southwestern Baghdad.
13. Hundreds of angry Shiites protesting the arrest of their leader, this man, Moriad Khasraji.
14. American intelligence suspects the cleric and one of his aides were involved in anti-coalition
15. activities.
16. [sound bite]
17. The Shias are the majority here ...and have generally been more tolerant of the U.S.-led
18. occupation, but some more radical clerics want the U.S. to leave.
19. Although there have been clashes with protesters and American troops here in the past,
20. today a deal was made with the organizers to keep things peaceful,
21. And the Americans withdrew.
22. But their departure didn't satisfy the protesters,
23. And, instead of leaving, the crowd continued to grow.
24. When darkness fell, there were more than 2,000 in front of the mosque.
25. So, the Americans came back en force.
26. Scores of fully-armed troops, helicopters overhead.
27. There was no violence, but the crowd refused to go home.
28. "We will continue to block off the streets from today until eternity," said this man.
29. "Until our officials are released."
30. Late tonight, neither side was showing any sign of backing down,
31. Setting the stage for what could be a dangerous showdown with the one religious group the
32. Americans are anxious not to offend.
33. Tom Asfell, NBC News, Baghdad.

*CBS Evening News, 10/9/03*

1. RATHER: ...fall of Baghdad and the overall picture in Iraq is mixed, but some fighting and
2. dying goes on.
3. U.S. forces and their allies were the targets of more deadly attacks today.
4. A 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry soldier was killed when a rocket-propelled grenade slammed into his convoy,
5. northeast of Baghdad.
6. In the capital, where U.S. administrator Paul Brenner is holding to his line that the
7. reconstruction is going better than expected,
8. CBS's Kimberly Dozier reports at least 10 people were killed in a suicide bombing.
9. DOZIER: A suicide driver smashed an explosive-laden car through the gates of this police
10. station,
11. as dozens of police lined up, waiting to be paid.
12. Locals in this poor Baghdad neighborhood called Sauder City (?) were quick to blame
13. Saddam,
14. because his loyalists have carried out similar bombings.
15. And because this area is predominantly Shiite,
16. traditionally Saddam's enemies.
17. More heavy loses and one more reason, say these Iraqis, for them to turn on the coalition.
18. This man said, "The attackers should be hitting the Americans instead,"
19. and when U.S. forces moved in to secure the area, locals gathered to protect their turf.
20. The standoff continued into the night.
21. In another part of Baghdad,
22. gunmen targeted a Spanish military attaché.
23. One of the attackers, dressed as a Muslim cleric, knocked on the diplomat's front door,
24. and dragged him outside, where gunmen shot him dead.
25. This unarmed security guard was powerless to stop it.
26. "They told me if you move," he said, "we'll kill you, too."
27. The attackers appear to be targeting anywhere they believe is helping the Americans succeed
28. here,
29. from aid workers, to Iraqi police, to foreign diplomats.
30. The strategy seems to be to send a message:
31. Join the American coalition and you risk violence...
32. and death.
33. Just six months since U.S. troops took this city and toppled Saddam's statue in this square,
34. that was not a message American or Iraqi officials wanted to hear today.
35. [sound bite]
36. While U.S. officials keep insisting the terrorists are on the run,
37. America's enemies seem bent on proving them wrong.
38. Kimberly Dozier, CBS News, Baghdad.

*NBC Nightly News, 10/10/03*

1. BROKAW: In other news tonight, the continuing bloodshed in Iraq.
2. There's been another round of fighting and more U.S. and Iraqi deaths.
3. And this latest battle, American forces claim they were ambushed,
4. a style of attack that is becoming alarmingly common.
5. If it seems like it's open season on American soldiers,
6. There's reason for that.
7. Here's NBC's Kevin Tibbles.
8. TIBBLES: Chanting "No to America, Yes to Martyrdom,"
9. a funeral procession of thousands of angry Shiite Muslims
10. wound through the streets of Sauder City today.
11. The protesters say last night, U.S. soldiers killed two Iraqis here,
12. But the U.S. military says, that's not the full story.
13. That first, armored division soldiers on a routine patrol were ambushed with small arms fire.
14. [sound bite]
15. Two soldiers were killed, and four wounded.
16. A quick reaction force rescued the patrol.
17. But this attack is just one of almost twenty every day here now in Iraq.
18. One reason why: it's so easy to find weapons here.
19. The U.S. military says Saddam Hussein's regime left behind 650,000 tons of weapons,
20. and now, it's Task Force Bullet's mission to find them.
21. The team is made up of weapons and explosives experts,
22. and today's mission is to clear a thousand unused artillery shells from this farmer's field.
23. [sound bite]
24. Already Task Force Bullet has seized 60 million rounds of ammunition
25. and one and a half million weapons in Baghdad alone.
26. But there's still a long way to go.
27. This is an unexploded artillery shell and all it would take is a bit of wire, a detonator, and
28. maybe even a timer to turn this into the sort of explosive device that has been used to kill
29. coalition soldiers and civilians alike.
30. And abandoned, unguarded dumps like this are spread out all across Iraq.
31. [sound bite]
32. To keep weapons from getting in the hands of militants,
33. Task Force Bullet rigs them with C4 explosives and destroys them in a series of timed
34. explosions.
35. Destroying too any further threat to U.S. soldiers.
36. Kevin Tibbles, NBC News, Baghdad.

*CBS Evening News, 10/14/03*

1. RATHER: Pentagon officials tell CBS News, U.S. forces in Iraq
2. Have captured a senior leader of a militant group with suspected links to Al-Qaeda.
3. But, in Baghdad today,
4. There was another suicide bombing, the third in a week.
5. And, as CBS's Kimberly Dozier reports from the Iraqi capital,
6. The target was an important U.S. ally.
7. DOZIER: Today, Turkey paid the price for pledging troops to the U.S. peacekeeping effort in
8. Iraq,
9. a country it once ruled.
10. At Turkey's Baghdad embassy, a suicide car bomb,
11. and a violent message that some Iraqis don't want Turkish troops back.
12. Guards opened fire at random,
13. fearful of a second attack.
14. They had stopped the car before it reached the building,
15. but some inside were injured by debris and flying glass.
16. U.S. forces had intelligence that their adversary planned to strike again,
17. they just didn't know where.
18. One U.S. commander told CBS News, they expect a surge in violence in the next two weeks
19. and on in to the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.
20. They had word this was one possible target.
21. [sound bite]
22. They have at least one prime suspect,
23. Shiite Muslim sheikh, Muktada al-Saudar.
24. He declared his own government last Friday,
25. and today, predicted clashes between his followers and coalition forces,
26. which he compared to the Devil.
27. The Sheikh's followers are already battling moderate pro-American Shiites, who are the
28. majority here.
29. Saudar's people tried to seize a holy Shiite shrine in the city of Karbala late yesterday.
30. They were forced into a bloody standoff that continued today.
31. If Sheikh Saudar is defeated by other Iraqis,
32. it could solve what is fast becoming a sticky American problem.
33. [sound bite]
34. Otherwise, U.S. Forces could face more violence from Saudar's supporters,
35. and risk turning him into a hero,
36. drawing moderate Iraqi Shiites to his cause.
37. Kimberly Dozier, CBS News, Baghdad.

*CBS Evening News, 10/20/03*

1. RATHER: In Iraq today, U.S. troops were ambushed again
2. for a second straight day, in Fallujah, West of Baghdad, in the dangerous Sunni triangle.
3. But it's not the only danger zone,
4. today alone there were forty-three attacks on Americans all over Iraq.
5. And, as CBS's Kimberly Dozier reports, with every attack the anxiety level rises.
6. DOZIER: Today in Fallujah, Iraqi guerillas used a roadside bomb to bring an American patrol
7. to a halt,
8. just yards from where they'd hit another American patrol the day before.
9. They opened fire with automatic weapons
10. some two dozen soldiers on foot returned fire, backed by humvees.
11. At least one soldier was killed, and more injured.
12. The Americans arrested three suspects, but they made many more enemies here,
13. when the soldiers shot back at the gunmen hiding in these houses.
14. At least one civilian was killed and more were wounded.
15. The driver of this truck was also killed instantly: shot in the skull, the police say, by stray
16. rounds.
17. On Sunday, the guerillas hit a U.S. convoy that was stranded by a broken down vehicle
18. at nearly the same spot.
19. No one was killed, but they scored a direct hit on an ammunition truck.
20. U.S. commanders say the number of attacks is normal,
21. but with one American death a day for the past week and a half,
22. the casualty rate is picking up.
23. Soldiers are all too aware of this,
24. and the risks they run when they leave their secure compounds.
25. [sound bite]
26. This young captain is worried it won't be long before one of her convoys gets hit
27. and she has to call the soldier's family back home.
28. [sound bite]
29. So, in their off hours, they try not to think about what they'll face tomorrow,
30. or how long they'll be running a gauntlet that is getting more dangerous by the day.
31. Kimberly Dozier, CBS News, Fallujah.

*CBS Evening News, 10/22/03*

1. RATHER: There were more serious attacks today on American troops in Iraq,
2. Where the top U.S. military commander blames some recent assaults on groups linked to Al
3. Qaeda.
4. CBS's Kimberely Dozier has the latest from Baghdad.
5. DOZIER: At the front line of the War on Terrorism,
6. things don't seem to be getting any better.
7. U.S. forces in Fallujah were attacked for a fourth day in a row.
8. [sound bite]
9. Iraqis complain America's heavy-handed pursuit of suspects is feeding the violence.
10. U.S. officials argue they're carrying out more focused operations aimed at troublemakers.
11. One is the radical Shiite Muslim sheikh, Muktada al-Saudar,
12. accused of ordering attacks on U.S. troops and Iraqis.
13. But even some Western security experts believe men like him would have no power if the
14. Americans weren't giving Iraqis so much to fear and complain about.
15. The leading Shiite on America's hand-picked Iraqi governing council agrees.
16. Ayatollah Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim says the U.S. Army is failing here because a tank only
17. works against another tank.
18. Iraqis have come up with their own idea.
19. CBS News has learned the Iraqi governing council has come up with a new plan to form a
20. temporary force to keep the peace,
21. made up of existing militias from each area or local political party.
22. But coalition officials fear such militias would never disband
23. and could eventually split Iraq along ethnic lines.
24. "The Americans reject Iraqi advice and aid at their peril," al-Hakim says.
25. If U.S. officials say no and the security situation worsens,
26. he predicts dire consequences:
27. destruction for the Iraqi people,
28. and their American occupiers.
29. Kimberely Dozier, CBS News, Baghdad.

*ABC World News Tonight, 10/23/03*

1. JENNINGS: ...violence against American soldiers and the technology which the military
2. now hopes can help to stop it.
3. When the U.S. invaded Iraq, the technology staggered the Iraqis.
4. And now with continuing American casualties,
5. the military is going to try putting technology to work.
6. Here's ABC's Martha Raddatz.
7. RADDATZ: In Baghdad today, Iraqi police discovered a car packed with explosives.
8. The driver was arrested, the car blown up.
9. To the West, in Bakava, another U.S. soldier was killed by a roadside bomb.
10. Nearby, two men were rounded up, suspects in a series of other attacks.
11. [sound bite]
12. In the past three weeks, the U.S. military has seen a sharp rise in these attacks.
13. [sound bite]
14. 105 U.S. soldiers have been killed by hostile fire in the last six months,
15. almost as many as were killed during major combat.
16. The Pentagon is now rushing to send millions of dollars of sophisticated new equipment to
17. Iraq to cut down on the ambushes.
18. 38 million for optical sensors to track the enemy on the ground;
19. 870 million for unmanned aerial vehicles,
20. and 26 million for electronic jamming devices,
21. which the Pentagon says can detect and jam the frequencies of remote-controlled bombs.
22. But the military already has 60 jammers in Iraq
23. And today, the Pentagon's director of operations admitted that there are no definitive reports
24. that jammers have stopped any attacks.
25. And no matter how many millions of dollars are spent on this new technology Peter,
26. The Pentagon realizes that the real key to stopping these ambushes
27. is human intelligence.

*CBS Evening News, 10/24/03*

1. RATHER: ...three more American soldiers lost their lives.
2. Two members of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry division were killed in a mortar attack on their position North
3. of Baghdad,
4. And a member of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne was killed in a gun battle in Mosul.
5. [CUT]
6. CBS's Kimberely Dozier shows, how many are barely hanging on in the new post-war
7. economy.
8. DOZIER: The view from here, business is booming.
9. You name it, you can find it, on the streets of Baghdad,
10. for a price.
11. The shops may be full,
12. but most of these goods are out of reach for ordinary Iraqis.
13. Unemployment stands somewhere above fifty percent.
14. the only people who can afford luxuries
15. are those with access to American dollars.
16. American soldiers aren't allowed to buy anything outside their bases,
17. but most of the shoppers here have found a way to tap in to the American coalition gravy
18. train.
19. This man sells goods to U.S. forces.
20. [sound bite]
21. Many Iraqis are finding the influx of cash is pricing them out of the market.
22. The cost of flour and other staples has tripled or quadrupled.
23. So have rents.
24. That's what drove these people to take refuge here,
25. squatters in what used to be the Iraqi Stock Exchange.
26. The U.S. coalition has printed new Iraqi dinars,
27. but the dollar is the currency merchants prefer.
28. The only other growth industry here is security.
29. For Americans and other foreigners,
30. and for the Iraqis doing business with them.
31. As one Western security analyst here put it,
32. you can't have business without security,
33. and the terrorists know that.
34. They also know a prosperous Iraqi economy
35. is the only thing that could put them
36. out of commission.
37. Kimberely Dozier, CBS News, Baghdad.

*NBC Nightly News, 10/27/03*

1. BROKAW: Now the other major story of this Monday,
2. one of the worst most violent days for Americans
3. and for Iraqis since the end of major combat.
4. A series of suicide car bombs exploded in Baghdad
5. within a 45-minute span killing at least 37 people, wounding more than 200.
6. NBC's Tom Asfell on this latest, dramatic escalation of the battle during a continuing war.
7. ASFELL: It was a swift and bloody escalation:
8. five suicide attacks across Baghdad in less than an hour.
9. At 8:30 this morning, a car packed with explosives rammed Bayar police station in central
10. Baghdad,
11. killing one American and at least fourteen Iraqis, most of them policemen.
12. [sound bite]
13. A few minutes later, a van painted to look like an ambulance
14. crashed through the entrance of the International Red Cross
15. and into a barrier made of oil drums filled with sand,
16. exploding only fifty feet from the headquarters building.
17. At least ten Iraqis were killed, mostly security guards and pedestrians on their way to work.
18. Ambulance sirens pierced the air
19. as the wounded were rushed to hospitals.
20. This man trying desperately to find news of his son, who worked inside the compound.
21. [sound bite]
22. At 8:55, a third suicide bomber strikes,
23. this time at the Shar police station in northern Baghdad.
24. And twenty minutes later, a fourth suicide bomber fails to break through security barriers
25. around Kardra police station in western Baghdad.
26. Instead, he detonated his explosives in the middle of a busy street
27. filled with shops and schools.
28. Then a fifth bomber, at another police station, was shot by Iraqi security guards before he
29. could explode his Land Cruiser.
30. He was carrying a Syrian passport.
31. American commanders could not say who was behind today's bombings,
32. but they admitted the attacks appeared coordinated.
33. [sound bite]
34. Despite the carnage, the American military says security around sensitive targets paid off
35. today.
36. The casualty toll could have been much higher if the car bombers had managed to get past
37. armed Iraqi guards and the crash barriers.
38. Tom Asfell, NBC News, Baghdad.

*NBC Nightly News, 10/28/03*

1. BROKAW: Now to the other front line in Iraq.
2. Another American soldier was killed today and six troops wounded
3. in a rocket attack in Baghdad.
4. U.S. officials also said,
5. one of Baghdad's deputy mayors was killed in a hit-and-run shooting over the weekend.
6. And there was also this chilling story today:
7. an Iraqi journalist, the editor of an independent newspaper that has criticized all sides of the
8. conflict,
9. was assassinated on the roof of his office building in Mosul.
10. U.S. authorities, meanwhile, think they know who is directing this escalation in violence.
11. NBC's Pentagon correspondent Jim McLefchevski is in Iraq tonight.
12. JIM: Another suicide bombing today, this one in Fallujah, West of Baghdad,
13. where a car bomb killed five civilians and the bomber outside the police station.
14. And after yesterday series of attacks that killed 34 in Baghdad,
15. U.S. officials now have a better idea of who is responsible.
16. In an exclusive interview with NBC News,
17. the commander of coalition forces, General Rick Sanchez,
18. says it now appears former members of Saddam Hussein's regime and foreign terrorists
19. are now working together in these terrorist attacks.
20. [sound bite]
21. And they're apparently being led by the number two man in Saddam Hussein's former
22. regime:
23. Izad Ibriham al-Dury.
24. U.S. military and intelligence sources tell NBC News
25. that several members of the Ansar al-Islam terrorist group rounded up last weekend in Iraq,
26. claim al-Dury is the mastermind behind many of the latest attacks.
27. Al-Dury was second in-line in the Ba'ath party behind Saddam Hussein
28. and the king of clubs in the deck of Most Wanted.
29. With a reputation as a ruthless killer,
30. Al-Dury has already been accused of war crimes.
31. Al-Dury could provide terrorists with the money and local knowledge to carry out attacks.
32. [sound bite]
33. The emerging alliance between Saddam's former regime and foreign terrorists
34. will now force U.S. troops to change tactics.
35. [sound bite]
36. Despite the increasing threat, General Sanchez says,
37. the U.S. will not be deterred and must not lose this war.
38. But it's clear the situation here could grow far worse
39. before the U.S. even has a chance to win it.
40. Jim McLefcheski, NBC News, Baghdad.

*ABC World News Tonight, 10/27/03*

1. ABC: Today the U.S. military said there are now on average 33 attacks against U.S. or
2. coalition forces a day,
3. a major increase from the 12 to 13 daily attacks reported in mid-September.
4. The military also said that two more U.S. soldiers have been killed.
5. They died when their tank was hit by a bomb north of Baghdad.
6. The number of U.S. forces killed in hostile action since May 1<sup>st</sup>,
7. when President Bush declared the end of major combat,
8. now surpasses the death toll in the war itself.
9. [cut]
10. One way U.S. forces hope to reduce the violence in Iraq is by beefing up Iraq's depleted
11. army.
12. But it is slow going.
13. ABC's Bill Redeker reports from Baghdad.
14. REDEKER: So far, the U.S. has trained nearly 2,000 men to become soldiers in the new Iraqi
15. Army.
16. But the current president of Iraq's governing council says,
17. the U.S. should train many more
18. and quickly.
19. Ahad Alawi says that most of Iraq's 400,000 soldiers from the old army
20. should be allowed to serve again.
21. [sound bite]
22. The U.S. would like that, but says that there are problems.
23. The general commanding U.S. forces here says
24. that some soldiers, loyal to Saddam Hussein, have tried to enlist in the new force.
25. [sound bite]
26. These former Iraqi soldiers say American concerns are justified.
27. "They should be very careful recruiting new soldiers," says Adnan,
28. "Saddam's Fedayeen, his Special Forces and the elite Republican Guard are still around and
29. still loyal."
30. There are logistics issues for any new force.
31. After the war, looters stripped Iraq's remaining military bases to the walls;
32. No plumbing, no windows, not even a door.
33. Lingering resentment by former soldiers is also a problem.
34. They claim the U.S. has reneged on a promise to pay back wages.
35. If they signed up, would they be loyal?
36. Despite all this, the governing council, and a lot of other Iraqis, believe
37. it's time to begin replacing American soldiers with Iraqi soldiers.
38. Bill Redeker, ABC News, Baghdad.

*ABC World News Tonight, 11/7/03*

1. JENNINGS: Good evening everyone, the United States has been bombing Iraq today
2. and the U.S. hasn't done this very much at all since the end of the invasion phase of this war in
3. April.
4. They were bombing around Tikreet tonight,
5. Saddam Hussein's hometown where U.S. forces have been given a very bad town [sic].
6. Today it was that Black Hawk helicopter shot down on the edge of Tikreet,
7. six more Americans killed, two of the visiting from the Pentagon.
8. We begin with ABS's John Burman.
9. BURMAN: The Black Hawk went down not far from a U.S. military base.
10. Troops nearby said they heard two explosions.
11. Investigators spent the day trying to determine exactly what happened.
12. Soldiers suspect the helicopter was shot down
13. by a rocket-propelled grenade.
14. [sound bite]
15. The Black Hawk was one of two flying from the northern city of Mosul to Tikreet this
16. morning,
17. it was just two miles from the base where it was supposed to land
18. when it crashed on the East bank of the Tigris River,
19. bursting into flames.
20. If the Black Hawk was shot down,
21. this would be the third U.S. helicopter hit in the last two weeks.
22. A shoulder-fired missile brought down a Chinook near Fallujah on Sunday,
23. and another rocket-propelled grenade crippled another Black Hawk in Tikreet, 13 days ago,
24. wounding a soldier.
25. Weapons of all kind are all over this country.
26. In Baghdad just today, soldiers found rocket-propelled grenades
27. hidden in the ceiling of this photo shop.
28. The U.S. military has warehouses filled with weapons and ammunition
29. seized in raids or turned over by Iraqis,
30. including shoulder-fired missiles
31. and rocket-propelled grenades that can be used to bring down helicopters.
32. [sound bite]
33. The continued attacks here show that not only is there an abundance of weapons,
34. but people still willing and able to use them effectively.
35. John Burman, ABC News, Baghdad.

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