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#### NETWORK TELEVISION NEWS AND FOREIGN EVENTS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE COVERAGE OF THE IRANIAN HOSTAGE CRISIS (1979-81)

BY

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#### THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts: Communication in the Graduate Studies Program of the College of Social Sciences at the University of Central Florida; Orlando, Florida

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> > and the set of the

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#### DEDICATION

To my father, who has always contributed to science and education, and who has always had a clear understanding of what is right or wrong. To my mother, whose passion for principles has always been a guide to me through uneasy times.

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#### CHAPTER I

#### Introduction

Television news is undoubtedly one of the major sources of news and information for many Americans. Recent trends in the television news industry all indicate that television will continue to be such a major source of news in the years to come. One such trend has been the lengthening by some stations of their local newscasts, with many more stations contemplating such a move. Network television also is considering the lengthening of its newscasts and is enjoying the rising popularity of its "news magazines" such as CBS's "60 Minutes".

Many researchers have examined the role of television as a major source of news, and some have studied the impact of television news on society. Still others have concentrated on detailed analysis of television news coverage of significant events. The present study is designed to expand on this existing knowledge by observing and analyzing network television news coverage of a significant and recent international event, namely the Iranian hostage crisis (1979-1981).

The Iranian hostage crisis, which dominated the international scene for over a year, began on November 4, 1979, when several hundred Iranian "militant students" attacked the American Embassy in Tehran, Iran, taking sixty-six personnel and nonpersonnel hostage. The militants, who were later supported by the Iranian revolutionary government, primarily demanded the return of the former Shah of Iran (Mohamad Reza Pahlavi), to be tried for alleged crimes and corruptions committed during his thirty-seven years of ruling Iran. The Shah had been admitted to a New York hospital for "medical treatment" several days prior to the date the hostages were taken. Several captives were released during the first few days of the crisis, whereas the last fifty-two Americans were freed from Iran, after 444 days in captivity, on January 20, 1981, moments after Ronald Reagan had been sworn in as the fortieth president of the United States.

#### Background and Related Material

In order to study television news coverage (of foreign events), one has to examine several aspects of television news. The following questions are posed and an attempt will be made to deal with each in this chapter:

 How much does the American public rely on television for news?

2. Can television news influence the public?

3. Can the American government influence television news?

4. How has television news performed in the covering of past foreign events?

5. Has television news been objective or free of bias

in the past?

1. <u>How much does the American public rely on tele-</u> <u>vision for news?</u> A great deal. It is estimated that every weeknight some 25 to 30 million American households, that is approximately 65 to 70 million people, watch one of the three network television news programs (Altheide, 1976; Pearce, 1980). According to a report by Television Information Office (Roper, 1980), a sizeable majority of the American public continues to get most of its news from television (64% as of November 1976) which has led all media since 1963. Roper further found that, since 1961, television has led as the most believable news medium in the eyes of the American public.

In terms of overall television viewing (in which news is included) Reel (1979) points out that adults spend approximately 28% of their leisure time watching TV, and that sixty million sets are on for an average of six hours a day. Reel speculates that by the time a child reaches school, he will have watched television for more hours than he will ever spend in college classrooms. Reel further indicates that by the time the child is eighteen, he will have devoted one-sixth of his life to television viewing.

Thus, one may conclude that the American public is fond of television and tends to rely heavily on it for news.

2. <u>Can television news influence the public?</u> Schiller (1973) believes this is so and explains:

America's media managers create, process, refine, and

preside over the circulation of images and information which determine our beliefs and attitudes and, ultimately, our behavior. When they deliberately produce messages that do not correspond to the realities of social existence, the media managers become mind managers. (p. 1)

Although Schiller is referring to mass media in general, the assumption could be made that he has television in mind as well.

Further argument for television news influence on the public comes from Reel (1979):

The real problem posed by network control over the broadcasting of the news...is not avarice. It is the power, the potential to influence people's minds and actions, that is most troublesome. It is a disturbing fact that today most Americans do not read newspapers. Sixty percent of all Americans depend solely on television for their news. (pp. 92-93)

Some authors/researchers have used specific examples to explain how television news can influence the public opinion. For example, Kuhns (1970), regarding the 1968 Chicago convention, writes:

Indeed the very extent of aggravation and hostility that the television networks aroused proves, as much as the moon landing a year later, the fantastic power and influence of the medium. (p. 49)

One cannot discuss the influence of television news on the public without mentioning the television coverage of President John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963. In a book on this subject, Mayo (1967) writes:

The continuous newscast of the assassination and funeral of President John F. Kennedy and the succession to the presidency by Lyndon B. Johnson, was an unprecedented psychological, political and journalistic event. (p. 5)

Mayo further indicates that "television gave the griev-

ing nation a comforting sense of continuity and of national survival" (p. 5). Greenberg and Parker (1965) make similar observations and note that:

The communication channels reassured people that the functions of government were being carried on smoothly, that there was no conspiracy, and that there was no further threat. If the content of the consequent communication had not been so reassuring, fear and anxiety might have magnified to the point of hysteria. (p. 382)

It appears that mass media, especially television, played a very important role of reassuring the public. It is perhaps ironic that television news gave one of its finest and most influential performances while covering the death of a president.

Zucker (1978) studied the influence of network television news on public opinion in the areas of pollution, drug abuse, energy, unemployment, and the cost of living in the period of 1968 to 1976. The author found that network television news reports had altered the viewers' perception in the areas of pollution, drug abuse and energy.

In another example of influence of television news (this time on the policy of the U.S government regarding the Vietnam War) Shaw (1979) explains how Walter Cronkite became opposed to the war and this prompted President Johnson to tell his press secretary that it was a turning point, that if he had lost Walter, he had lost Mr. Average Citizen. Shaw further quotes author David Halberstam as saying, "It was the first time in American history a war had been declared over by an anchorman" (p. 42).

In order to broaden the perspective, it is perhaps

helpful to note the thoughts of a Soviet journalist on the Republican National Convention of 1980:

It was a perfect television show. In fact, it was for television that the convention was primarily intended. This may seem an exaggeration, but the three giant TV networks--which determine not only public opinion in America but also, to a large extent, the country's policy--did more than produce a gigantic show. They essentially directed the convention. (Kobysh, 1980, p. 57)

There are of course different ways in which television news can influence public opinion. One way is by prolonging the coverage of a specific issue. This is perhaps due to the fact that one of the most important factors affecting recall has been found to be the length of time a story appears on the air (Stauffer, Frost and Rybolt, 1978). This has also been indicated by McClure and Patterson (1976) who reported cases in which television news, through intensive coverage, played a role in increasing the salience of issues on the audience's mind (like coverage of Nixon's trip to China in 1972).

Another way television news can exert its influence is by manipulating masses and by propagandizing. Addressing mass media in general, Cirino (1971) writes:

Even though it appears obvious that the use of propaganda has considerable effect on public attitudes and behavior, the owners of media are still able to minimize its importance because it is extremely difficult to prove scientifically the exact effect of attempts to influence public opinion. (p. 184)

Cirino further argues that, in the broadest sense, "All the people of the world are in a state of being propagandized by the very technical and financial nature of modern communication" (p. 200).

Another attempt to explain the manipulative power of mass media was made by Wells (1972):

Since the media are invariably controlled by a small group of people, be they government personnel or private operators, they always have a manipulative potential. Indeed, by the necessary selection of information to be transmitted, no matter how carefully this selection is made, there is always a slant given to the reportage of human events. So the problem of manipulation is a matter of degree. (pp. 73-74)

Recently, in 1979, Reel discussed the problem in another form:

The potential for manipulation and control of public opinion that now exists in the offices of American networks is without question, beyond any preexisting private power in our history. (p. 93)

In summation, it appears that television news is believed to have the potential to influence public opinion and may be used to manipulate the masses.

3. <u>Can the American government influence television</u> <u>news reporting?</u> The question of government influence on television news has always haunted the television industry. It is significant to note that in many other countries of the world, television and other major media are controlled by their respective governments. This, however, is not the case in the United States, even though the FCC has regulatory power over the broadcast industry. This section first deals with the nonregulatory influence of government on television news and then discussion will be afforded to the regulatory power of the government over television news.

Lowry (1971) studied the possibility of the administra-

tion influencing the network television news. Through a content analysis, the author found the three networks' news reporting had been influenced by the administration (of President Nixon).

Skornia (1968) discusses the kind of influence, on media in general, which is brought by censorship:

There <u>is</u>, no doubt, too much government censorship, particularly by the military. Any such censorship is too much in peacetime. All journalists should oppose managed news, and should fight for access to all materials which do not genuinely jeopardize our national security. (p. 82)

In an article discussing how the members of Congress can benefit from the news media, Bagdikian (1974) writes:

Most of the media are willing conduits for the highly selective information the member of Congress decides to feed the electorate. This propaganda is sent to newspapers and broadcasting stations, and the vast majority of them pass it off to the voters as professionally collected, written and edited "news". (p. 4)

In an article discussing the manner in which President Carter tried to shape the news, Leubsdorf (1978) explains that the president made an announcement of a \$100 million pledge for solar energy on Sun Day, shortly before the deadline for the networks' evening news. Since the networks did not have enough time to check the details, they went ahead with the story of the pledge; only to find later that the pledge had not really been new and had been a part of a package already in the making. Leubsdorf suggests:

What had happened was an excellent example of the ability of any U.S president to "make news" and control the way it is disseminated. It is a problem most White House correspondents recognize, but one which they often feel virtually helpless to deal with, especially when the events happen close to deadline. (p. 42) The story was, of course, later corrected but it was too late and it had already made the impact the president had sought. Leubsdorf explains how:

While a number of these stories provided at least some context for the pledge story, most of the nation's viewers and readers never got to the fine print, especially since most, presumably, perceived the event as it was presented by the three networks and the two major wire services. The net impact was precisely the one the White House intended: A belief that the president had made an important new commitment to solar energy on Sun Day. And the incident demonstrated once more the tremendous advantage any White House has over the presidential press corps. (p. 43)

Finally, Reel (1979) tells a story of television news industry's sensitivity to government reaction:

Perhaps the most dramatic example of the television industry's sensitivity to government reaction occurred while Lyndon Johnson was president. Johnson had had a speech prepared by his assistant, Joseph Califano, in which the term <u>public airwaves</u> had appeared. President Johnson penciled in 's after the word <u>public</u>, so that it now read "public's airwaves". The next day Califano was besieged by all the major broadcast lobbyists, who wanted to know whether this change signified some dangerous new anti-industry policy in the executive office. (p. 102)

Although the nonregulatory influence of government has been greatly debated, the regulatory power of government has been debated just as much, if not more. The basic law which gives the government its authority of control over broadcasting is the Communications Act of 1934. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is the government agency charged with watching over the broadcasters.

Of the provisional regulations that relate to the television news, the Fairness Doctrine and the equal time provision of Section 315 of the Communications Act are most

debated. The Fairness Doctrine applies to the broadcasters' obligation to be balanced and fair in their news coverage and public affair programming. The equal time provision, however, applies specifically to the treatment of political candidates and to the broadcasters' obligations to make time available to all qualified candidates (Diamond, 1978).

The Fairness Doctrine and the equal time provision have brought negative reactions from the broadcasters and the professionals in the field. One such reaction comes from Hofstetter and Buss (1978) who note that:

The Fairness Doctrine, for instance, requires mention of more than one view concerning issues. Depth in coverage may be sacrificed by giving several groups time or space with regard to some issue. Resulting superficial coverage provides less information even if the in-depth coverage were less balanced. (p. 525)

Schoenbrun (1976), a long-time media professional, has the following thought:

The question of equal time has made stations so nervous that they are fearful about giving time to any candidate. But that is not the worst of it. Over the years the equal time provision has grown and spread like a cancer throughout the entire American media. (p. 78)

Criticism comes also from Congressional Representative VanDeerlin (1977) who observed that "Existing communications law is far more a hindrance than help to the news professional on television and radio" (p. 41).

Finally, a study by Busby (1979) surveyed the attitudes of broadcast station managers on regulations and found that the broadcasters, from major and small markets, believe that:

Regulations have drastically increased in the last ten

years and with the increase in regulations their jobs have become harder and their expenses have greatly increased. They are pessimistic about the future of broadcasting and about the future of regulations. (p. 340)

Thus, in conclusion of this section, it appears that the American government (and its agencies) do have some regulatory and nonregulatory influence over the network's television news and there have been cases in the past where the government has used this influence.

4. <u>How has television news performed in its covering</u> of past foreign events? Before attempting to find the answers to this question, it is significant to note that in covering foreign events or crises, some problems exist, not necessarily from the fault of television news but from the way world politics operate. Some examples should clear the point.

One such problem, and perhaps an important one, is the fact that (international) censorship exists in many parts of the world. Some foreign leaders exert pressure on the correspondents for favorable coverage. Foreign leaders could also limit the reporters' access to sources or areas of information. A favorable coverage could be obtained by foreign leaders' generous gifts to reporters. A somewhat militant approach used by a foreign leader is desrcibed by Rubin (1975):

This June (1975), Uganda's president Idi Amin threatened to execute British subject Denis Hills for passages critical of Amin in an unpublished manuscript confiscated by Ugandan police. Amin made a number of demands before unconditionally releasing Hills--among others, that the British government stop the BBC from spreading "malicious propaganda" against Uganda and the British press from publishing "wild and baseless" reports that Uganda was in a state of chaos. (p. 55)

Another problem with covering foreign events (and to a degree domestic events as well) is the fact that there are some four billion people in the world and no establishment can even think about covering the affairs of this fourbillion population (mainly due to economic and man-power limitations). A result of this would be missing out on an important event that is in the making. This is further explained by Critchfield (1978):

Three-fourths of the world's people receive very little attention from American reporters. They are the peasants, the three billion people who are still traditional subsistence cultivators of the land. There should be no doubt that these people are worth our attention: all the major contemporary revolutions--in Mexico, Russia, China, Indochina, Egypt, Algeria, Cuba, Angola-have involved peasant societies. In almost every case the revolution was preceded by cultural breakdown out in the villages, because the old peasant ways and views of life no longer worked. (p. 32)

The above-mentioned difficulties relating to the covering of foreign events should be kept in mind while evaluating television news performance in covering of those events.

Perhaps the best way to study the foreign coverage would be to examine some of the significant foreign events and their coverage in the past two decades:

1. Nigeria and the Civil War (of late 1960's): Sambe (1980) studied the American network television coverage of the civil war in Nigeria. He found, through a content analysis, that the three commercial networks used inferences and judgments in covering the crisis. Sambe also found out that the networks tended to be favorable to Biafra's cause and unfavorable to Nigeria's.

Balogun (1973), a Nigerian, feels that the Western media fell victim to Biafra's propaganda campaign. He explains:

Near-total ignorance of Africa and Nigeria on the part of most of the European and American journalists covering the Nigerian Civil War made them willing to accept even the most fantastic propaganda handouts at facevalue and precluded any deep analysis of the genesis and circumstances of the conflict. (p. 94)

Balogun further explains why the media were more fav-

orable to Biafra:

Pressure from powerful financial and economic interests which stood to benefit by Nigeria's disintegration played a leading role in determining the stand of the Western news media. (p. 95)

Okpaku (1972), presumably an African, is also critical of Nigerian coverage and attributes the poor coverage to reporters' lack of knowledge and background on Nigeria. He suggests:

It has never occurred to those who run the bastions of international communications, such as the Associated Press, United Press International, <u>The New York Times</u>, or the television networks, to employ the services of African reporters in order to provide their public with more knowledgeable information and more sophisticated and more sensitive interpretation of the dynamics of a situation the Africans are more aquainted with. (p. 4)

Finally, Rothmyer (1970) also criticizes the Nigerian coverage and believes that "The further away geographically the story occurs, the more likely it is that special-interest groups will be successful in influencing its telling" (p. 47). 2. Chile (in the 1960's): Some experts have criticized the media's (including television's) coverage of Chile and the American government's involvement in that country. Robert Schakne (1976), a CBS correspondent, who covered Chile, explains the situation rather clearly:

The facts were indisputably newsworthy and headlinemaking. As the Senate Intelligence Committee reported it, the United States, over a ten-year period, as a matter of conscious policy actively interfered in the domestic politics of Chile, financing one election campaign, promoting at least one coup d'etat attempt, covertly financing opposition newspapers and political parties, overtly and covertly conducting an economic warfare campaign to "destabilize" a constitutional government, and "laying the seeds", as a C.I.A. official put it, for the successful coup d'etat that finally did take place ... but for all its news value, this was a story that went largely unreported, in print or on the air, while the events in question were taking place. This was a story left untold until C.I.A. officials confessed their role to a congressional committee and Representative Michael Harrington, in turn, made that testimony public; by then it was testimony about a fait accompli, a year after the Allende government had been overthrown. (p. 60)

Morris, Mueller and Jelin (1974) also are critical of Chilean coverage by television (and other media). They explain what was missing from the coverage:

Among the important missing perspectives in the coverage of Chile was the extraordinary record of what the United States Government was doing to the Allende regime. The assumption of Washington's official tolerance was an early and persistent theme in the journalism on Chile. Most often the subject of American policy was simply ignored. (p. 21)

Morris et al. further suggest:

And in much of the coverage there was a one-sided characterization of Allende and his government that obscured both developments in Chile and the reality of U.S policy toward that country. The reporting of Allende's Chile leaves disturbing questions about the depth and range of foreign news coverage, about working relationships of correspondents to the U.S government, and, not least, about the impact of culture and ideology on the efforts of a free press to report international affairs. (p. 16)

3. Vietnam War (of late 1960's and early 1970's): The coverage of the Vietnam War has brought criticism to television and other media as well. It has been argued that the media either missed the real story, as they did in Chile, or chose not to tell it. Reel (1979) explains how:

The networks boast that they brought the Vietnam War into our living rooms, but there is reason to believe that what they brought was largely a fiction. What we saw was what Michael Arlen describes as a "parade of film clips of guns firing and of smoke rising and of refugees fleeing", a collection of images that smacked of thoughtlessness. Over a period of ten long years, television failed to tell us the major story of our times, the truth behind the tragic venture into Southeast Asia and all that it might portend for our country. (p. 102)

Friendly (1970-1971), former president of CBS News, feels that television and other media did not succeed in explaining the Vietnam War. He suggests that "Brilliant combat reporting has not been enough, or Vietnam would not continue to be the best reported and least understood war in history" (p. 19).

Bailey (1976) examined the coverage of the Vietnam War and found that:

The network anchormen, in their daily summaries of the war, read short stories of events without much interpretation, certainly without challenging, adversary interpretation. (p. 323)

In summary then, a review of expert analysis on television news coverage of some of the most important events of recent history (the Nigerian Civil War, the Chilean affair, and the Vietnam War) indicates that television and other media were not wholly successful in telling the real stories.

5. <u>Has television news been objective in the past?</u> The question of objectivity or unbiased reporting is a very controversial one. Experts have presented opposing viewpoints in this regard. This is perhaps due to the fact that it is difficult to define the terms in question. One of the most recent efforts to define bias was made by Stevenson and Greene (1980) who concluded that:

What news consumers see as biased news is often material which is discrepant with the information already in their heads, material which evokes an evaluative response. If so, news bias is less a function of reporters' accuracy or fairness and more a function of what readers and viewers think the situation is or ought to be. (p. 121)

It appears that a majority of bias allegations occurs when the news organization is covering a story with competing elements or characters, such as an election, a war, or a riot. These are the cases where the media may be charged with biased reporting or favoring one side over another.

For example, Sambe (1980), in an analysis of the television news coverage of the Nigerian Civil War, found that the three commercial networks were favoring one side (Biafra) over the other (Nigeria).

In another case, Efron (1971), in her book <u>The News</u> <u>Twisters</u>, studied the coverage of the commercial networks during the 1968 presidential elections. Efron concluded that the campaign coverage of the three networks was heavily biased against Richard Nixon. However, later studies discredited much of Efron's findings and her methodology.

For example, in a replication of Efron's study, Stevenson, Eisinger, Feinberg and Kotok (1973) were led to a totally different conclusion:

There was no evidence of any systematic evaluative bias for or against any of the three candidates. Coverage of all three candidates was remarkably similar. (p. 219)

Thus a review of opinions and findings on the issue of objectivity indicates that there have been cases where television news has been biased, at least to a degree.

<u>Summary</u>. A brief summary of related research would then indicate that:

1. The American public tends to rely heavily on television for news.

2. Television news has been found capable of influencing the public opinion.

3. The American government has been found capable of influencing the television news.

4. Television news has had some difficulty in covering some of the most important international events of recent history.

5. Television news has been found to be biased at times, although not necessarily deliberately, in its reporting.

#### Purpose of the Study

As the review of the literature showed, research has been directed at studying of television news and its effects on society. Similarly, research has evaluated the performance of television news in covering specific events. Nearly all major events covered by television news have been the target of one or more scientific inquiries. What follows appears to be one of the first scientific attempts to study and evaluate network television news coverage of the muchpublicized Iranian hostage crisis (1979-1981). It is the purpose of this study to carry out such an evaluation, through scientific means, in order to contribute to an understanding of the performance of the network television news.

#### Significance of the Study

Television played a very unique role in the Iranian hostage crisis due to several reasons. One, television was used for transmission of messages between the governments of the United States and Iran since direct communication between the two governments was made difficult by severed diplomatic relations. Two, the Iranian government tried to gain American public support for its cause through American mass media, especially television. Three, the American government also utilized the mass media to counter such efforts by the Iranian government. Four, the American mass media, most notably television, gave an extensive amount of coverage to the crisis.

Since television played such a significant role in the crisis, much research is likely to surface in the near future, and it will examine how well television covered the crisis. What has already surfaced have been judgmental evaluations and reactions to the coverage rather than scientific inquiries. For example, Said (1980) wrote a lengthy article criticizing the media coverage of Iran. His contention is that media mainly presented the crisis as the U.S government saw it. Thus Said suggests that:

For a journalist, blindly serving his government is as perilous as assuming that his audience is incapable of learning. Neither course is acceptable for a society like ours, and no amount of going on about free competition, openness, and democracy ought to obscure the issues. Bad journalism is bad journalism, but for the U.S it is worse. (p. 33)

Said further argues that the media were generally closed-minded in covering the Iranian crisis. He explains:

It is alarming that the U.S press seems generally incapable of learning much about the world, that its reports one day seem not to have incorporated very much learned the day before, that it seems generally unwilling to refine its perceptions by looking in new places. (p. 33)

Hurewitz (1980), a specialist on the Middle East, agrees (with Said), with some "reservations", with the notion that "Coverage of the late fall and winter 1979-1980 phase of the crisis in United States relations with Iran was flawed" (p. 19).

It is important to note that Said is referring to the coverage which began with the Iranian revolution (1978-1979). The author's contention is that the media's misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the revolution (partly)

contributed to the (misunderstanding of the) hostage crisis. Bordewich (1980) has views similar to Said's:

We have misunderstood not just the Iranian revolution, but revolution itself. We have misunderstood fascism. We have misunderstood the implications of modernization. In a sense, we have been our own captives in Iran, held hostage by our ethnocentrism, the inability to see anything in an alien culture but our own reflection. (p. 71)

Hodding Carter, the State Department's spokesman during much of the crisis, has the following reservation about the Iranian coverage:

Someday, somebody's going to do a piece on how much of policy and coverage was actually based on any kind of understanding of the dynamics at play in Iran. I'm talking about the critics as well as the policymakers and all forms of press. The basic underlying realities of what was going on in Iran were ignored. (VanHoffman, 1980, p. 37)

Thus it appears that even though no scientific research has yet been reported on the coverage of the Iranian hostage crisis, some negative reactions have already surfaced. An in-depth scientific analysis of the network television news coverage of the hostage crisis should then constitute a significant step forward in the understanding of television news and its performance in reporting developments with significant international consequences.

#### CHAPTER II

#### Methodology

One way to evaluate the network's television news coverage of the Iranian hostage crisis would be to determine whether the networks reported the event objectively and free of bias. To do this, a definition of "bias in the news" needs to be utilized. It is, however, apparent that researchers have had difficulty in agreeing on standard definitions for bias. For example, Stevenson and Greene (1980) note that "Bias is hard to define, but many find it easy to recognize in their newspapers and newscasts" (p. 115).

One fairly common approach defines bias as "The systematic differential treatment of one candidate, one party, one side, of an issue over an extended period of time" (Stevenson and Greene, 1980, p. 116). Hofstetter (1976) defined bias as "partiality in the news programming...lying, distortion, and aggrandizement of values" (p. 4).

An approach for detecting bias has involved the examination of the language content of the news. This approach (used by Lowry, 1971; Sambe, 1980) first tries to identify the statements that are factual compared to statements that are capable of containing bias or partiality. It then determines whether the statements that are capable of containing partiality are actually biased or not. The researchers who have used this approach refer to the factual statements as "reports" and the statements that are capable of being biased are referred to as "inferences" and "judgments". This approach can be applied to all spoken words and contends that all sentences (used in the reporting of an event), regardless of content, are either reportive or inferential, or judgmental.

The above approach to the study of news will be applied here to evaluate the network's television news coverage of, and its attitude toward, the Iranian hostage crisis. The justifications for using this approach will be explained later. First an in-depth definition for each category (of reports, inferences and judgments) is necessary.

Briefly, report sentences are factual statements made from observations; inferences are made when the observer infers a conclusion based on what he observes; and judgments are those statements that involve some appraisal on the part of the observer. Some hypothetical examples should better explain the concept. A bystander watches a car weaving as it goes down the street. The bystander may comment, "That car is not going straight". This would be a reportive (factual) statement since the bystander is reporting only what he is observing. Or he may comment, "Look at that drunken driver", which would be an inferential statement since he is inferring or guessing from the car's irregular movement that the driver is drunk, whereas something else might have caused the irregularity. Or the bystander may

comment, "That drunk has no respect for others' rights", which would imply that not only is he making an inference (that the driver is drunk), he is also making a judgment on the driver's character. These examples illustrate that an individual may observe one occurrence but reach and/or report three different conclusions. At this point an attempt will be made to explain reports, inferences and judgments still further.

Reports are statements made merely based on observation and are capable of being verified (Hayakawa, 1972). Of course some reports may not be easy to verify personally, such as the height of a mountain or the depth of an ocean, but ideally it is possible to do so. Thus, one may rely on available information on the height of the mountain or the depth of the ocean with comfort that the information is correct. Another major characteristic of reports is that they can be made only after the observation and not before.

Inferences are statements made by guessing, from some known or observed fact, at some conclusion. Inferences may be made at any time, unlike reports, which have to be made only after observation. Lee (1962) indicates that, "Any utterance made prior to observation or when observation is not possible involves an inference or guess" (p. 34). Haney (1973), another author who has distinguished between statements of facts (reports) and statements of inferences, explains that inferences can be made at any time and by anyone, can go beyond observation and may involve some degree

of probability. More recently, Haney (1979) noted that, "We find it enticingly easy to make inferences and to utter inferential statements with the false assurance that we are dealing with 'facts'" (p. 258). Of course it is significant to note that the point is not to avoid making any inferences but rather to try to be aware of the inferences made. It would be almost impossible to go through a day of life without making some kind of inference; and inferences can even be useful at times. For example, a fire investigator can only infer from the ruins of a fire as to what caused the fire. In a broader sense, science too uses inferences. For example, scientists can only infer, from collected data and previous observation, the expected nature of the cosmos, as direct observation by man has not yet been possible.

Judgments are statements that contain observers'/reporters' personal opinions on, or approval or disapproval of, some matter (Hayakawa, 1972). The example of the individual who observed the weaving car and said "That drunk has no respect for others' rights" illustrates that the observer shows his (approval or) disapproval of the occurrence by letting his opinion be known.

An appropriate summary for these three categories would be the definitions outlined by Hayakawa (1972), who contends that all sentences, regardless of content, fall into one of the following groups:

Reports: Statements of facts, being capable of verification, excluding inferences and judgments.

Inferences: Statements about the unknown made on the basis of the known.

Judgments: Statements expressing reporters' approval or disapproval of the occurrences, persons, or objects being described.

Now the question seems to be how this system of categorization can apply to news reporting. Whenever a reporter is covering an event (of any nature), he uses combinations of words to describe what is happening or what has happened. These combinations of words (better known as sentences) are then relayed to the audience or reader while they contain an impression of the event. There are different ways in which the reporter may combine or select his words (and thus form his sentences). The type of sentence or combination he chooses may be one of three: (a) he may report what he has in fact observed which would, according to earlier definitions, be a reportive or factual statement; (b) he may infer, from what he has seen or what he is seeing, a conclusion (that he thinks is factual) which would actually be an inference; or (c) he may interject his personal opinion into the matter which would constitute a judgment on his part. Of course, it is important to realize that the reporter does not necessarily go through this selection process every time; and that several factors (including his attitude toward the event, his motivation, etc.) influence the way he chooses to report.

Thus, it is appropriate to suggest that the reporter

(knowingly or not) has one of three types of sentences to cover an event: a report, an inference, or a judgment. This is true for any and all kinds of reporters, including newspaper reporters and broadcast reporters and/or anchormen. Since the Iranian hostage crisis was an event covered by the reporters, it is appropriate to contend that the reporters, as explained earlier, had the above three types of sentences at their disposal, to cover what was going on. And, given the five conclusions which were evolved from the review of literature (p. 17), it is appropriate to apply this system of categorization (of reports, inferences and judgments) to find out how the networks (through their reporters and anchorpersons) covered the Iranian hostage crisis; to find out whether the networks merely reported the (verifiable) facts, or they further inferred from these facts, or they plugged in their own opinions and judgments into the coverage. As a result, the first research question was formulated as follows:

Were the three commercial television networks more reportive in their coverage of the Iranian crisis or more inferential and judgmental?

As the review of the literature (Chapter 1) showed, there have been cases where television news has been biased and has taken sides in some past conflicts (for example, Sambe, 1980, on the Nigerian Civil War). Since the Iranian hostage crisis put the two governments of the United States and Iran into conflict with each other, it is important to

find out whether the networks favored either side (the United States or Iran) in their coverage. In order to do this, however, some operational definitions for favorable and unfavorable coverage are needed. These definitions should be applicable to the crisis under study and should have been validated in past research. Such definitions are available from Budd, Thorp and Donohew (1967) and have been used by other researchers (for example, Sambe, 1980) in studies similar to the present one. They are:

Favorable: Statements that reflect social cohesion, cooperation, political and economical stability, and/or strength; statements that depict either side as progressive, successful, peace-loving, moral, intelligent, lawful, unified, and/or exercising leadership.

Unfavorable: Statements that report social conflicts, disorganization, political and economical instability, and/ or weakness; statements that depict either side as backward, domineering, immoral, impractical, unlawful, disunified, and/ or lacking leadership.

Neutral: Any statement that reflects neither favorable nor unfavorable conditions. (p. 53)

The above definitions will be used to find out if the networks favored either side in the Iranian conflict. Of course this evaluation is possible only if inferences and judgments are detected in the coverage. This is due to the fact that report sentences are, by definition, factual representation of events and that if the networks tended to

favor one side or the other, this would show in, and be contained to, their inferences and judgments. Thus, research question number two has been designed to discover which side, if either, the networks tended to favor in their inferences and judgments, if any such inferences and judgments were detected:

Did the three networks favor one side (the United States) or the other (Iran) in their coverage of the crisis?

Finally, since media critics and researchers have charged that television news does not identify its news sources in most of the cases (for example, Ryan, 1979), a third research question was designed to discover what sources of news and information the networks used in their coverage of the Iranian crisis (this should add support to, or detract support from, previous research):

What news sources were used most often by the three networks in the coverage of the Iranian crisis?

#### Procedure

The procedure employed in this study was similar to the content analysis of Lowry (1971) and Sambe (1980). A sample of the three commercial networks' (ABC, CBS and NBC) coverage of the Iranian crisis in the evening news programs were audio-recorded. The sample consisted of three weeks drawn at random by selecting one week in April (1980), about five months into the crisis, and skipping two weeks and selecting another week and so on for the third sample week. The sample under study consisted of Monday through Friday (April 21-25, May 12-16, and June 2-6 of 1980). Saturdays and Sundays were excluded from the study due to the fact that the networks use different formats and anchors on the weekends. The main sample coverage consisted of a total of fifteen days. The selected weeks appear to have been a fair and typical representation of the coverage of the crisis due to the fact that they consisted of one week of heavy coverage (as was the case in the beginning) and two weeks of moderate coverage (which was the case later on in the crisis).

Only stories and reports relating to the Iranian crisis were selected for analysis. Any item read by the anchormen, whether a copy story or an introduction to a filmed report, was considered to be a story. The stories had to meet one or more of the following conditions (established by the researcher for guideline) in order to be selected:

1. Mentioning the crisis by name.

2. Mentioning the hostages by name.

3. Dealing with efforts to free the hostages.

4. Reporting statements made by officials or private citizens regarding the hostages.

5. Dealing with Iran and/or its internal problems.

6. Dealing with events caused by the crisis, or the events which would not have been covered had the crisis not taken place.

The sample under study was analyzed by three independent coders, all American nationals, with ages of 21-25, who had an average of two years of college education. The coders

listened to each sentence in the selected news stories as many times as they wished with no time limitations.

For research question number one (whether the networks were more reportive or more inferential and judgmental), the coders were asked to determine whether each sentence was a report, an inference, or a judgment. The three coders were extensively trained in order to be able to distinguish between the three categories (of reports, inferences and judgments). As part of their training, the following examples (some hypothetical, some taken from the news) were used:

<u>Reports</u>. (a) The president flew to Camp David last night, (b) the senator was reelected for a second term, (c) they all had ties on at the reception, (d) she did not attend the congressional hearing, and (e) the congress passed the budget bill yesterday.

<u>Inferences</u>. (a) What they really want to do is to establish a monopoly, (b) the governor was not smiling because of the low turnout, (c) with his ratings so low, he has no chance, (d) based on the preliminary results, she will be the next president, and (e) his speech last night set the tone for his 1984 bid.

<u>Judgments</u>. (a) This campaign was marvelously organized, (b) this has to be the saddest day of his presidency, (c) the hurricane devastated the glory of the beach town, (d) the exhibition attracted the most sophisticated crowd, and (e) her extremely harsh criticism will not go unnoticed.

The coders were further instructed to observe the fol-

lowing rules (so that they would not have to make individual evaluative decisions that were inconsistent with each other):

1. All quotations, direct or indirect, are to be coded as reports.

2. If a report sentence contains any element of inference, it is to be coded as inference.

3. If a statement contains elements of inference and judgment, it is to be coded as a judgment.

4. All other sentences/statements are to be coded as they appear under reports, inferences, or judgments.

For the second research question, which side, if any, the networks favored more, the three coders were instructed to decide whether each inferential or judgmental statement, if any detected, was favorable to Iran (thus unfavorable to the United States), or unfavorable to Iran (thus favorable to the United States), or neutral.

To learn what news sources the three television networks used most often (research question number three), the following seven types of news sources were identified, and each statement was tabulated accordingly:

1. U.S government: Statements attributed to a U.S government official.

2. Iranian government: Statements attributed to an Iranian government official or the militants holding the

hostages.1

3. American public: Statements attributed to a member of the American public.

4. Iranian public: Statements attributed to a member of the Iranian public.

5. Networks' confidential: Statements attributed to a network's confidential source.

6. Unidentified or observed: Statements not attributed to any source; or the observations made by the reporters on the scene.

7. Others: Statements attributed to any other source not covered in the above six.

This part of the analysis was done by the researcher (not the coders) due to the fact that it required no evaluation or personal judgment.

<sup>1</sup>The two groups (Iranian government officials and the militants) were combined because the Iranian government apparently supported the militants and their position; it was also expected that the total for both groups would only make up a small percentage of all the news sources (this was actually supported by the data, Table 3); and, the data later showed that the two groups were almost equally used as news sources.

#### CHAPTER III

#### Results

A total of 2120 sentences were analyzed. In the fifteen days under study, ABC used 704, CBS used 768 and NBC used 648 sentences to cover the crisis. These figures indicate that CBS's coverage was slightly longer than that of ABC or NBC. NBC, meanwhile, had the least amount of coverage on the crisis. At this point the results for the three research questions will be examined:

Research question #1: Were the three commercial television networks more reportive in their coverage of the Iranian crisis or more inferential and judgmental?

The data showed that the three networks used considerably more report sentences than inferences and judgments. As Table 1, which has the total number of sentences used by the networks during the three week sample-period, shows, ABC and NBC had almost equal percentages of reports, inferences and judgments; whereas CBS had a slightly higher number of reports (by almost 7%) than the other two networks. On the whole, the three networks, in the fifteen-day period under study, used a total of 1688 (79.6%) reports, 184 (8.7%) inferences, and 248 (11.7%) judgments. It can be noted that the difference between CBS and the other two networks was in

Γ	a	b	1	е	1
		-	_	-	

Reports, Inferences and Judgments

AE	30						
	50	CB	S	NB	C	Тс	otal
44	77.3%	645	84.0%	499	77.0%	1688	79.6%
63	8.9%	62	8.1%	59	9.1%	184	8.7%
97	13.8%	61	7.9%	90	13.9%	248	11.7%
04		768		648		2120	100.0%
	44 63 97 04	63 8.9% 97 13.8%	63 8.9% 62 97 13.8% 61	63 8.9% 62 8.1% 97 13.8% 61 7.9%	63 8.9% 62 8.1% 59 97 13.8% 61 7.9% 90	63 8.9% 62 8.1% 59 9.1% 97 13.8% 61 7.9% 90 13.9%	63 8.9% 62 8.1% 59 9.1% 184   97 13.8% 61 7.9% 90 13.9% 248

Note. The numbers are averages from the three coders.

the number of judgments used. That is, CBS used fewer judgmental statements than ABC or NBC.

The following are some actual examples, from the recordings which judges/coders unanimously agreed to be reports, inferences, and judgments:

Reports:

1. The mother of an American hostage has been allowed to see her son. (ABC)

2. The State Department today sent telegrams to the hostage families. (ABC)

3. A separate statement dealing with Iran called for the immediate release of the hostages. (CBS)

4. Eight men were killed in that failed rescue attempt. (CBS)

5. They spent 45 minutes together, in private. (NBC)

6. The nine common market foreign ministers, meeting in Luxembourg, agreed to impose economic sanctions. (NBC)

Inferences:

1. It has long been the intention of Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution to humiliate the United States. (ABC)

2. No further news...from the compound today. (ABC)

3. For the time being, the administration decided to conceal its disappointment. (CBS)

4. Members of congress were just as surprised as everyone else. (CBS)

5. This comes at a time of increasing unrest in Iran. (NBC)

6. In a land where calm is becoming less common every day. (NBC)

Judgments:

1. (Iranian government) which is struggling to put down a violent rebellion by many of its own people. (ABC)

2. The campus was torn by violence. (ABC)

3. Iranian's fragile civilian government clashed today with the powerful clergy in a major test of authority. (CBS)

4. Ramsey Clark was under sharp attack. (CBS)

5. The Iranians are getting increasingly sensitive about violence between Moslem fundamentalists and leftists. (NBC)

6. The audacious attempt to rescue the hostages in Iran. (NBC)

Research question #2: Did the three networks favor one side (the United States) or the other (Iran) in their coverage of the crisis?

The data regarding this question are reported in Table two, which shows the three-week total for each network as averaged from the three coders.

It is important to note that the data in Table 2 represent only the inferences and the judgments, not the reports (as explained earlier). For instance, Table 2 shows that the three networks were neutral in 66.8% of their inferences and judgments.

## Table 2

Favorable, Unfavorable and Neutral

Networks   Categories ABC CBS NBC Tot   F <sup>a</sup> 7 4.4% 8 6.6% 14 9.4% 29   U <sup>b</sup> 40 25.2% 31 25.4% 43 28.9% 114   N <sup>c</sup> 112 70.4% 83 68.0% 92 61.7% 287									
F <sup>a</sup> 7 4.4% 8 6.6% 14 9.4% 29 U <sup>b</sup> 40 25.2% 31 25.4% 43 28.9% 114				orks	Netw				
u <sup>b</sup> 40 25.2% 31 25.4% 43 28.9% 114	Total		NBC	CBS		Categories ABC			
	6.7%	29	14 9.4%	6.6%	8	4.4%	7	Fa	
N <sup>C</sup> 112 70.4% 83 68.0% 92 61.7% 287	26.5%	114	43 28.9%	25.4%	31	25.2%	40	Пр	
	66.8%	287	92 61.7%	68.0%	83	70.4%	112	Nc	
159 122 149 430 1	.00.0%	430	149		122		159		

Note. The numbers are averages from the three coders. <sup>a</sup>F: Favorable to Iran/unfavorable to the U.S. <sup>b</sup>U: Unfavorable to Iran/favorable to the U.S.

<sup>C</sup>N: Neutral.

As shown in Table 2, the three networks tended to be mostly neutral whenever they made inferences or judgments. In these inferences or judgments, they remained neutral 66.8% of the time, while 26.5% of the inferences and judgments were unfavorable to Iran/favorable to the United States and 6.7% were favorable to Iran/unfavorable to the U.S. In other words, the networks favored one side or the other 33% of the time they made any inferences or judgments.

In comparing the three networks, the data suggest that ABC and CBS were slightly more neutral than NBC. ABC and CBS were also almost equally unfavorable toward Iran although CBS, at the same time, used slightly more favorable statements on Iran (2.2%).

Research question #3: What news sources were used most often by the three networks in the coverage of the crisis?

The networks, for the majority of the time (52.7%), either did not identify their sources or conveyed what the reporters had themselves observed (such as street demonstrations, funerals, etc.). Table 3 lists the data on the origin of the sources for the three-week period.

Further examination of the data shows that all other sources were used considerably less than the "unidentified" sources. The networks however, used U.S government, as their source of information, 19.6% of the time, whereas they used the Iranian government only 8% of the time. Another comparison shows that the networks used the American public,

## Table 3

# Sources of News and Information

	Networks					
Sources	ABC	CBS	NBC	Total	%	
U.S government	114	190	111	415	19.6	
Iranian government	62	63	44	169	8.0	
American public	74	87	100	261	12.3	
Iranian public	1	6	8	15	.7	
Networks' confidential	42	4	0	46	2.2	
Unidentified/Observed	390	395	333	1118	52.7	
Others	21	23	52	96	4.5	
Total	704	768	648	2120	100.0	

as their source of information, 12.3% of the time, whereas they used the Iranian public .7% of the time.

The three networks proved to be almost identical in their selection of sources, with the exception of CBS which received a greater number of its statements from the U.S government. (Sambe, 1980, also found that CBS used mostly State Department sources in its coverage of the Nigerian Civil War.)

### Statistical Analysis

In order to measure the reliability of the three coders and the degree to which they agreed in their definitions of the categories involved, a series of chi-square analyses were administered.

Research question number one asked whether the three commercial television networks were more reportive in their coverage of the crisis or more inferential and judgmental. A chi-square analysis of the data shows that the coders/ judges agreed in their definitions of reports, inferences and judgments during each of the three weeks (Table 4). The chi-square analysis shows that differences among the judges in the use of the categories do not exceed the .30 level of significance.

Another chi-square analysis of the data (for the three weeks total) on the second research question (whether the three networks favored one side or the other in their coverage) shows a chi-square value of 3.70 with 4 degrees of

Week#	Chi-square	Degrees	of	Freedom
1	4.32 <sup>a</sup>		4	
2	1.61		4	
3	2.53		4	

Table 4

Chi-square Analysis on Coder Reliability

<sup>a</sup>p>.30 (4df)=4.88

freedom, (p > .50). Again, the three coders were in sufficient agreement in their definitions of favorable, unfavorable, and neutral inferences and judgments.

No statistical analysis was necessary on the data for the third research question (what sources the networks used most often) since no judgmental evaluation was made in collecting the data.

#### CHAPTER IV

#### Summary and Discussion

Previous research has shown that the three commercial networks have had some difficulty in covering some of the most important international events of recent history (the Nigerian Civil War of the late 60's, the Chilean events of the 60's, and the Vietnam War of the late 60's and the early 70's). Research has also shown that the networks, at times, have been biased in their news reporting. Thus a content analysis was performed to study the network television news coverage of the much publicized Iranian hostage crisis (1979-1981). Three questions were asked:

1. Were the three television networks more reportive in their coverage of the crisis or more inferential and judgmental?

2. Did the networks tend to favor one side or the other?

3. What news sources were used most often by the networks in their coverage of the crisis?

A total of fifteen days of evening news coverage (three weeks) from the three commercial networks (ABC, CBS and NBC) were selected at random. From these, stories relating to the crisis or Iran were further selected and analyzed. Three independent coders were instructed to categorize each news sentence into reports, inferences, or judgments. The coders were further instructed to subcategorize inferences and judgments into statements favorable to Iran/unfavorable to the U.S, unfavorable to Iran/favorable to the U.S, or neutral. The third research question was responded to by (the researcher) classifying each sentence as having come from one of these sources: U.S government, Iranian government, American public, Iranian public, networks' confidential, unidentified/observed, and finally, others.

The results showed that the three networks were mostly reportive (80%) in their coverage of the crisis; they did, however, use 20% inferences and judgments. The three networks were also slightly more favorable to the American side (in 26.5% of their inferences and judgments) whereas only 6.7% of the inferences and judgments they used favored Iran. The three networks, however, remained neutral in 66.8% of their inferential or judgmental statements. Source analyses showed that the networks did not identify their sources in 52.7% of the cases. 32% of the statements came from U.S officials or citizens compared with 8.7% coming from Iranians. A series of chi-square analyses were administered and coder reliability proved to be significantly high in all cases.

#### Discussion

In order to evaluate the network television news coverage of a significant and recent foreign (international) event, namely the Iranian hostage crisis (1979-1981), a sys-

tematic language approach was employed. This approach was designed to help determine whether the networks covered the crisis objectively (by using factual or reportive sentences) or if they injected their own (inferences and) judgments into the coverage. The appropriate contention would be that the more reports used, the more objective the coverage is likely to be. On the other hand, the more inferences and judgments used, the less objective the coverage is likely to be.

The content analysis for research question number one (whether the networks were more reportive or more inferential and judgmental in their coverage of the Iranian crisis) showed that the three commercial networks (ABC, CBS and NBC) used mostly report sentences (80%), while using some inferences and judgments as well (20%). This indicates that one out of every five sentences used by the networks in covering the crisis, had some element of inference or judgment in it.

In lieu of the television news coverage of some other important foreign events (Chapter 1), one is likely to look at the findings in this present study and conclude that television did a fairly good job of reporting the Iranian crisis. For example, Sambe (1980) used the same language approach and studied the television news coverage of the civil war in Nigeria. Sambe found far more inferences and judgments in the Nigerian coverage (53.4%) than this present study

found in the Iranian coverage (20%). This establishes a significant change (for the better) from the coverage of Nigeria to the coverage of Iran. This change could, however, be partly due to the fact that in this study, all quotations (direct or indirect) were coded as reports (whether the quotations contained any inferences or judgments or not) and Sambe does not indicate in his article whether he did the same with quotations or not.

The reason all quotations, regardless of content, were coded as reports was that this study was trying to examine the attitude of the networks and not the attitude of the sources of information. If these quotations included any inferences or judgments, they were made by the sources and not by the networks. And if the networks reported any inferential or judgmental statements made by any sources, the networks still reported factually (because that is what the sources said and not the networks).

Thus, other than the above possible reservation, the networks used far fewer inferences and judgments in their coverage of Iran than they did in their coverage of Nigeria, which would mean that, in this context of evaluation, the networks did a better job of reporting the Iranian crisis than they did in reporting the Nigerian Civil War.

At this point it is necessary to note that the three coders were instructed to distinguish report statements from inferences and judgments and they were not required to

verify the correctness of the reports. The reason being that the reports are assumed to be factual (according to definition) and verification of reports, if desired, would require a different study, perhaps a study utilizing methodological approaches of detecting accuracy/inaccuracy in reporting. In short, the intention in this study was not to check the accuracy of reports, but rather to distinguish reports from inferences and judgments, in terms of wording and structure.

On research question number two (whether the networks favored either side in the Iranian crisis), the data suggest that the three networks appeared to be mostly neutral in their presentation of the events surrounding the Iranian crisis even though previous research has found the networks to have favored one side or another in some controversial issues (Chapter 1). However, on the occasions that the networks were not neutral, they were more favorable to the United States than to Iran. Perhaps an explanation for this is that it would be natural for the American networks to tilt to the American side in times of tension or crisis. Another reason could be the fact that the Iranian crisis evolved around the taking of hostages which is largely looked upon as a terrorist act and vexatious at best. Beyond the reasons mentioned, it is difficult, if not impossible, to speculate on the networks' motivations or intentions.

It is important to note that this study only examined the inferences and judgments in order to find out which side

the networks favored more. The report sentences were excluded from this part of the analysis since the only time a report sentence can contain any favorable treatment of one side (and not be rated as a judgment) is when the reporter makes a quotation (direct or indirect) that is not neutral. To evaluate this hypothetical quotation as favorable or unfavorable would be again evaluating the source of the quotation, and not the networks. As indicated earlier, this study did not involve in evaluation of the sources, rather it intended to evaluate the networks' performance. Evaluation of the sources (and their objectivity) would be a more appropriate task for studies concentrating on the selection habits of the networks or the news organizations.

The above reasoning could perhaps explain why Sambe (1980) found the networks far more favorable to one side (in the case of Nigeria) than this study found (in the case of the Iranian crisis). Sambe included the report sentences in his analysis of favorable/unfavorable whereas this author did not consider it appropriate to make such an inclusion of the report sentences into this part of the analysis (for reasons explained above).

Finally, on research question number three (which news sources the networks used most often in covering the Iranian crisis), the data showed that the networks did not identify their sources of information 53% of the time. This is in agreement with previous research. For example, Ryan (1979) reported that 61.3% of all the sentences he analyzed were

not attributed to a source. It is significant to note in this section that the unidentified sources (53%) included direct observations by reporters in this study. Direct observations would be, for example, covering of ceremonies. Obviously, the reporter cannot keep repeating "I see the crowd" or "I see the president" or "I see the motorcade". It would perhaps be helpful to separate these direct observations (by reporters) from statements (without any identified sources) in future research. Finally, some more suggestions follow for future research attempts.

#### Future Research

Future research might study whole newscasts, rather than one incident or crisis, to discover how much these programs use inferences or judgments on the average and overall. That is, instead of analyzing the coverage of one event, research could take the whole news and examine it across the board.

Further, future research might analyze a combination of nonverbal and vocal cues (along with verbal cues) in order to assess the coverage. A comparison may also be made to find out whether verbal and nonverbal signals of a newscast are consistent with each other or not.

Future research might also analyze a shorter crisis (in terms of time duration) than the Iranian crisis which lasted for over a year. This approach could study the entire coverage of a shorter crisis and thus the need for sampling would be eliminated.

An attempt may also be made to study the crises in which (official) sources of information are few or inaccessible, to find out if this inaccessibility to official information would lead to more inferential and judgmental reporting.

Future studies could also analyze crises in which government control (or lack of it) influences or determines the flow of information to find out how the news organizations cover such crises. Finally, future research may examine coverage of the crises in which sources of information are hostile to the news media, to find out how reports are affected by such hostility.

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