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Whose News? How Television News Fails Political Discourse

Abstract

This study analyzes the relationship between strategy frames and reported verbal and visual discourse in news content. It explored this dynamic by examining the verbal aspects of television broadcast news coverage of presidential campaigns and visuals in television broadcast news coverage of crime. Interviews with journalists were conducted in order to explain the findings. The visual analysis found that after the Willie Horton case became prominent, network news altered visual depictions of black and white criminals. Black criminals increasingly appeared in visuals similar to those that depicted Horton while white criminals were shown in different ways. This altered the visual representations of what constituted black and white criminals. These findings are evidence of visual framing, which occurs when subjects are shown in dissimilar ways to offer distinct depictions of the same entity. As an explanation for visual framing, the author offers the concept of visual priming, a process by which the news media alter the visual portrayal of issues or phenomena to reflect a salient incident. The study of presidential campaign coverage found that candidate messages in issue stories were more likely to be advocacy and supported by evidence; by contrast, messages in strategy stories were more likely to be attack and not supported by evidence. Interviews with journalists v Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission. indicate that they select portions of candidates' and public officials' speech based on a pre-established news frame rather than choose frames after considering political discourse. Piecing together research on news frames and the reporting of verbal and visual discourse, I offer the following explanation for press performance: strategy coverage, the result of real-world cues, drives the selection of unrepresentative verbal and visual discourse in television news about politics. By contrast, the absence of strategy framing produces reported discourse that is more consistent with political speech. The results demonstrate that strategy coverage goes beyond journalistic interpretations and affects how sources are quoted and how social phenomena are depicted visually.

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WHOSE NEWS?

HOW TELEVISION NEWS FAILS POLITICAL DISCOURSE

James Devitt

A DISSERTATION

in

Communication

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2001

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James Michael Devitt

2001

For my wife Andrea and my son Truman, whose love, support, and humor helped me realize the lasting value of communication.

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ABSTRACT

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HOW TELEVISION NEWS FAILS POLITICAL DISCOURSE

James Devitt

Kathleen Hall Jamieson

This study analyzes the relationship between strategy frames and reported verbal and visual discourse in news content. It explored this dynamic by examining the verbal aspects of television broadcast news coverage of presidential campaigns and visuals in television broadcast news coverage of crime. Interviews with journalists were conducted in order to explain the findings. The visual analysis found that after the Willie Horton case became prominent, network news altered visual depictions of black and white criminals. Black criminals increasingly appeared in visuals similar to those that depicted Horton while white criminals were shown in different ways. This altered the visual representations of what constituted black and white criminals. These findings are evidence of visual framing, which occurs when subjects are shown in dissimilar ways to offer distinct depictions of the same entity. As an explanation for visual framing, the author offers the concept of visual priming, a process by which the news media alter the visual portrayal of issues or phenomena to reflect a salient incident. The study of presidential campaign coverage found that candidate messages in issue stories were more likely to be advocacy and supported by evidence; by contrast, messages in strategy stories were more likely to be attack and not supported by evidence. Interviews with journalists indicate that they select portions of candidates' and public officials' speech based on a pre-established news frame rather than choose frames after considering political discourse. Piecing together research on news frames and the reporting of verbal and visual discourse, I offer the following explanation for press performance: strategy coverage, the result of real-world cues, drives the selection of unrepresentative verbal and visual discourse in television news about politics. By contrast, the absence of strategy framing produces reported discourse that is more consistent with political speech. The results demonstrate that strategy coverage goes beyond journalistic interpretations and affects how sources are quoted and how social phenomena are depicted visually.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

During the 1996 presidential campaign, President Bill Clinton and Senator Bob Dole offered contrasting plans on a variety of public policy issues, including the tax code, Medicare, Social Security, the environment, and affirmative action. While the candidates compared and contrasted their views and records, journalists frequently contextualized Clinton's and Dole's stated positions by analyzing their strategic impact on the electorate. This practice was apparent on the networks' evening newscasts. CBS' Sandra Hughes, reporting on the Dole campaign in California in late October, offered this assessment of the Republican nominee's public policy agenda:

> With his eyes on the Golden State's hefty electoral prize, Bob Dole tailored his message specifically for Californians. He promised beefed up border patrols to cut back illegal immigration and pledged his support for the California proposition to end government-sponsored affirmative action.[1]

On September 22, ABC's Bob Zelnick used a similar approach in covering Dole's tax plan:

> ...Dole's massive tax cut plan—fifteen percent across-the-board—was supposed to be the centerpiece of his campaign. The switch in emphasis led some to speculate that the tax-cut strategy hasn't worked, given the strong economy and Dole's ponderous efforts to explain it to crowds. But the Dole camp insists the more voters learn about the tax cut, the more likely they are to support Dole.[2]

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[1] CBS "Evening News," October 27, 1996.

[2] ABC "World News Tonight," September 22, 1996.

The networks offered similar perspectives in evaluating governmental activity during the campaign. After the Clinton Administration set aside land in Utah for a national monument, NBC's Brian Williams contended:

> Protecting it will infuriate many in Utah, and it already has...But losing Utah is no loss as the White House sees it, because the state is so solidly Republican anyway. Today's move will play very well with certain environmentally minded voters in places like California, where Clinton needs and hopes to do very well.[3]

NBC's Jim Miklaszewski offered this analysis on the impact of a Federal Reserve Board decision:

> White House officials tell us tonight that the decision not to raise interest rates was the best political news the Federal Reserve could have delivered. President Clinton got the good news about interest rates as he landed for a campaign stop in New Jersey...A steady economy could solidify his lead in the polls, and make him hard to beat.[4]

These examples illustrate that in covering the public policy issues that are part of a presidential campaign, the networks often consider strategic import these matters will have on the electorate. A candidate's tax plan does not simply represent his philosophical approach to governing. Rather, it is an attempt to appeal to some voting block that will help secure the 270 electoral votes necessary to win the presidency.

Other forms of strategy coverage make no attempt to link public policy and electoral strategy. Instead, they simply focus on the horse-race or tactical aspects of the election, disregarding where the candidates stand on the issues. This practice occurred in 1996. The following example from CBS' John Roberts is illustrative:

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[3] NBC "Nightly News," September 18, 1996.
[4] NBC "Nightly News," September 24, 1996.

> Senior citizens are among the most ardently sought after groups of voters this election year. Both parties are targeting seniors in their advertising, and both President Clinton and Bob Dole are frequent fliers to swing states where many seniors live...There's one big reason why both parties are campaigning so strongly for the senior citizen vote, they historically turn out in very large numbers.[5]

Many delved deeper into campaign tactics. For instance, ABC's Sam Donaldson reported, "...that's how it goes in modern campaigns, punch and counterpunch within hours of each other. Whatever the road they take, they'll both travel at about ninety miles an hour between now and election day."[6] Two days later, Donaldson said, "The president has been very good about staying on message, letting nothing intrude on his bridge building campaign theme.[7] Gwen Ifill, then of NBC, noted:

> Back at (Clinton's) Washington campaign headquarters, aides planned rapid attack and counterattack. The weapons, phone and fax. The rapid response war is at the heart of a campaign of tactics, where little that the candidates say, whether it is in their advertising, in their stump speeches, on even in their Web sites, is exactly true, and none of it is exactly false.[8]

NBC's David Bloom offered this assessment: "Recent polls put Dole behind in forty-one states, ahead in just eight, tied with Clinton in staunchly Republican Texas, which has not gone to a Democrat since Jimmy Carter twenty years ago. So now Dole who's complained about Clinton's 'campaign of fear' is taking a similar attack."[9]

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[5] CBS Evening News, October 27, 1996.
[6] ABC "World News Tonight," September 20, 1996.
[7] ABC "World News Tonight," September 22, 1996.
[8] NBC "Nightly News," September 20, 1996.
[9] NBC "Nightly News," September 24, 1996.

The strategic analysis in some stories went even beyond the 1996 campaign, looking ahead to the 2000 election cycle. Covering an appearance by Dole's running mate Jack Kemp in Harlem, ABC's Jack Smith said, "...Kemp has good contacts with black leaders and a pro-minority record as Housing (and Urban Development) secretary, and these would help him if he runs at the top of the ticket four years from now."[10]

Indeed, research on national news coverage of politics has consistently found that reporters focus on the strategic or tactical aspects of campaigning rather than on the substance of candidates' public policy proposals (Jamieson, 1992; Kerbel, 1997; Patterson, 1993; Robinson and Sheehan, 1983). This practice is evidence of interpretive journalism, in which reporters translate, rather than transcribe, the actions of candidates and public officials (Jamieson, 1992; Patterson, 1993; Robinson and Sheehan, 1983). This process has also been described as an instance of "framing" or using news frames (Entman, 1993) to construct news.

Unanswered is the question, What effect does this have on other aspects of news content, such as how candidates are quoted? Specifically, past research has extensively explored how the press covers politics—documenting its reliance on strategic analysis—but it has not examined political discourse of candidates and how journalists report this discourse. Similarly, other scholarship has analyzed visuals on television news, but it has not considered the relationship between journalistic interpretation and the selection of these visuals.

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[10] ABC "World News Tonight," September 22, 1996.

My study focused on these matters by asking: Is our sense of verbal and visual discourse distorted in predictable ways by tactical or strategic press reports? And, if so, under what circumstances? Verbal discourse includes the arguments put forth by candidates in their speeches and advertisements as well as during debates. Visual discourse consists of the visuals that news reporters select for airing in reporting stories.

Because strategy coverage is a staple of campaign journalism, I asked the following about the reporting of verbal frames: Does strategy coverage influence the reporting of political discourse in ways that are unrepresentative of political speech? To gauge the impact of strategy coverage on verbal discourse, I examined the reporting of candidate discourse in both strategy and non-strategy stories. In addition, I interviewed reporters in order to explain these findings.

I also looked at the impact of strategy coverage on visuals of alleged criminals. I specifically looked at the impact of the William Horton issue during the 1988 presidential campaign. Because journalists treated the Horton matter as a key component of the Bush campaign's electoral strategy against opponent Michael Dukakis (Jamieson, 1992; Simon, 1990), the visuals depicting this strategy—i.e., those of Horton—may explain changes in visuals of black and white alleged criminals. I asked if the networks used visuals of black alleged criminals that were more like those of Horton. I also asked if the networks used visuals of white alleged criminals that were quite different than those portraying Horton.

My research was intended to better gauge the impact of a certain form of journalistic interpretation—strategy coverage. While past studies have reached different conclusions on the nature and impact of such interpretations, they have not considered how they may affect the reporting of verbal and visual discourse.

This gap is crucial, especially with regard to verbal discourse. Understanding the nature of reported verbal discourse may cast light on the quality of information the public receives. In an era of sound bites (Hallin, 1992) and at a time when the press views political discourse as lacking in substance or news value (Plissner, 1999), one might be initially inclined to believe that candidates' and public officials' discourse is truly superficial. However, the bulk of the daily *Congressional Record* as well as candidate position papers suggest that the discourse of public officials and candidates is at least somewhat thoughtful, though possibly long-winded. In either case, the question remains: Does the strategic frame influence the reporting of this discourse?

Exploring this dynamic is a worthwhile endeavor. While political strategy is a fundamental part of campaigns, electoral contests are also a competition over policies, ideas, and philosophies in which voters, in part, support candidates based on record and position on public policy issues. Candidates are certainly aware of which views are popular and which are not. But the fact that they do not adopt identical positions on every issue demonstrates that campaigns, unlike athletic contests, are not only about tactics and strategies. Rather, they are also about communicating contrasting priorities and preferences on the role and direction of government for subsequent years. If journalism obscures candidates' discourse on these matters, reporters are depriving the electorate of the opportunity to better understand how candidates will govern once in office.

Previous research has found that the length of candidate sound bites has diminished in network campaign coverage (Hallin, 1992) and that journalists' voices have increasingly displaced those of candidates (Patterson, 1993). By contrast, other research has concluded the media report "official messages" (Bennett, 1983). However, this scholarship has not examined the nature of political discourse and whether or not journalistic interpretation influences how this discourse appears in the news. Are news organizations preventing office holders from communicating substantively to the public or merely relaying the superficial nature of speeches and interviews? Or is it something in between? This study set out to address these questions.

Again, the study was not limited to the spoken word. It also considered how journalists process visuals. We know that every day thousands of visuals are available to reporters. They pick and choose the ones they wish to include in their newscasts and news pages to depict the day's events. Much like the processing of source discourse, reporters must also process visuals, which are often controlled by news subjects. These include photo opportunities and advertisements. In effect, the visuals that campaigns and public officials make available to journalists function as discourse to be processed. This study considered how news organizations process these visuals: Were they representative of the social phenomena they were depicting and, if not, why?

The study also included interviews with reporters to better understand the process of constructing news. Results from the content analysis determined the questions. This methodology shed light on how sources speak to the media and why journalists ignore some discourse and report other. By providing a better understanding of these processes, this procedure also offered practical avenues for the improvement of journalistic practices (see Chapter Nine).

Although this study explored the construction of news content, it cannot make any claims about the effects of this content on news consumers. *Since it does not include an experiment or a survey, any effects posited are speculative.* However, it may offer insight into the construction of news upon which subsequent effects studies could be based. Experiments could explore how individuals process news content containing different types of reported discourse. Or, they could examine how the reporting of source discourse influences perceptions of sources.

Significance of Study

The components of my study go to the heart of the newsmaking process by asking how political discourse appears on the airwaves. Previous research (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Bennett, 1983, 1990; Gamson and Modigliani, 1987, 1989; Gans, 1979; Hertsgaard, 1988; Weaver and Elliott, 1985) has concluded the perspectives of sources have an unimpeded entrée into the news agenda.

However, this research has largely been limited to coverage of news topics and the reporting of specific opinions. Elected officials and candidates discuss matters such as the economy, national defense, and the federal budget and offer their views on these matters. These often become focal points of news coverage. What is less clear is the relationship between news frames and source discourse (i.e., how public officials and candidates structure their verbal appeals). Because news frames may construct reality for audiences, particularly during presidential campaigns (Pew Research Center, 1996), this is an important line of inquiry.

Beyond my study's significance to communication research, the results also point to ways to improve news coverage.

Improving Journalism

Because my research explored the impact of journalistic interpretation on the reporting of discourse, recommendations focus on altering the nature of these interpretations. These interpretations could include a broader exploration of public policy proposals, rather than simply their import as campaign tactics. Also, journalists could change the nature of the source discourse they report. They could quote sources in ways that are more representative of their actual speech, rather than shortening it in ways that neither reflect actual political discourse or convey its substance. These suggestions demonstrate the potential significance of pursuing this line of research.

The beneficiaries of these proposed changes include both candidates and journalists. Bennett et al. (1999) argue that news fairness—i.e., the public's belief that the media report the news fairly—is positively related to trust in government. In other words, as perceptions of media performance improve, so does public trust in governmental institutions. This is not to suggest that the media's responsibility is to prop up governmental institutions; rather, it demonstrates that the consequences of poor journalistic practices extend beyond Americans' opinions of the press. I describe these recommendations in greater detail in Chapter Nine.

Areas of Research

This study considers the impact of strategy coverage on the news media's reporting of political discourse. The research areas relevant to these phenomena are framing, which I am defining as journalistic interpretations that form a single or primary theme for an entire news story, and indexing, which focuses on whose views are reported. There is some overlap between these components, but each offers a rich avenue of scholarship that this study seeks to interconnect in order to have a greater understanding of how news is constructed. There is a third area that is relevant to this study: reporter-source relations. Because this study considers how source discourse and journalistic interpretation influence news content, it is important to consider how the two parties interact *before* news is disseminated to the public.

Subsequent chapters will outline this research. The first is scholarship on framing, which the next chapter will explore.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH ON FRAMING

This study seeks to understand how the news media process political discourse, such as speeches, ads, and candidate debates. Crucial to this exploration is how journalistic interpretation is juxtaposed—or associated with—the words of candidates and public officials. A primary component of journalistic interpretation is framing or, specifically, news frames.

While frames are often found in news, they have additional applications. When scholars discuss "framing," they mean the context, assumptions, and characteristics that shape both our understanding of everyday events and of written and spoken discourse. Frames are also defined by what they exclude: those that have characteristics A and B may not have characteristics C and D.

Frames are evident in conversation and speech—as well as in news. By heightening some aspects of reality and excluding others, framing can produce different depictions of the same event, person, or trend. A husband and wife, for instance, may offer starkly different descriptions of a vacation they took together. While he highlights the lost luggage and the humidity, she focuses on the clear skies and marvelous meals. Though both are describing the same vacation, by choosing to focus on some aspects while excluding others, they are framing the vacation in quite different ways, resulting in dissimilar accounts. In short, writes Matthew Kerbel, frames are both "justifiable and arbitrary" (Kerbel, 1997).

Scholars have studied framing extensively. Much of this research has centered on how frames operate in news discourse. However, these analyses have presupposed very different concepts of framing. This has left us with a fuzzy understanding of the nature of frames and how they function in communication.

Nature and Content of Frames

Goffman's (1974) work, *Frame Analysis*, examined how frames help us structure daily events or phenomena. Frames, according to Goffman, "organize 'strips' of the everyday world, a strip being 'an arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity' " (10). To analyze frames, then, is to examine the "terms of the organization of experience" (10-11).

Goffman also argued that frames are subject to transformations through a process called "keying":

> a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else. The process of transcription can be called keying (43-44).

While Goffman acknowledged that individuals use certain resources to organize experiences for them, he didn't identify these resources (Tuchman, 1978, 195). Among these resources, most certainly, are the news media. Several scholars have studied how the news media frame the events and experiences Goffman discussed.

Tuchman (1978) analyzed the newsmaking process, including the press's role in framing. Like Goffman, Tuchman wrote that frames help organize daily phenomena: "Frames turn nonrecognizable happenings or amorphous talk into a discernible event. Without the frame, they would be mere happenings of...talk, incomprehensible sounds" (192). However, unlike Goffman, Tuchman wrote that frames are the product of a "negotiation" about the character of an occurrence (193). And because frames shape our understanding of events, these negotiations are ultimately over the meaning of events: Was the fire big or small? Was the president dishonest or uninformed? Does a story on a liquor story robbery go on page one or page 27?

The players in these negotiations include the news media and other institutions, organizations, and professions (216). However, while Tuchman extensively studied the newsmaking process and while she contended frames are part of this process, she didn't study the link between these two areas in great detail or how frames function in news content.

Gitlin (1980) offered a more detailed conception of how frames function in news. He defined news frames as "principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters" (6). According to Gitlin, frames are also defined by what they exclude. In his study of how the news media portrayed Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), he found that news organizations' frames centered on individuals, rather than the group as a whole, and on news events engineered by SDS, rather than the underlying conditions the group was attempting to address (28).

In an essay intended to clarify our understanding of frames, Entman (1993) echoed Gitlin's conception of how frames function in news. However, he added that frames also "define problems," "make moral judgments," "diagnose cause," and "suggest remedies" (52).

Iyengar and Kinder (1987) have suggested that frames are topic-based. News shapes our understanding of the world by focusing on certain subjects—e.g., inflation, national defense, or unemployment. Iyengar (1991) reported that news frames are either episodic or thematic. Episodic frames focus on individuals and view news as a series of single events. Thematic frames, on the other hand, examine larger social dynamics that may produce seemingly isolated phenomena. These two frames may result in vastly different stories on, for instance, rising unemployment. An episodic story may focus on how a single individual lost his job while a thematic story may look at economic data and governmental policies that explain this trend on a national scale.

Gamson and Modigliani (1987) studied frames' content but saw a greater variety of frames than did Iyengar and Kinder. This is because they saw frames as philosophical premises that translate into different loci of arguments. For instance, they analyzed the alternative frames in the media's coverage of affirmative action. "Remedial action" frames argue that affirmative action programs are necessary to redress the continuing effects of a history of racial discrimination while "reverse discrimination" frames contend these programs advance the well-being of certain racial groups at the expense of individual rights (148-149). According to Gamson and Modigliani, then, frames are rhetorical devices that explicitly advance arguments. Kinder and Sanders (1990, 1996) demonstrated the impact of these frames.

Building on Entman and Gitlin, Pan and Kosicki (1993) examined the tools used by journalists in constructing frames. They divide these tools into four organizing structures of news discourse: syntactical, thematic, script, and rhetorical. Syntactical structures refer to the building blocks of news stories—headline, lead, episode, background, closure, inverted pyramid, and source attributions. Thematic structures offer a thesis about a problem or issue, such as describing affirmative action programs as tools of reverse discrimination rather than as practices needed to correct past wrongs. Scripts are story lines that form a news narrative. In part, these are the five Ws and one H in reporting: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Rhetorical structures are news techniques that encourage the acceptance of news content and, specifically, news frames. These may include pictures of flattened buildings to demonstrate the power of an earthquake or reporting an event using third person to underscore the journalist's objectivity and, implicitly, the reality of the event.

While Gitlin, Entman, and Pan and Kosicki generally describe how frames operate in news, others have studied the characteristics of certain frames and how they n depict institutions, politicians, interest groups, and other news subjects. In covering political institutions, national news frames have centered on conflict rather than consensus between public officials (Graber, 1989; Kerbel, 1997; Lichter and Amundson, 1994; Neuman, Just, and Crigler, 1992; Ornstein, 1987; Rozell, 1994). Other research has suggested that these frames are reporter-driven rather than source-driven and that the reporter frame has tended to overreport candidates' criticisms of each other, thereby artificially inflating the level of conflict (Annenberg Public Policy Center, 1996; Kerbel, 1997). Althaus et al. (1996) also found the overreporting of conflict in coverage of congressional debate. Conversely, reporters have tended to underreport office holders' policy successes (Patterson, 1993, 1996).

Related to the conflict frame is the strategy frame, in which journalists describe candidates' or public officials' acts as self-serving or as attempts to manipulate the public. The strategy frame also promotes the "horse race" aspects of politics: Who is winning, who is losing, and why (Jamieson, 1992; Patterson, 1993; Robinson and Sheehan, 1983). Since 1980, the majority of presidential campaign coverage for both print and broadcast news has focused on strategy (Annenberg Public Policy Center, 1996). Neuman et al. (1992) wrote that both conflict and strategy frames show politicians as competitors, which exaggerates the differences in their views (64).

Both Cappella and Jamieson (1996, 1997) and Patterson (1993) also considered another type of structure: the issue frame. Rather than painting politics as a game or competition, issue frames focus on matters related to governance—e.g., the deficit, NAFTA, and foreign policy—independent of their strategic implications. Issue frames, then, show politics as a basket of public policy problems and solutions, rather than as a contest between opposing forces. However, where Cappella and Jamieson's experimental work was able to show that strategy framing activates cynicism and depresses learning, their work uncovered no statistically significant effects of the issue frame. Patterson (1993) added that strategy frames have come to dominate political coverage while issue frames have gradually receded.

Overall, by focusing on strategy and overreporting conflict, journalists have become increasingly interpretive in their coverage. In offering strategic analysis, reporters have provided their own perceptions of the events and individuals they cover, rather than allowing the words and perspectives of news subjects to dominate news stories (Crouse, 1972; Patterson, 1993; Robinson and Sheehan, 1983). By overreporting conflict, they are suggesting campaigns are more combative than is actually the case. An emphasis on both strategy and conflict amounts to journalistic interpretations that do not match the reality of political campaigns.

In sum, while researchers have examined news frames' content, there appears to be little consensus on the nature of this content. Moreover, previous research does not make clear the origins of frames. Are they, for example, arguments advanced by sources or a set of journalistic assumptions influencing the structure of news stories?

Part of the confusion over content occurs because there is little research on how or why frames are adopted. Are frames the result of source activities, journalistic norms, source-reporter interactions, organizational priorities, or something else? Understanding *how* frames make it into news discourse may shed light on their nature.

Gamson and Modigliani (1987) began to address this question. They saw news frames as the result of "sponsor activities"—actions taken by news sources to advance their particular frame (i.e., argument) in the press. Sponsors, whom the researchers define as organizations or advocacy networks (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987, 144), construct packages to advance their views on issues (e.g., affirmative action) and attempt to get news outlets to adopt these packages when covering these issues (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987, 1989).[11] They showed how certain "sponsors" (e.g., the NAACP, the AFL-CIO, the Supreme Court, and the Justice Department) each advanced frames on affirmative action and which ones dominated news discourse. They also attributed the rise of some frames and the failure of others to media practices, such as the need for both drama and objectivity. In short, Gamson (1989) concluded that any entity that sends messages in news—journalists or sources—is a frame sponsor.

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[11] Edelman (1988) discusses a similar process, in which presidents attempt to influence the public to interpret their actions as successful (41).

However, they did not study these processes in detail and generally drew their conclusions from their analysis of content—news content and that of the sponsors' frames. Left unstudied is the nature of the interactions that favor the adoption of some frames and the rejection of others. For instance, *why* did the reverse discrimination frame dominate in news? These questions are explored below.

Rather than clarifying the nature of frames, studies exploring frames' origins have possibly further muddled our understanding of them. Gamson and Modigliani suggested that frames are source-driven. Sources are the sponsors—or creators—of frames, and these frames are either accepted or rejected by the news media. In addition, while Gamson and Lasch (1983) and Gamson and Modigliani (1987, 1989) saw frames as tools used to organize news stories and other forms of discourse, the function they posit for frames is different from that envisioned by others. To them, frames are arguments (e.g., the "reverse discrimination" frame) that appear in news. Frames are not devices that influence the construction of entire news stories, but elements that appear within news stories. Because frames function as arguments, stories can contain a variety of conflicting frames without upsetting the overall structure of a news account. However, Gamson (1989) acknowledged that journalists may also be sponsors of frames because they determine a news account's story line, lead, and closing. Much like Gitlin (1980), Gamson and Modigliani (1989) wrote that news organizations adopt certain packages through "negotiation" with package sponsors: journalists "straddle the boundary between producers and consumers of meaning" in adopting certain packages (9).

This is in contrast to Iyengar (1991), Jamieson (1992), and Patterson (1993), who suggested that frames are primarily reporter-driven. This contrasting view dramatically alters the nature of news frames. According to this research, journalistic assumptions and practices produce stories centering on strategies or issues, themes or individuals. These and other studies also contended that frames are embedded in the overall structure of news stories. Frames are not simply one or two paragraphs pasted onto the end of a 1500-word story or an argument situated in the lead. Rather, they define, or at least influence, the nature of an entire news story.

These distinctions are significant because they offer different conceptions of how news is constructed. If frames function as arguments, several frames—or perspectives—can appear within a single news story. By contrast, if they serve to structure a given news story, frames are singular in nature, thereby stifling alternative views of reality.

Other research has attempted to reconcile these conflicting views. Allen, O'Loughlin, Jasperson, and Sullivan (1994) also saw frames as arguments or perspectives. However, unlike Gamson and his colleagues, they concluded that news accounts contain single frames rather than conflicting ones. Their research suggested that news coverage of the Gulf War marginalized anti-war voices by primarily highlighting the perspectives and assumptions of those supporting U.S. intervention:

> (The) media provided the public with ubiquitous, redundant, repetitious message of support. More than serving simply as conduits for military information, media also framed and primed views of dissent, patriotism, technology, and elite

> consensus to construct a reality that stifled dissent and influenced citizens' evaluations of military actions (283).

Reese and Buckalew (1995) reached similar conclusions about the frames employed during news coverage of the Gulf War.

My study seeks to clarify framing. However, rather than searching for new types of frames, my approach contextualizes the wide array of content evident in past studies. Specifically, I am hypothesizing that the association of news frames with certain types of political discourse forms a set of news structures. This research broadens our understanding of how frames function in news discourse. In the process, this study offers a clearer concept of news frames.

This study will also consider another type of frame: **visual frames**. The frames discussed up to this point are verbal. They depend on inclusion—and exclusion—of certain words, phrases, and perspectives in offering a portrait of reality. Visual frames function in a similar manner. However, they employ—or do not employ—certain pictures, which also convey a certain aspect of reality. For instance, in campaign coverage, television reporters may use favorable visuals of candidates who are leading in the polls and unfavorable ones of trailing candidates to depict which candidate is winning and which is behind (Jamieson, 1992, 178-179). The same may be true of newspaper photographs (Waldman and Devitt, 1998).

The study includes an analysis of visuals used in network news coverage to determine how they serve as news frames—that is, how visuals can be manipulated to offer contrasting portrayals of reality. I also explore the factors that explain visual frames.

The question is important. As Wanta (1986) has shown, the presence of pictures enhances the agenda-setting function of news content.

Consequences and Effects of News Frames

While the construction and nature of news frames remains unclear, their impact is often significant. Many have studied how framing affects the portrayal and our understanding of the status of certain groups. Goshorn and Gandy (1995) analyzed how frames shape our conception of risk by highlighting some aspects of reality while de-emphasizing others. The authors studied news coverage of a Federal Reserve Board report, which concluded that whites were more likely than blacks to obtain loans. They found that the overwhelming majority of story headlines noted how blacks were more likely to be denied mortgages; in contrast, only a handful of headlines reported that whites were more likely to obtain them. By emphasizing black loss rather than white success, the authors contended, news headlines framed the mortgage market as a risky endeavor for blacks rather than as a successful one for whites.

Guerrero (1993) studied the portrayal of blacks in film and concluded that Hollywood "constructs black people as 'other' and subordinate, while it naturalizes white privilege as the invisible but sovereign 'norm' " (5). He based his conclusions, in part, on the analysis of black actors' roles. He found that film overrepresented blacks as comics, entertainers, athletes, and criminals while diminishing "dramatic roles depicting the emotional and intellectual complexity of black life" (7). In these studies, frames may be understood in terms of overrepresentation and underrepresentation of certain aspects of reality, which alter our understanding of groups and their societal roles.

The body of research I have described has focused on the construction and content of news frames—and their implications for certain groups. The impact of framing extends beyond these spheres. Many have found that frames affect perspectives and opinions as well. These findings demonstrate that framing in news has consequences for news consumers.

Researchers have found that frames can have a variety of effects on audiences. For example, Kahneman and Tversky (1984) concluded that word changes can influence the choices people make. The different types of frames conceived by researchers are associated with similar effects.

Iyengar (1991) found that episodic and thematic frames influence, in different ways, attributions of responsibility for public problems. When certain news items centered on individuals (episodic frames), subjects held individuals responsible; when news items emphasized the widespread nature of a problem (thematic frames), subjects attributed responsibility to society. Iyengar also explored how more overt frames influence attributions of responsibility. These frames point to either "causal responsibility," which focuses on the origin of a problem, or "treatment responsibility," which focuses on who has the power to alleviate the problem (8). For certain issues, respondents were critical of national leaders when news emphasized their responsibility for certain problems and controversies (i.e., causal responsibility) but less so when news focused on leaders' steps to address these matters (i.e., treatment responsibility).

Cappella and Jamieson (1996, 1997) reported that news stories that focus on strategy activate cynicism. Miller, Goldenberg, and Erbring (1979) found that readers of newspapers containing criticism—stories in which news subjects criticize each other (i.e., conflict) and are also criticized by journalists—are more distrustful of government than those reading less critical papers. Cappella and Jamieson's (1996, 1997) findings also suggest that conflict in news stories *may* activate cynicism. These findings suggest that strategy coverage and conflict may affect news consumers' perceptions of politics and government. However, Zhao and Bleske (1998) and Meyer and Potter (1998) found positive associations between attention to election polls—an element of strategy coverage—and issue knowledge. Yet, the inclusion of election polls in news stories does not equal the strategic interpretations journalists provide in covering campaigns. In addition, unlike Cappella and Jamieson, these studies do not explore how news stories may activate cynicism.

The frames Gamson and his colleagues describe also appear to have effects. Gamson (1992) found that certain frames, or arguments, influence how people talk about the topics of these arguments (e.g., affirmative action). Kinder and Sanders (1990, 1996) also studied the effects of Gamson et al.'s affirmative action frames. The researchers employed two anti-affirmative action frames in gauging public opinion: the reverse discrimination frame and the "unfair advantage frame," in which affirmative action programs are portrayed as giving blacks benefits they have not earned. They found that while the reverse discrimination frame did not influence other related opinions, the unfair advantage frame correlated with the subjects' "partisanship, their ideological identity, their intolerance for change and diversity in society, their views on social issues, and the threats they saw to the United States around the world" (1990, 86).

Kinder and Sanders concluded that inducing citizens to think about affirmative action in different ways—via different frames—affects their understanding of the issue and opinions on related matters (90). Gross (1999) also concluded that frames can influence opinions of social policy.

Allen et al. (1994) suggested that news frames may stifle dissenting opinion in ways similar to Noelle-Neumann's (1984) "spiral of silence." According to this theory, by portraying one view as dominant, the news media discourage the expression of dissenting voices. In their analysis of Gulf War coverage and public support for the war, the researchers concluded that "(c)ontinual, positively framed repetition of...support (for the war) and suppression or negative framing of dissent is likely to have activated a spiral of silence, resulting in prolonged (public) consensus" (283). McLeod and Detenber (1999) reached similar conclusions in studying framing effects of television news coverage of social protest.

Neuman et al. (1992), Iorio and Huxman (1996), and Druckman (1999) concluded that frames' effects were more limited. Neuman et al. (1992) contended that news consumers do not "slavishly follow the framing of issues presented in the mass media. Rather, people frame issues in a more visceral and moralistic...style" (77). Iorio and Huxman (1996) reported that subjects re-framed topics in the news in three ways. First, they interpreted a series of social problems—such as crime and drug abuse—by linking them together, suggesting that discrete issues were connected. Second, respondents collapsed, or simplified, issues in order to better understand them. For instance, one subject simplified the complexities of a changing world economy by discussing it in terms of entrepreneurship (107). Third, subjects colorized news topics by viewing technical or political phenomena in personal, human terms. For example, one subject discounted the likelihood of a nuclear war between the Soviet Union and the United

States because "(n)o matter how much you disagree with the Russians, they still have brains" (108). Druckman (1999) found that the credibility of the source and the news organization mitigates framing effects[12]: the less credible the source or news organization, the less likely framing effects will occur among news consumers.

Previous research, then, has demonstrated that frames probably have some effects on news consumers, but that the extent of these effects varies. News frames may influence public opinion or may be reshaped to fit one's understanding of national and world events. While my study will not include framing effects, research in this area reveals that which news frames are ultimately produced may influence the perspectives of news consumers.

Similar research points to other ways news content may influence public opinion. Schwarz and Bless (1992) found that asking subjects to consider the link between a popular German politician and his party (the Christian Democrats) produced more favorable opinions of Christian Democrats as a whole. When subjects were asked how this politician was different from his party, subsequent evaluations of the Christian Democrats dropped. In addition, the researchers found that focusing on a particular German political scandal decreased subjects' evaluations of German politicians in general but increased evaluations of specific German politicians. This research did not explicitly test news frames, but suggested that news content may influence opinion.

Sears and Citrin (1982) reached similar conclusions. In studying discourse in favor of and opposed to California's 1978 Proposition 13, they concluded that thinking about government services in concrete terms increases public support for these services. For instance, associating government services with an individual's Social Security benefits or the local public high school English teacher improves public support for government. However, discussing government services in abstract terms such as "big government" or "small government" decreases support.

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[12] Druckman defines framing as the process by which subjects—i.e., news consumers—alter their criteria for judgment.

Studies have repeatedly shown that frames do have an impact on public perceptions and opinions. What is less clear is the nature of the process producing these effects: How do news frames appear and function in news? Are they arguments advanced by sources or themes established by reporters—or something else? This study does not seek to find new categories of frames. Rather, it helps clarify our understanding of them by examining how they operate in relation to political discourse. By grasping how frames work in concert with political speech, we can move closer to grasping their impact in news.

This chapter has outlined the first component of literature relevant to this study. But research on framing often does not consider how sources' words are processed. The next area, indexing, does so and is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH ON INDEXING

The previous chapter outlined research on framing. While there is no consensus on what constitutes news frames or how they function in news, it is clear that reporters—based on their own perspectives or on influence from sources—can offer contrasting portraits of reality.

In an effort to understand how frames function in news, this study considers how reporters process political discourse. Research on source indexing is particularly relevant to this portion of my study. Findings in this area consider the extent to which news organizations adopt the views and aims of sources. By merging scholarship on indexing with that on frames, my study works toward a conception of the association between journalistic interpretations and political discourse in news content.

Whether covering a presidential speech or reporting a congressional vote or describing a visit by a foreign leader, news organizations focus on the words and deeds of the politically powerful, who are often public officials (Bennett, 1983; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Hallin, 1986; Sigal, 1973, 1986). However, what these findings cannot answer is how elites—and other news sources—are treated in news coverage (Whitney et al., 1989, 172). Are their views simply repeated by journalists or are they treated more critically?

Additional research has analyzed how sources and their opinions are portrayed in news, leading to a variety of conclusions. These works have concluded that news organizations replicate the range of elites' views in their coverage, a process labeled "source indexing." Bennett (1990) described source indexing as a practice by which "(m)ass media professionals…'index' the range of voices and viewpoints in both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about given topic" (106).

In a study of the *New York Times'* coverage of United States' policy on Nicaragua, Bennett (1990) concluded that the paper's content reflected the opinions of American elected officials. When the ratio of congressional criticism of this policy increased, so did criticism in the *Times*' opinion and editorial pages (119); when congressional criticism declined, so did the paper's. Paletz and Entman (1981), Page (1996), and Solomon (1992) produced similar results. Gitlin (1980) found this also applied to news frames. He concluded that in its coverage of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the *New York Times*' news frames changed over time in the paper's news pages. SDS went from being a serious movement to a marginal and "ineffectual" group (71-72). He added that these frame changes occurred not because SDS changed, but because the *Times* shifted news frames "toward alignment with government policy" (77).

Consistent with Bennett's conclusion, Gamson and Modigliani (1987) reported that sources may influence frames. The authors found that sponsor activities—i.e., actions taken by sources to promote their organizations in the news media—led to the rise of "no preferential treatment" and "reverse discrimination" packages in news coverage of affirmative action (166). Similarly, research by Goldenberg and Traugott (1984) revealed that local congressional coverage reflects the campaign issues raised by the candidates (130-131).

Others have reached different—though not necessarily conflicting—conclusions. Pritchard and Berkowitz (1991) found that letters to the editor influenced front-page news and editorial topics for some urban newspapers. Behr and Iyengar (1985) concluded that changes in national economic trends influence network news coverage of energy and economic issues. Changes in the energy consumer price index and the unemployment rate, and large increases in the consumer price index all produced greater news coverage of these matters. While these studies go beyond Bennett's conception of source indexing, they, like Bennett's work, point to entities outside of news organizations that guide news content.

While Bennett (1996) and Bennett and Klockner (1996) acknowledged the limits of source indexing's explanatory power, they contended it does account for a "large range of political content cues in news" (Bennett and Klockner, 1996, 95). These findings are consistent with Donohue, Tichenor, and Olien's (1995) conception of the news media as a "guard dog." Under this model, the press reports conflict among a community's existing power structures and between the community and external entities.

American journalists, particularly those based in Washington, may be more likely to defer to public officials in foreign affairs coverage than in domestic news (Dorman and Farhang, 1987; Dorman and Livingston, 1994; Gans, 1979; Graber, 1989; Hallin, 1987; Reese and Buckalew, 1995; but see Seaver, 1998:79-83).[13] Bennett (1994) concurred when he wrote that the "dominance of official...sources is even more pronounced in national security stories than for the news as a whole" (23). Others have found that American press coverage is more favorable to its government's actions abroad than to similar ones taken by other countries (Entman, 1991; Liebes, 1992). In fact, Sobel (1998) concluded that indexing may even mask the range of domestic public opinion on foreign policy issues. He cited public support for humanitarian and multilateral intervention in Bosnia, but found these sentiments missing from news coverage on this issue because stories were indexed to reflect political elites' opposition to U.S. intervention. Consequently, it is not surprising that coverage of foreign affairs reflects American elite opinion. However, this dynamic may not apply to domestic news.

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[13] However, as Bennett (1994) wrote, news organizations may seek out the perspectives of grass-roots and interest groups when conflict over foreign affairs among elites is sustained. Hallin (1986) found evidence for this in press coverage of the latter stages of the Vietnam War.

While the exact nature of source indexing is unclear, its findings are significant because research has found that indexing can influence public opinion. Zaller (1994) reported that education and attention to the Gulf War and the congressional budget negotiations—the latter two considered measures of news exposure—were positively related to elite opinion on these matters. He labeled the sum of the three variables "political awareness." When elites agreed on these issues, so did respondents with high levels of political awareness, regardless of party affiliation. However, when Democratic and Republican elites disagreed, so did Democratic and Republican respondents with high levels of political awareness.

Others, however, have challenged components of source indexing. Patterson and Davis (1985) and Lichter and Noyes (1995) concluded that journalists—rather than candidates—determined the news agenda in presidential campaigns. While candidates emphasized certain subjects in their speeches, news stories focused on different topics.

Other studies have produced results not accounted for by source indexing, including some concerning foreign policy coverage. Althaus et al. (1996) found that the *New York Times* covered the views of members of Congress opposed to or in favor of certain U.S. actions toward Libya. However, it excluded alternative actions voiced by other members of Congress. They wrote that the exclusion of alternative views—even from elite sources—was a function of the journalistic norm of objectivity, in which "both" sides of an issue, rather than multiple sides, are reported: "Media-constructed conflicts need to be two-sided, not multi-faceted, so the *Times* simplified the richer debate that occurred too briefly and too late in the Congress (418)."

Other research has also noted the limits of source indexing. In general, it has found that journalistic interpretations, which include framing, diminish the influence of political elites to determine news content. Several have noted that campaign news has become increasingly interpretive, with reporters translating, rather than transcribing, the actions of candidates and public officials (Jamieson, 1992; Patterson, 1993; Robinson and Sheehan, 1983).

In sum, while source indexing theorists contend news organizations generally replicate the range of public officials' views, research on framing suggests a broader (i.e., interpretive) role for journalists. However, these strands of research do not necessarily conflict. Journalists may employ strategy or issue frames while still reporting "official messages" (Bennett, 1983). In fact, Bennett (1996) noted journalists' interpretive role in this capacity but contended that it did not alter source-indexing theory.

While frames may not influence the range of opinions reported in news, they may affect the nature of elites' arguments reported by journalists. Specifically, news organizations may report where political elites stand on the issues of the day—e.g., Bosnia, abortion, the missile defense system—but not dutifully convey their arguments for or against specific legislation and policies. In urging the development of a missile defense system, members of Congress may attack their opponents' positions, simply lay out advantages of their own view, or do both. But how much of this discourse is reported that night on the evening news or the next day in the newspapers? Is it solely the attacks or is it a portion of a senator's discourse that is more representative of an entire speech? How the journalist covering the story framed it? These are questions source indexing theory has not yet addressed and which this study explores. Since candidates generally do not publicly discuss strategy and focus primarily on issues (Lichter and Noyes, 1995), it is likely reporters select certain types of candidate discourse to fit the frames they adopt rather than choosing frames based on what the candidates say.

Althaus et al.'s (1996) findings offered insight on the relationship between candidate discourse and how it is reported. Their results suggested that journalists do not index elite opinion; rather, they simplify the nature of elite debate by reporting the views of those for or against specific policies and excluding perspectives that diverge from this paradigm. They conclude that this practice may be product of news norms. Other studies offer support for this interpretation.

These studies have considered how news norms influence the reporting of discourse. News norms consistent with Althaus et al.'s (1996) results include reporting "both sides" of an issue (Tuchman, 1972) and focusing on conflict between office holders (Graber, 1989; Kerbel, 1997; Lichter and Amundson, 1994; Neuman, Just, and Crigler, 1992; Ornstein, 1987; Rozell, 1994). According to the former practice, by presenting two sides of an issue, journalists can claim objectivity—that they are free of bias because they are reporting competing versions of the truth. However, public policy and campaign issues often have more than two sides. For example, candidates may not simply be "pro-choice," favoring abortion rights in all circumstances, or "pro-life," opposing abortion in all contexts. Some candidates may favor abortion rights but oppose federal funding and favor parental consent. Others may be generally opposed to abortion but may allow it when the mother's life or health is in danger. The debate over intact dilation and evacuation—or "partial birth" abortion—has revealed other splits among pro-choice lawmakers. This example highlights some of the complexities of public policy that the journalistic norm of reporting only two sides may inhibit.

Bennett (1996) considered the relationship between news norms and source indexing, but offered a different explanation for their impact. He contended that reliance on officials is "rooted" in news norms—specifically, objectivity and balance (376). News norms *explain* both the reliance on public officials and the reporting of their disagreements. An alternative possibility is this: news norms actually *inhibit* the reporting of public debate, even among official sources. If journalists only report the discourse of those who are either for or against a given proposal, they are ignoring additional views that may enrich public understanding of the issue at hand. Chapter Five considers the impact of these norms on the reporting of candidate discourse.

These questions also address the impact both reporters and sources have on news content. Other studies have analyzed this process. Cook (1998) wrote that news is a "co-production" between public officials and journalists (109). But the leading roles seem to continually change. While Bennett and others concluded news coverage reflects the range of political elites' views, Hallin and Mancini (1984, 846) found that American journalism oscillates from being a critic of to an instrument for political authority. Page and Tannenbaum (1996) found that the public may engender criticism of government. They reported that Zoe Baird's confirmation hearings for U.S. Attorney General revealed little new information. Even the fact that Baird and her husband failed to pay Social Security taxes for their nanny had already circulated in news reports. However, news coverage of Zoe Baird's nomination as attorney general changed after televised congressional hearings. The authors wrote that the televised hearings generated public dissatisfaction with Baird's nomination, which was voiced on talk radio stations across the country, leading to changes in news coverage.

Source indexing adds another piece to the analytical puzzle of how political discourse is transformed in news. Understanding how news frames function helps clarify how journalistic interpretations influence news content. Source indexing sheds light on how the press reports sources' arguments. By exploring how these strands of research merge to influence news content, my study works toward a conception of how the news media process political discourse.

A third area of research complements framing and source indexing: reporter-source relations. As a way of explaining news content, these studies consider how journalists and public officials interact. The next chapter explores these findings and addresses their relevance to the processing of political discourse.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH ON REPORTER-SOURCE RELATIONS

The previous chapter considered how journalists report source discourse, with a particular focus on source indexing. Source indexing contends that news organizations replicate the range of public officials' views when reporting events and trends. Research on source-reporter relations is closely linked to these studies because it analyzes how journalists interact with newsmakers in the production of news content. A review of the literature in this area points to factors that influence news content, it does not explain the relationship between source discourse and journalistic interpretation. However, interweaving research in this area with that on framing and indexing points to an area of inquiry that my study explores. This undertaking works toward a conception of how journalists process political discourse.

Many studies have concluded that journalists rely primarily on official sources in producing news stories (Berkowitz, 1987; Bennett, 1990; Bennett, 1997; Blumler and Gurevitch, 1981; Cook, 1986; Gans, 1979; Hansen, Ward, Conners, and Neuzil, 1994; Sigal, 1973, 1986; Soloski, 1989; Tuchman, 1978). Certain interest groups are quoted much less frequently (Danielian and Page, 1994; Gitlin, 1980). However, the reliance on official sources does not necessarily result in homogeneous news content or frames.

Reese and Buckalew (1995) studied how source-reporter relations and news practices may influence the construction of news frames. They concluded that a Texas television station generally adopted news frames in support of the Gulf War. They found that journalists generally relied on official (e.g., government, military, police) sources, a practice that resulted in frames consistent with these sources' perspectives—either pro-war frames or anti-dissenter frames. In studying the relationship between the press and elite sources, others have reached similar conclusions (Allen et al., 1994; Entman, 1991; Gilligan, 1998a, 1998b; Reese, Grant, and Danielian, 1994). However, in his study of news coverage on TWA flight 800 crash, Durham (1998) concluded that in news stories in which reporters and sources cannot agree on the "dominant frame," the views of public officials do not override alternative perspectives.

Others have explored these interactions in greater detail, though not in relation to framing. Some media scholars write that source-journalist exchanges are based on similar needs, thereby producing mutually beneficial results—i.e., favorable stories for sources and valuable information for reporters (Gans, 1979; Molotch and Lester, 1974). Other research, however, finds that these relationships may result in content that is unfavorable to official sources.

Cook (1990) wrote that local coverage of members of Congress is more favorable than national coverage because local media are more dependent than national media on individual members as sources (i.e., their city's or region's member of Congress or senator). Kaniss (1993) reached similar conclusions. She (1991) added that because local news quotes fewer government officials, the select number who are quoted appear often and can eventually appear larger than life (166-167). On the other hand, Cook (1990) found national reporters rely on a wider array of legislators and therefore can afford to be more critical of individual sources.

These findings are evidence that different source-reporter relations may produce different types of news content. Even if journalists as a whole tend to rely on official sources, the nature of these interactions varies, resulting in content differences. Some reporters may be primarily concerned with highlighting the accomplishments of public officials. Others may seek to reveal how public officials disagree rather than what they accomplish. This may downplay, or exclude altogether, the achievements of any single source.

Cook (1994) concluded that in news coverage of the Gulf War, the news beat structure produced different types of stories, depending on which branch of government was generating information for reporters. Eventually, the views of the Bush Administration came to dominate public debate on the crisis, minimizing domestic criticism and the views of international sources.

Lichter and Amundson (1994) found that since 1972 elected congressional representatives and their staffs have made up a decreasing proportion of network news sources. Displacing their voices are those of congressional critics, primarily White House officials. These changes may even influence investigative reporting. Protess et al. (1991) studied how news organizations constructed and reported investigative stories. The researchers' six case studies included five local news organizations and one national news organization (CBS's "60 Minutes"). They found that public officials and journalists "actively collaborated to set policy-making agendas prior to the public dissemination of the investigative findings" (246). This allowed public officials to display their "problem-solving activities" (253). This type of "coalition journalism" occurred even in instances in which the public officials were responsible for the original conditions that led to the investigative inquiry (245-46). However, Durham (1998A) reached a quite different conclusion, arguing that by presenting “all perspectives” in news stories, journalists prevent “progressive or emancipatory politics from developing out of journalism” (125-127).

The purpose of studying source-reporter relations is to understand how they affect news content. I have outlined research that suggests that these relations vary. These different relations, it appears, influence news coverage. Some reporters seek to highlight sources’ achievements and perspectives while others downplay these elements and choose to emphasize conflict between sources.

Another way of examining reporter-source relations is by looking at how news organizations as a whole function. Fishman (1980) concluded that intra-organizational factors, such as routines, deadlines, and story quotas, influence media content. The different aims and practices of news organizations influence their relations with sources and, consequently, the construction of news frames and the processing of source discourse.

The traditional ways sources court news access include press releases and other forms of “information subsidies” (Gandy, 1982) provided to news organizations. Research by McManus (1990) suggests that information subsidies play a significant role in the newsgathering process for local news. In a study of three television stations—one in the top 10 markets, one in markets 11 through 50, and one in markets 51 through 100—McManus found that reporters at all three network-affiliated stations generally relied on passive, or “minimally active,” news discovery methods. These included finding out about news events or getting information from press releases, other news organizations, the wire services, and video feeds from the networks (675). Ostroff and Sandell (1984) reached similar conclusions in their study of Ohio television stations' election coverage.

These findings suggest that local news organizations: 1) passively gather news (i.e., rely on sources and other news organizations to provide them with news); and 2) prefer information subsidies that have local significance. Sources, then, appear to drive local news coverage. Left unstudied is how this dynamic translates into news frames and how it influences the processing of source discourse.

Research on national news organizations has found that they also rely on passive newsgathering methods, in which sources drive coverage (Gans, 1979; Hertsgaard, 1988; Sigal, 1973, 1986). However, Berkowitz and Adams (1990) recounted research that suggests local news organizations are more reliant on information subsidies than are national ones. This reliance may influence the nature of local coverage. In her interviews with reporters, Kaniss (1991) found that local sources who regularly provide reporters with information may receive more favorable coverage than sources who are less forthcoming (175-178). Similarly, Donohue, Olien, and Tichenor (1985) reported that newspapers in pluralistic communities are more likely to highlight conflict than are those in homogeneous communities.

By contrast, Hindman (1998) concluded that small community newspapers still highlight conflict between local groups and individuals, suggesting that local news does not necessarily report less criticism than does national news. Demers (1998) concluded that the type of community—heterogeneous or homogeneous—does not affect the level of press criticism sources believe they or their institutions receive. Rather, it is a news organization's complexity that determines perceived criticism of sources: structurally complex news organizations are perceived to be more critical of sources than are simple news organizations. Complex news organizations are owned by larger corporations (e.g., Gannett), are public corporations, or are publicly owned and have a clear hierarchy of authority and many rules and regulations; structurally simple organizations are those owned or managed by the same individual or family. They also do not have the clear hierarchy of authority or the many rules and regulations of complex organizations.

Research is this area examines how the relationship between reporters and sources and between news organizations and their communities influences news content. These studies are primarily concerned with criticism of sources or the level of community conflict evident in news. However, much like scholarship on framing and indexing, this research does not consider how journalists and news organizations process source discourse and how it is juxtaposed with other elements of news content, such as frames. My research answers these questions.

Another area of study closely related to reporter-source relations is agenda setting and agenda building. While this research considers how *topics* become part of news agenda—a component my study is not concerned with—it also examines how journalists and sources—and the public—interact to influence news.

Agenda Setting and Agenda Building

Research on agenda setting and agenda building sheds light on how both sources and reporters influence the construction of news frames. These areas of research outline principles of news construction that are relevant to the processing of source discourse.

According to Shaw and McCombs' (1974) classic study, the media's agenda is more influential on the public's agenda than are the political candidates' agendas. Their analysis compared the impact of news with the effects of candidate advertising. It did not analyze who influenced the media's agenda, a process generally labeled "agenda building." Subsequent research has addressed this question.

Agenda-building research has not decisively answered the question of who sets the media's agenda: sources, reporters, or the public. Lang and Lang (1983) found that all three forces interact to make agenda building a "circular" process:

> Media exposure and public attention generate responses at the elite level that produce still more news in a cycle of mutual reinforcement that continues until politicians and public tire of an issue or another issue moves into the center of the political stage (58).

Reese (1990) added that the media agenda's antecedents included a range of "cultural, institutional, and organizational forces" (311). These antecedents, in turn, influence the media's agenda, which Rogers and Dearing (1988) describe "as a list of issues and events that are viewed at a point in time ranked in hierarchy of importance" (565).

Wanta and his colleagues have also concluded that all of these forces determine the press's agenda, but at different times. Wanta (1992) found that presidents influenced CBS News's agenda but not that of the *New York Times*. In their study of how the president's state of the union message influenced the media agenda, Wanta et al. (1989) concluded that the president influenced this agenda in some years but not in others. Johnson and Wanta (1996) found that the public and the news media influenced President Nixon's "War on Drugs" rather than the other way around, as was previously thought. Wanta and Foote (1994) examined the circumstances under which a president might set the media's agenda. In their study of President Bush, they concluded that he influenced the media's agenda for issues on which he is an important source (e.g., international crises) and on which he has a "pet interest" (e.g., flag burning). However, his influence was more limited in areas where reporters could turn to other sources of information. These include economic issues.

However, Zilber and Niven (2000) reported that African-American members of Congress have difficulty advancing their agendas through the news media. This is because reporters portray these officials as narrowly focused on racial matters, not on their broader legislative priorities.

By contrast, others have written that sources are more likely to determine the news agenda. Cassara (1998) concluded that the Carter Administration's human rights policies caused news to devote more attention and resources to Latin American nations, including greater coverage of human rights issues. Weaver and Elliott (1985) found that local newspaper coverage of the city council reflected the council's agenda on economic issues such as finances and building construction (91-92). There was a strong correlation between committee minutes on these topics and the amount of subsequent news coverage. However, a much smaller correlation existed for other topics, such as arts and entertainment, election campaigns and politics, and utilities. Sellers (2000) concluded that coordinated message strategies by members of Congress on specific legislative issues can draw news media attention to that issue.

Research outlined in this chapter has found that reporter-source relations and agenda setting may explain the reporting of topics and emergence of news frames. However, it has not explored associations between reporter-source relations and the processing of source discourse. How do these relationships influence the types of arguments journalists report in their stories? Bennett and others contend that reporters "index' elites' positions on issues of the day. But do journalists report elites' arguments—i.e., the rationale for these positions—in the same manner? Others have concluded that the reporter-source relationship is the nexus that explains the emergence of certain news frames. Does this dynamic also explain the reporting of sources' arguments?

My study examines how relations between reporters and sources are associated with the reporting of political discourse, thereby broadening our understanding of this body of research as an explanatory variable of news content. By combining this area of research with analyses of framing and source indexing, this study can help develop a better understanding of the factors associated with the processing of source discourse.

To this point, I have explored three areas of scholarship: framing, source indexing, and reporter-source relations. My study will build on these studies in an attempt to develop an understanding of how the press processes political discourse. The following chapters—Chapters Five through Seven—analyze different forms of political discourse: speeches, debates, and the words and visuals of campaign advertisements. These chapters also explore how journalists process these forms of communication in constructing news stories. In order to develop a deeper understanding of this process, Chapter Eight includes interviews with journalists, who were asked in surveys to account for the results of the content analysis. In this examination of the construction of news content, these chapters consider existing literature on framing, source indexing, and reporter-source relations as explanatory variables. The concluding chapter, Chapter Nine, summarizes these results and describes how the processes political discourse. In doing so, this explanation links the findings to existing communication theories.

The next chapter begins this study with an analysis of how network television reporters process candidate discourse in covering presidential campaigns.

CHAPTER FIVE

NEWS NORMS AND ELITE ARGUMENT

How Network News Reports Candidate Discourse

Analyses of news coverage have shown that political elites and their views dominate news pages and the airwaves. Whether covering a presidential speech or reporting a congressional vote or describing a visit by a foreign leader, news organizations focus on the words and deeds of the politically powerful, who are often public officials (Bennett, 1983; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Hallin, 1986; Sigal, 1973, 1986). However, what these findings cannot answer is how elites—and other news sources—are treated in news coverage (Whitney et al., 1989, 172). Are their views simply repeated by journalists or are they treated more critically by reporters and other sources? Additional research has analyzed how sources and their opinions are portrayed in news, leading to a variety of conclusions.

Reporters index views of sources

Several studies have analyzed how elites' perspectives are reported in news. These works have concluded that news organizations replicate the range of elites' views in their coverage, a process labeled "source indexing." Bennett (1990) described source indexing as a practice by which "(m)ass media professionals…'index' the range of voices and viewpoints in both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about given topic" (106). Consequently, when elites agree on domestic issues, foreign policy, and other matters, the nation's news pages and airwaves do not present views that diverge from this consensus. However, when they disagree, news content captures the nature of the discord. In addition, this theory contends that sources—rather than reporters—drive news content. When the range of elite debate expands, so do the positions expressed in news coverage; when it contracts, so do those in news content.

In a study of the *New York Times'* coverage of United States' policy on Nicaragua, Bennett (1990) concluded that the paper's content reflected the opinions of American elected officials. When the ratio of congressional criticism of this policy increased, so did criticism in the *Times*' opinion and editorial pages (119); when it declined, so did the paper's. Paletz and Entman (1981), Page (1996), and Solomon (1992) produced similar results. While Bennett (1996) and Bennett and Klockner (1996) noted the limits of source indexing's explanatory power, they contended it does account for a "large range of political content cues in news" (Bennett and Klockner, 1996, 95).

The practice of source indexing has significant consequences. By focusing only on elite opinion, news coverage ignores alternative views that may be relevant to domestic and foreign policy. For example, in 1990 and 1991 Congress and the president debated how the United States should respond to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Should America invade Iraq, attempt to topple Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, or continue to rely on economic sanctions? These views were expressed by congressional and administration officials. But were non-elites advocating additional proposals that could have enriched the debate? Should the United States have done nothing or should it have solely defended

Saudi Arabia? If these opinions were not expressed by political elites, source-indexing theory predicts, they would not have appeared in news coverage, regardless of their merit.

Source indexing also appears to influence public opinion. Zaller (1994) reported that education and attention to the Gulf War and the congressional budget negotiations—the latter two considered to be measures of news exposure—were positively related to elite opinion on these matters. He labeled the sum of the three variables "political awareness". When elites agreed on these issues, so did respondents with high levels of political awareness, regardless of party affiliation. However, when Democratic and Republican elites disagreed, so did Democratic and Republican respondents with high levels of political awareness.

Sobel (1998) concluded that indexing may also mask the range of public opinion on specific issues. He cited public support for humanitarian and multilateral intervention in Bosnia, but found these sentiments missing from news coverage on this issue because stories were indexed to reflect political elites' opposition to U.S. intervention.

This perspective is similar to Donohue, Tichenor, and Olien's (1995) conception of the news media as a "guard dog." Under this model, the press reports conflict among a community's existing power structures and between the community and external entities. But, news content does not stray from the views articulated by existing power structures. Therefore, when a community's power structures agree, conflict is not reported by its news organizations.

However, these studies may have limited applications. Research on source indexing generally analyzed the American press' coverage of foreign affairs. American journalists, particularly those based in Washington, may be more likely to defer to its public officials in foreign affairs coverage than in domestic news (Dorman and Farhang, 1987; Dorman and Livingston, 1994; Gans, 1979; Graber, 1989; Hallin, 1987; Reese and Buckalew, 1995; but see Seaver, 1998:79-83).[14] Bennett (1994) concurred when he wrote that the "dominance of official...sources is even more pronounced in national security stories than for the news as a whole" (23). Others have found that American press coverage is more favorable to its government's actions abroad than to similar ones taken by other countries (Entman, 1991; Liebes, 1992). Consequently, it is not surprising that coverage of foreign affairs reflects American elite opinion. However, this dynamic may not apply to domestic news.

Donohue et al.'s (1995) guard-dog model may also have limited usage. They argued that this model applied to local, homogeneous communities, not to the complex national political stage. In general, then, the source-indexing and guard-dog models may not be generalizable to national domestic news, including the coverage of political campaigns. Other studies have analyzed the relationship between sources and news content in different environments.

Reporters determine topics covered and views reported

Patterson and Davis (1985) and Lichter and Noyes (1995) reported findings on presidential campaign coverage that depart from source-indexing theory. Both studies concluded that journalists—rather than candidates—determined the news agenda. While candidates emphasized certain subjects in their speeches, news stories focused on different topics. Similarly, Coglianese and Howard (1998) found that in covering the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), newspapers focused on regulatory actions policies that affect everyday life, shifts in policy, and policy failures, generally disregarding other agency activity.

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[14] However, as Bennett (1994) wrote, news organizations may seek out the perspectives of grass-roots and interest groups when conflict over foreign affairs among elites is sustained. Hallin (1986) found evidence for this in press coverage of the latter stages of the Vietnam War.

Other studies have produced results for which source indexing does not account, including some in foreign policy coverage. Althaus et al. (1996) found that the *New York Times* covered the views of members of Congress opposed to or in favor of certain U.S. actions toward Libya. However, it excluded alternative actions voiced by other members of Congress. They wrote that the exclusion of alternative views—even from elite sources—was a function of the journalistic norm of objectivity, in which "both" sides of an issue are reported rather than multiple sides: "Media-constructed conflicts need to be two-sided, not multi-faceted, so the Times simplified the richer debate that occurred too briefly and too late in the Congress (418)."

This practice was evident in the debate over the agreement United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Anna negotiated with Iraq in early 1998. On March 1, 1998, "Meet the Press" host Tim Russert asked Arizona Senator John McCain if it was "a good deal" or "appeasement." By structuring the question in these terms, Russert implied that the complex agreement was either good or bad for the United States—not something in between. I shall return to this point later.

There are other facets of news and political discourse that source indexing may not explain, either. Source indexing refers to news' recounting of positions on public policy issues: Should the United States launch air strikes against Iraq or should it continue to rely on economic sanctions? Should women have the right to late-term abortions or should this procedure be banned? Should the attorney general appoint an independent counsel to investigate the vice president or is such a step unnecessary? While these elements are certainly a part of news content, they do not fully capture the nature of news structures or the discourse of public officials.

First, source indexing does not consider how public officials' and candidates' arguments are structured. Do members of Congress attack each other or do they advocate the passage of favored legislation? Also, do they offer evidence or reasoning for these claims? These aspects of public discourse may be quite distinct from the types of opinions offered on public policy. For example, consider the early 1998 debate over possible U.S. actions toward Iraq. Source indexing would account for the range of political elites' views articulated in news coverage. These include the following: the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, air strikes to reduce Saddam's chemical or biological weapons' capability, and continued negotiation in an effort to produce a diplomatic solution (Watson, 1998).

However, this analysis does not consider how these positions are structured as arguments. In encouraging the overthrow of Saddam, are congressional Republicans claiming President Clinton would be shirking his responsibilities as leader of the free world if he did not go along with their plan or are they carefully spelling out the advantages of such an action? In pressing for continued negotiations, is the United Nations secretary-general calling proponents of immediate use of force "war mongers" or is he contending diplomacy is simply the best among all possible options? In short, tracing the positions taken by political elites may not fully capture the nature of their discourse. Source indexing may account for the range of views that appear in news, but it does not consider how these views are presented or structured.

Elite discourse may contain several components, such as attacking opponents while also advocating specific actions. What is less clear is how much of this is reported. What is certain is journalists do not print or broadcast elite discourse in its entirety—outside of printing speech or debate transcripts. Rather, they shorten speeches and interviews into a series of sound bites, thereby altering their nature. Consequently, elite sources are not solely—or even largely—responsible for the types of arguments that appear in news. Instead, by selectively recounting the content of elites' public discourse, journalists may play a significant role in representing debate on public policy matters.

This study examines this process. It compares the contents of presidential candidates' arguments in speeches, debates, and advertisements with how they appear in broadcast news coverage. In other words, it studies news coverage to determine if source indexing accounts for how candidates' arguments are reported. Does news report candidate arguments in ways that reflect their discourse in speeches, debates, and advertisements? Or, does it, for instance, disproportionately report candidate attacks? These results may reveal a greater role for journalists in the construction of news than source indexing would posit.

Journalists interpret actions of political elites

Other research has concluded journalists have a significant role in reporting the actions of political elites. Several have noted that campaign news has become increasingly interpretive, in which reporters translate, rather than transcribe, the actions of candidates and public officials (Jamieson, 1992; Patterson, 1993; Robinson and Sheehan, 1983). Moreover, Hallin (1992) found that the length of candidate sound bites has diminished in campaign coverage on the television networks' evening news shows, thereby giving news subjects a smaller voice. Taken as whole, as journalism has become more interpretive, the amount of candidate discourse in news has decreased.

Much of the research on journalistic interpretation has studied framing. There is no consensus as to what constitutes framing in news. However, my synopsis of the literature indicates that when scholars discuss "framing," they mean the context, assumptions, and characteristics that shape our understanding of everyday events through written and spoken discourse. Frames are also defined by what they exclude: those that have characteristics A and B may not have characteristics C and D. By heightening some aspects of reality and excluding others, framing can produce different depictions of the same event, person, or trend (Dorman and Fahrang, 1987; Entman, 1993; Gamson and Modigliani, 1987; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Gamson and Lasch, 1983; Gitlin, 1980; Pan and Kosicki, 1993). Consequently, Entman (1993) wrote, frames can "define problems," "make moral judgments," "diagnose cause," and "suggest remedies" (52).

In politics, reporters frequently employ strategy or issue frames (Jamieson, 1992; Patterson, 1993). Strategy frames suggest that politics is a competition—that it is about winning and losing. Stories adopting a strategy frame portray candidates and elected officials as competitors seeking strategic advantage rather than as legislators addressing public policy matters. In contrast, issue frames focus on matters related to governance—e.g., the deficit, NAFTA, and foreign policy—independent of their strategic implications. Issue frames, then, show politics as a basket of public policy problems and solutions, rather than as a contest between opposing forces.

In sum, while source indexing theorists contend news organizations generally replicate the range of public officials' views, research on framing suggests a broader (i.e., interpretive) role for journalists. However, these strands of research do not necessarily conflict. Journalists may employ strategy or issue frames while still reporting "official messages" (Bennett, 1983). In fact, Bennett (1996) noted journalists' interpretive role in this capacity but contended that it did not alter source-indexing theory.

Yet, while frames may not influence the range of opinions reported in news, they may affect the nature of elites' arguments reported by journalists. My previous analysis found that news frames were associated with the type of presidential candidate discourse reported in network news in 1980, 1988, and 1992 (Devitt, 1997). Specifically, in stories with issue frames candidates were more likely to be quoted promoting their own agendas or programs. In stories that focused on strategy, candidates were more likely to be quoted attacking their opponents. Since candidates generally do not publicly discuss strategy and primarily focus on issues (Lichter and Noyes, 1995), it is likely reporters selected certain types of candidate discourse to fit the frames they adopted rather than choosing frames based on what the candidates said.

Other studies have concluded that journalists rather than candidates influence the type of discourse that is reported. An analysis at the Annenberg School for Communication found that in 1960, 1980, 1988, and 1992 the newspapers reported a higher proportion of attack than was present in presidential candidates' speeches and debates (The Annenberg Public Policy Center, 1996). By overreporting attack, news organizations are misrepresenting the true nature of candidate discourse.

This study takes a related approach. It looks at the association between candidates' arguments and how they are reported in news. However, it builds on the Annenberg study by examining separately the candidates' arguments in each mode of candidate communication (i.e., speeches, debates, and advertisements). It then compares these arguments with those reported by network news (see Method below). By separating the different modes of communication, one can examine the relationship between specific forms of candidate discourse and what journalists report. Is reported discourse reflective of advertising, debate, or speeches—or none of these?

Althaus et al.'s (1996) findings offered insight into the relationship between candidate discourse and how it is reported. Their results suggested that journalists do not index elite opinion; rather, they simplify the nature of elite debate by reporting the views of those for or against specific policies and excluding perspectives that diverge from this paradigm. Similarly, my research asks if journalists alter the nature of elite argument by reporting candidate discourse in ways that are not representative of how candidates structure their appeals. Althaus et al. conclude that this practice may be product of news norms. Other studies offer support for this interpretation.

News norms influence the reporting of elite discourse

As Althaus et al. (1996) note, news norms include reporting "both sides" of an issue (Tuchman, 1972) and focusing on conflict between office holders (Graber, 1989; Kerbel, 1997; Lichter and Amundson, 1994; Neuman, Just, and Crigler, 1992; Ornstein, 1987; Rozell, 1994). By presenting two sides of an issue, journalists can claim objectivity—that they are free of bias because they are reporting competing versions of the truth. However, public policy and campaign issues often have more than two sides. For example, candidates may not simply be "pro-choice," favoring abortion rights in all circumstances, or "pro-life," opposing to abortion in all circumstances. Some candidates may favor abortion rights but oppose federal funding and favor parental consent. Others may be generally opposed to abortion but may allow it when the mother's life or health is in danger. The debate over intact dilation and evacuation—or "partial birth" abortion—has revealed other splits among pro-choice lawmakers. This example highlights the complexity of public policy that may be simplified because of the journalistic norm of reporting only two sides.

Journalists also focus on conflict between public figures. Not only do journalists cover conflict, but they also overreport it. As I noted earlier, the Annenberg study (1996) found that the news media report candidates attacking each other more frequently than they actually do. In addition, as Althaus et al. (1996) noted, journalists report views of those for or against a policy, thereby excluding alternative views. By ignoring the latter perspectives, which are advocating rather than opposing possible governmental actions, news organizations are overrepresenting conflict in public debate. If these alternative views were included, the voices opposed to public policy proposals—as well as those advocating the same proposals—would thereby diminish. Cook's (1989) research also shed light on this practice. He found that for news topics to make it on the media's agenda, they needed to have distinct sides. This characteristic met the news norms of having two sides and of containing conflict between news subjects.

Bennett (1996) considered the relationship between news norms and source indexing, but offered a different explanation for their impact. He contended that reliance on officials is "rooted" in news norms—specifically, objectivity and balance (376). Specifically, news norms *explain* both the reliance on public officials and the reporting of their disagreements. Another possibility is this: news norms actually *inhibit* the reporting of public debate, even among official sources. If journalists only report the discourse of those who are either for or against a given proposal, they are ignoring additional views that may enrich public understanding of the issue at hand. This study considers the impact of these norms on the reporting of candidate discourse.

Another news norm relevant to this analysis is the use of sound bites. As Hallin (1992) reported, the length of sound bites has decreased over time in national broadcast news coverage of presidential campaigns. Similarly, the Center for Media and Public Affairs found that presidential candidate sound bites have decreased since 1988 (Media Monitor, 1996b). The Center also reported that anchors' and reporters' airtime on network news dwarfed that for presidential candidates in the 1992 and 1996 (Media Monitor, 1992, 1996b). Candidates' words accounted for less than 15 percent of airtime in both years while comments from anchors and reporters made up over 70 percent.

There are many ways to shorten candidate discourse. One way is to eliminate the evidence or rationale candidates provide in making a claim. For example, a candidate may state in a speech that he is for an across-the-board tax cut and offer reasons why this would stimulate the economy. However, in reporting this claim, a journalist may only quote the candidate stating his position on this matter, not the reasons for it. A recollection of notable sound bites bears this out. Reagan's

"Government is not the solution to our problem—government is the problem," Bush's "Read my lips: No new taxes," and Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country" are all memorable assertions, but they lack evidence or reasoning: Why is government the problem? What are the benefits of not raising taxes? Why is volunteerism beneficial to the country? While these claims were part of broader arguments, they have been reported—and repeated—without this backing. It is likely that other reported discourse undergoes similar transformations.

The Annenberg (1996) study found that both print and broadcast news organizations did indeed strip away evidence in reporting candidates' oppositional arguments. Similarly, Jamieson et al. (1998) reported that in reporting speeches, broadcast news usually omitted the evidence candidates supplied in backing their oppositional and advocacy claims. This analysis broadens these findings by considering oppositional and advocacy claims in both speeches and debates and how frequently network news quoted candidates supplying evidence for their arguments. A replication of the earlier findings would suggest that news organizations do not index, but instead simplify, candidates' discourse—at least in terms of their argument structure.

Ultimately, this study asks if and how journalistic interpretation affects the type of elite dialogue to which news consumers are exposed. Are news organizations overreporting candidate attacks, thereby preventing the electorate from understanding what candidates are advocating? Or, are journalists relaying the actual proportion of attack, advocacy, and comparison in speeches, debates, and ads? Or is it something in between? In addition, are journalists simplifying public debate by removing the evidence candidates use to bolster their claims?

These questions also address the impact both reporters and sources have on news content. Other studies have analyzed this process. Cook (1998) wrote that news is a "co-production" between public officials and journalists (109). But the leading roles seem to continually change. While Bennett and others concluded news coverage reflects the range of political elites' views, Hallin and Mancini (1984, 846) found that American journalism oscillates from being a critic of to an instrument for political authority. This study, then, seeks to understand how public officials' arguments are presented to the public via the news media—specifically, whether or not journalists index these arguments.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses expand the work of Althaus et al. (1996), who found journalists generally limit public debate to elites who are for or against government policies or proposals. This study does not consider candidate positions on issues; rather, it examines candidates' argument structure. Candidates' speeches, debates, and ads include claims advocating the sponsor's candidacy (self-promotional arguments), claims attacking the opponent (oppositional arguments), and claims that both advocate and attack (comparative or contrasting arguments). The latter type of discourse is the most complex because it juxtaposes criticism of one position with praise for another. However, if news norms limit the scope of public debate by reporting views that either praise a proposal or criticize it, it is likely that journalists largely report arguments that advocate or attack at the expense of comparative claims:

H1: Journalists underreport comparative claims, relative to candidate discourse.

Reporting advocacy and attack at the expense of comparative arguments is consistent with the news norm of reporting both sides. However, this says nothing about the news media's tendency to focus on—and possibly exaggerate—conflict. If this news norm does indeed influence the reporting of arguments, the data would show that journalists overreport candidates' oppositional claims but not those that advocate:

H2: Journalists overreport candidate attacks but not candidate advocacy.

Another way of simplifying elite discourse would be to strip away evidence or reasoning candidates employ to back their claims. Nearly all candidate claims in speeches and debates are supported by evidence. Most candidate statements take the following form: "I know that our policy to control missiles is poorly administered (claim), for in the entire U.S. government, only three people are working on this problem (evidence)." Claims supported by evidence provide useful information to voters because they tell an audience why one might accept the claim. By employing evidence, candidates also give the voters a fuller understanding of the pros and cons of national issues. However, news norms—specifically, the use of sound bites—dictate simplification and brevity of elite discourse. Consequently, one would expect evidence to be missing when candidates' claims are reported:

H3: Journalists underreport evidence in candidates' claims.

Together, these hypotheses predict that news norms influence the reporting of source discourse. More broadly, they attempt to account for the types of arguments found in news coverage that source indexing may not explain.

Method

Sample

This study is based on data gathered for the Annenberg Public Policy Center's Campaign Mapping Project. The project obtained a sample of candidate speeches from September 1 to the day before the election in 1960, 1980, 1988, 1992, and 1996. The sample included the nomination speeches given at both parties' conventions, the first speech given on each Wednesday during the September 1-election eve time period, all broadcast speeches, and the election eve speech. It also gathered transcripts from debates and television advertisements.[15]

The speech sample determined which broadcast and print news stories were analyzed. The broadcast sample consisted of stories from the day of each sample speech and coverage the day after each debate. The broadcast sample, which did not include coverage from 1960, includes ABC, CBS, and NBC. Because 1960 was not included in the broadcast sample, this analysis considers only the 1980, 1988, 1992, and 1996 campaigns.

This analysis did not examine broadcast stories as a unit. Rather, the unit of analysis was the arguments of candidates (presidential and vice-presidential nominees) within broadcast stories (see "CODING" below). It also examined arguments made in the candidates' television ads that were part of broadcast news stories.[16] If the speaker in an ad was not a candidate, he or she was coded as "surrogate in ad." If a broadcast story did not include any arguments by a candidate or by a candidate's ad, it was not included in the analysis. This study examined a total of 2,250 candidate and advertising arguments and a total of 613 candidate and advertising arguments reported in broadcast news.

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[15] The totals do not represent the actual number of arguments in candidates' speeches and advertisements. Opposing candidates do not have the same number of arguments in their speeches or run the same number of ads. However, they may be speaking for comparable lengths of time or be buying similar amounts of advertising time. For example, in 1980, Carter had about four times as many ads as Reagan. As a result, he had more arguments than did Reagan. But, they purchased similar amounts of advertising time, meaning the public's exposure to the candidates' arguments was comparable. To account for these differences, researchers divided the number of arguments in the Democratic candidates' speeches and debates by those in the Republican and Independent candidates'. The result, labeled the argument multiplier, was multiplied by the Republican and Independent candidates' arguments in speeches and ads to get adjusted argument totals. The adjusted figures are those reported here.

Coding

Coding for news stories included two fundamental components: arguments and evidence (See Appendix One). Specifically, coding included candidates' quotes that were considered arguments. Quotes that were not arguments, or arguable claims, were not coded (See Appendix One for an explanation of arguable claims). In addition, coders determined whether an argument promoted the speaker's aims or agenda (self-promotional), whether it criticized the speaker's opponent (oppositional), or whether it included both self-promotional and oppositional claims (comparative). Finally, coders determined whether the speakers offered evidence, or reasoning, to support their arguments.

Appendix One includes detailed descriptions of each argument type. The analysis for this study, however, was only concerned with the questions: 1) Was the argument self-promotional, oppositional, or comparative? and 2) Did the argument include evidence? Intercoder reliability, using Krippendorff's alpha, for all variables was between 0.7 and 0.8.[17]

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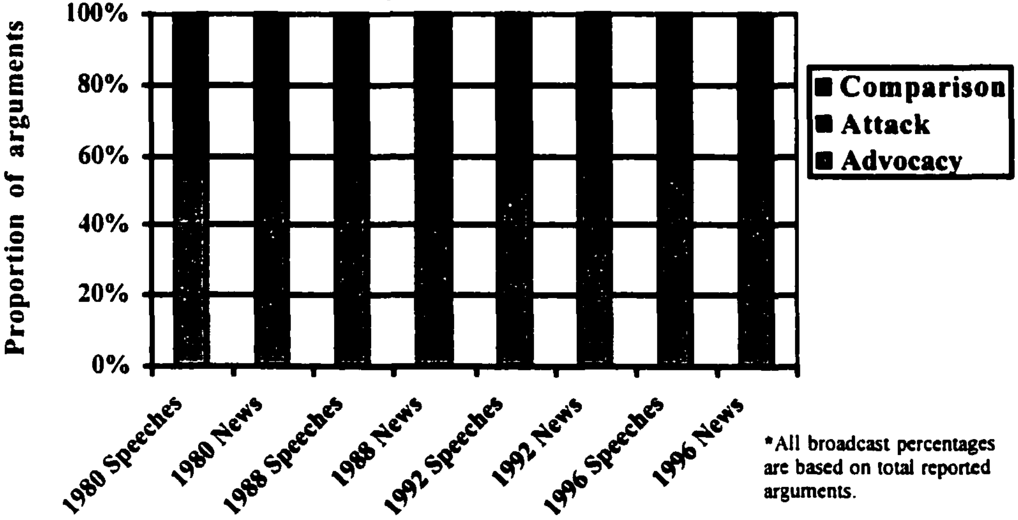
[16] Often, news stories will replay a portion of a candidate's television ad. The study coded ad arguments broadcast within news stories.

Findings

Figures One and Two illustrate the relationship between candidate discourse in speeches and debates and how it was reported in news coverage. The arguments in broadcast news are the sum total of reported arguments in speeches, debates, and advertisements. In all four years, network news underreported the proportion of candidates' comparative claims relative to speeches and debates. This difference is most pronounced in debate discourse, where candidates' comparative claims ranged from 30 to nearly 50 percent of their total arguments. In contrast, fewer than 10 percent of the reported claims on network news were comparative in 1980, 1992, and 1996. At just

Figure One
Arguments in Speeches and Broadcast News*



*All broadcast percentages are based on total reported arguments.

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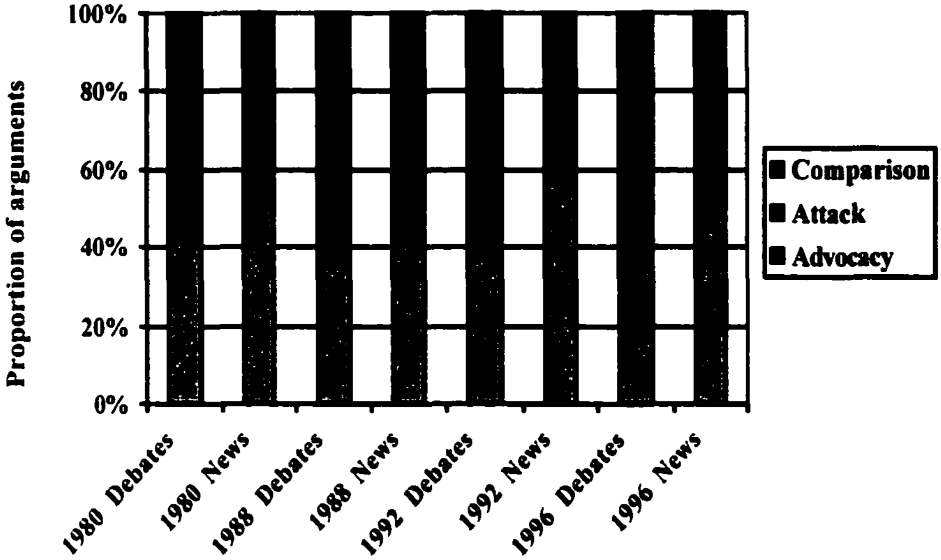
[17] Krippendorff's Alpha is more rigorous than other reliability tests, making .7 an acceptable level of

Figure Two
Arguments in Debates and Broadcast News



under 14 percent, 1988 was the high-water mark for networks' reporting of comparative claims.

However, broadcast news does appear to reflect the proportion of comparative claims found in candidates' advertising in 1980, 1988, and 1992 (see Figure Three). Only in 1988 does broadcast news underreport candidates' comparative claims, relative to their advertising (see Table One for reporting of significance tests). Moreover, there also appears to be a relationship between candidates' self-promotional and oppositional arguments in advertising and total arguments reported in broadcast news. For example, in 1988, about 34 percent of candidates' advertisements were self-promotional and 41 percent were oppositional. Broadcast news' reporting of all candidates' discourse (i.e., speeches, ads, and debates) revealed similar proportions: 41 percent self-promotional arguments and 45 percent oppositional arguments. In fact, in these years, the differences

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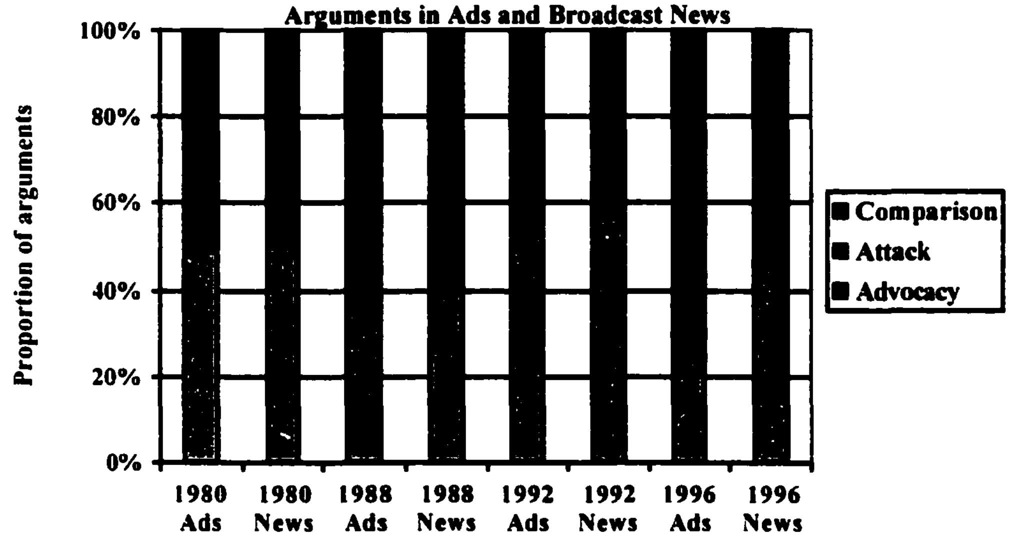
reliability. See Klaus Krippendorff (1980). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

between advocacy and attack in ads and in news are insignificant (see Table Two for reporting of significance tests).

Because of this association, one might conclude that reported candidate discourse is "indexed" to candidate advertising. Like Bennett's concept of source indexing, which pertains to *positions* taken by elites on public policy issues, indexing in this capacity suggests news replicates the proportion of *argument structures* based on elites' advertising claims.

Figure Three

Arguments in Ads and Broadcast News



However, the indexing that occurred in 1980, 1988, and 1992 may only be a coincidence. In 1996, there was not the same relationship between candidates' ad discourse and their reported arguments. Broadcast news overreported candidate advocacy and attack, relative to candidates' ads, and underreported comparative arguments. Why did this occur? The answer appears to lie in the increased proportion of comparative claims in advertisements. The proportion of comparative claims rose in 1996 advertising, whereas in previous years ad claims generally attacked or advocated. In 1996, over 40 percent of all ad claims were comparative, more than double the proportion in previous years. This type of discourse also increased in speeches and debates, though not as dramatically. At the same time, the proportion of attack in ads declined from 1980, 1988, and 1992 levels.

Therefore, it is not clear that reported candidate arguments are indexed to ad claims, even though the association between ads and news in previous years is striking. If this were the case, the proportion of reported comparative claims would have increased in 1996 broadcast coverage—consistent with changes in advertising—but this did not occur. It is also possible that before 1996 ad discourse happened to coincide with news norms. Candidates either attacked or advocated in advertising, a practice consistent with journalists' reporting the views of those who either support or oppose a given policy or action. In 1996, however, this commonality disappeared as candidates increased comparative claims in their ads. The findings, then, generally supported H1: journalists underreport comparative claims made by candidates. The exception appears to apply only to candidates' advertising prior to 1996.

As an additional test that news norms influence reported candidate discourse, H2 predicted that news coverage overreports candidate attacks but not candidate advocacy. Support for this hypothesis would show that news not only simplifies candidate dialogue by underreporting comparative claims, but also does so by exclusively overreporting attack. Overreporting conflict is a long-established news norm.

TABLE ONE: Candidate and Reported Comparative Claims

	Claims#			
Year	*Comparison* (%)	n	*Reported Comparison* (%)	n
Speeches				
1980	25.42	86	9.4**	16
1988	33.44	99	13.9**	24
1992	28.6	95	7.7**	14
1996	37.97	74	9.1**	8
Debates				
1980	39.5	47	9.4**	16
1988	43.1	50	13.9**	24
1992	31.6	72	7.7**	14
1996	49.7	76	9.1**	8
Ads				
1980	11.46	18	9.4	16
1988	24.7	24	13.9*	24
1992	7.66	6	7.7	14
1996	42.37	48	9.1**	8

#Percentages do not include self-promotional or oppositional claims.
*p<.05
**p<.01

TABLE TWO: Candidate and Reported Attacks and Advocacy

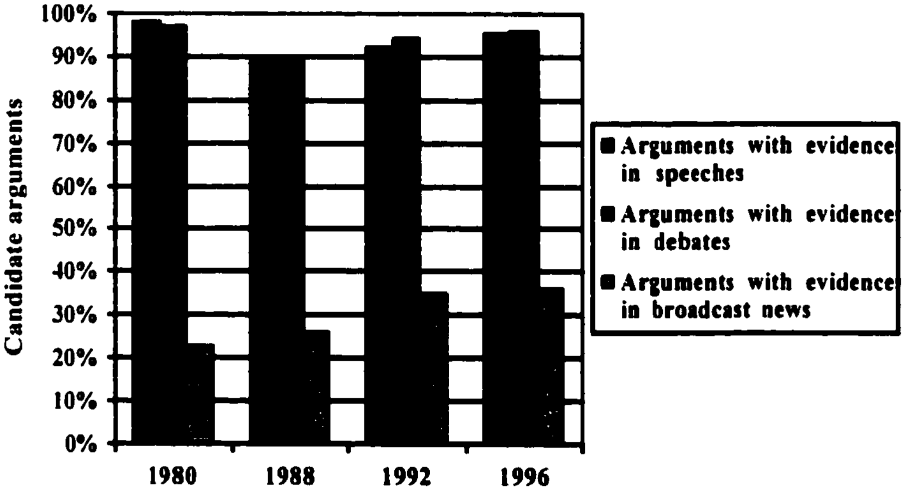
					Claims#			
Year	*Advocacy* (%)	n	*Reported Advocacy* (%)	n	*Attack* (%)	n	*Reported Attack* (%)	n
Speeches								
1980	55.61	189	50.0	84	18.97	64	40.6**	69
1988	54.22**	160	41.0	71	12.34	37	45.1**	78
1992	50.8	170	56.8	104	20.6	69	35.5**	65
1996	54.07	105	48.9	43	7.96	15	42.0**	37
Debates								
1980	44.5	53	50.0	84	16.0	19	40.6**	69
1988	35.3	41	41.0	71	21.6	25	45.1**	78
1992	53.5	122	56.8	104	14.9	34	35.5**	65
1996	34.6	53	48.9*	43	15.7	24	42.0**	37
Ads								
1980	48.8	76	50.0	84	39.74	62	40.6	69
1988	34.5	34	41.0	71	40.77	40	45.1	78
1992	53.2	43	56.8	104	39.14	32	35.5	65
1996	26.84	30	48.9**	43	30.79	34	42.0	37

#Percentages do not add up to 100 because they exclude comparative claims.
*p<.05
**p<.01

As Table Two shows, the networks, at different times, overreported both candidate advocacy and candidate attacks (See Table Two). However, network news uniformly overreported candidate attacks in speeches and debates. Moreover, the networks occasionally overreported the proportion of candidate attacks by two or three times—a practice not evident in the reporting of advocacy claims. As discussed above, the networks did not overreport advocacy or attack relative to candidates' advertising claims prior to 1996. Consequently, data supported H2 only for speech and debate claims.

Because broadcast news uniformly overreported candidate attack in speeches and debates while not doing the same with candidate advocacy, there is support for H2: Journalists overreport candidate attacks, but not candidate advocacy. The only exception appears to apply to candidate advertising. The proportions of advocacy and attack in ads were similar to those in broadcast news.

Figure Four
Arguments with evidence



Broadcast news also tended to strip away the evidence or reasoning candidates supplied to bolster their claims. As Figure Four shows, the networks dramatically underreported candidates' use of evidence in both their speech and debate claims. These results, then, support H3: Journalists underreport evidence in candidates' claims.

Discussion

The data offered support for all three hypotheses: journalists underreport comparative claims relative to candidate discourse, journalists overreport candidate attacks but not candidate advocacy, and journalists underreport evidence in candidates' claims. These results suggest that journalists do not index candidates' argument structure: unlike the reporting of elite opinion, reported argument does not reflect how candidates actually shape their discourse. Rather, these results are consistent with the following news norms: reporting discourse that are either supports or criticizes a proposal—instead of that which compares positions—focusing on conflict between political elites, and turning candidate discourse into sound bites by shortening it (i.e. by removing evidence). I shall return to this point below.

Before analyzing the results in relation to source indexing and news norms, the findings themselves warrant some discussion. First, by largely reporting only advocacy and attack claims, candidates may appear less concerned about the issues than their actual discourse would suggest. Comparative arguments indicate that candidates are engaging an issue: the speaker states his position and criticizes that of his opponent. While such comparisons are undoubtedly biased, they allow the public to simultaneously hear and read alternative views on issues.

Second, by overreporting attack, news organizations are suggesting candidates are far more negative than they really are. This practice may have consequences for the electorate. Cappella and Jamieson's (1997) preliminary evidence indicated that conflict-based stories may distance the public from the public policy positions of elected officials. While certain news stories may focus on the substance of policy proposals, if such pieces highlight—indeed, exaggerate—disagreement rather than compromise, public support for a proposal may decline, independent of the proposal's merits.

Third, by dropping the evidence when reporting candidate arguments, network coverage suggests candidates are trafficking in unfounded claims, when in fact they almost always offer support or reasons for their views. In presidential campaigns the media not only distort candidate discourse by overreporting attack, but also shortchange voters by underreporting the evidence candidates offer for their claims. According to previous research, this may influence voting decisions and how the electorate processes campaign information.

Kinder and Sanders (1996) studied opinion on government assistance to blacks. Their experiments showed that when reasoning backed assertions, subjects were more likely to take a position than when no such support was offered. Shah et al. (1996) reached similar conclusions in analyzing the impact of how candidates' positions on health care were reported in the press. Subjects employed different decision-making strategies, depending on whether the issue was discussed in material terms (i.e., costs and benefits) or ethical terms (i.e., rights, morals, or ethics). [18] In sum, both of these findings point to the significance of reasoning or evidence in processing information—they influence opinion by encouraging news consumers to take positions on public policy issues.

This study also expands our understanding of the relationship between sources and news content. Source indexing theory contends that the news media represent the range of elite opinion on public policy and other matters. However, these studies do not consider how elite arguments are structured and how news subsequently reports them. This is a significant distinction. For instance, two candidates may disagree on the merits of NAFTA. Source indexing would account for why their disagreement appears in news coverage. But it would not consider *how* these candidates are discussing this issue and how journalists are reporting the exchange. Are the candidates attacking each other or are they offering well-reasoned arguments for their opposing views? And, are the news media replicating the nature of this debate or are they altering this discourse to fit journalistic practices? In short, while source-indexing theory contends that elite sources influence news discourse in terms of views reported, this same explanation may not hold when considering how arguments used to advance these views appear in coverage.

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[18] Both Kinder and Sanders and Shah et al. labeled these positions "frames." However, what they call frames are the equivalent of candidate claims backed by evidence because both link reasoning with assertions. These are quite different from the news frames discussed above.

Indeed, this study found that sources—in this case, candidates—do not have the same influence in how their arguments are reported. While their views may be dutifully covered, their arguments are shortened and simplified by reporters in order to meet news norms. In sum, elite sources may influence which views reach the public via the press, but journalists appear to determine how these perspectives are debated—at least in broadcast news.

It is true that there was an association between ad discourse and overall reported candidate discourse (i.e., speeches, ads, and debates) in 1980, 1988, and 1992. This suggests that reported candidate argument structures may be indexed to candidate advertising. Candidate ads often run nationally and air repeatedly, meaning journalists and voters alike have a high level of exposure to them. Consequently, advertising—and the nature of its discourse—may come to symbolize an entire campaign. Journalists view candidates' advertising and report candidates' discourse that reflects their advertising claims. The Bush campaign's tank and revolving door prison ads—both attacking Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis—may have served this function for the 1988 presidential race. However, these associations did not occur in 1996, when advertising included a higher proportion of comparative claims than was present in the networks' reporting of all candidate arguments. This reduces the likelihood candidates' reported arguments are indexed to their advertising.

What, then, explains these associations in previous years? Most likely, ad discourse and news discourse operated under similar norms prior to 1996. Like news, ads either advocated or attacked and contained a higher proportion of attack than other forms of candidate communication, such as speeches and debates. Consequently, ad discourse and reported candidate discourse appeared to be related in these years. However, while the norms for ad discourse changed in 1996, those for news did not. As a result, reported candidate discourse continued to overwhelmingly report candidates as either attacking or advocating, thereby underreporting comparative claims, even relative to advertising.

It appears, then, that journalists have a larger role in shaping reported discourse of public officials than source indexing supposes. While reporters may index elite sources' views, their arguments are altered and simplified to meet news norms. Certainly, an enhanced role of journalists in this area is not surprising. As Patterson (1993) reported, campaign news has become increasingly interpretive, thereby suggesting a greater role for journalists in construction of news content.

However, what makes these data significant is not that there is evidence of journalistic interpretation. Rather, it is that journalists simplify candidates' communication to the point where reported discourse is not representative of how candidates are actually speaking. Candidates advocate, attack, and compare, and generally back these assertions with reasoning or evidence. However, by watching network news, the voter is led to believe candidates either advocate or, especially, attack and that they fail to offer reasons for their claims.

Because nearly half of the public relies on the networks for campaign information (Pew Research Center, 1996), this transformation of candidate discourse is notable. The number of news stories on campaigns far outnumbers candidate debates. Also, voters are more likely to read and hear about candidate speeches as reported by the news media than listen to them in person. In short, the electorate is most likely to hear from candidates through a news media filter. More importantly, this filter significantly alters the nature of political dialogue so that candidate communication—as reported to the public—reflects news norms rather than campaign discourse.

The next chapter takes this analysis a step further by considering how reported candidate discourse is aligned with journalistic interpretations—news frames.

CHAPTER SIX

FRAMING POLITICIANS

The Transformation of Candidate Arguments in
Presidential Campaign News Coverage, 1980, 1988, 1992, and 1996

"The national press is entirely concerned with 'horse race' and popularity...If thermonuclear war broke out today, the lead paragraph in tomorrow's *Washington Post* would be, 'In a major defeat for President Carter...' "

Former congressional press secretary[19]

"Bob Connelly...angrily recalled an *Arizona Republic* headline after Mr. Clinton's visit here Thursday: 'Clinton Plays It Safe.' 'It was a strategy headline rather than an issues headline. That doesn't tell me anything about what he said.' "

The *New York Times*, November 4, 1996

Media analysts have studied how reporters use "frames" to heighten certain aspects of the events or individuals they cover (Entman, 1993; Iyengar, 1991). The use of frames is consistent with the finding that news stories are becoming increasingly "interpretive": Journalists focus on "why" rather than "what" in covering news subjects (Patterson, 1993).

In covering politics, these frames have centered on strategy and conflict rather than candidate positions and consensus. Previous research shows that these frames have been applied not only when reporters cover political campaigns, but also when they report on the legislative process.

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[19] Cited in Michael Robinson and Margaret Sheehan, *Over the Wire and on TV: CBS and UPI in Campaign '80* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1983), p. 140.

Dominance of Strategy Coverage

Several scholars have found that strategy coverage in political campaigns has increased. In his study of news coverage of presidential elections, Patterson (1993) examined journalists' tendency to focus on the strategic aspects of campaigns in which candidates' behaviors and policies are described as attempts to "manipulate the electorate." Patterson provides the following examples of strategy coverage: "a campaign promise...that (a reporter) presumes the candidate is trying to gain favor with a particular interest; a change in media strategy may be seen as an attempt by the candidate to project a more favorable image; the results of a primary election may be viewed as altering the competitive balance between the contending sides (57)."

In analyzing a random selection of front-page *New York Times* presidential election stories from 1960-1992, Patterson found a dramatic increase in strategy stories and a decrease in policy, or issue, stories. Strategy stories had doubled from 1960 to 1992 while policy stories declined from more than 50 percent to less than 20 percent.

A study of the same period by the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania (1996) found that strategy stories made up a majority of campaign stories, but did not find the large increase Patterson reports. Analyzing a sample of presidential campaign print coverage from six major newspapers in 1960, 1980, 1988, and 1992, the study found that more than half of the stories in each year focused on strategy. In 1980 and 1992, more than 60 percent of print stories focused on strategy. The study also examined a sample of broadcast stories from ABC, CBS, NBC, and the MacNeil-Lehrer NewsHour in 1980, 1988, and 1992. In all three years, more than 60 percent of the stories centered on strategy.

Consequences of Strategy Coverage

Media scholars argue that strategy coverage: reduces candidate and public information by asking who is going to win rather than who is better able to serve as president; limits coverage of where candidates stand on the issues; covers issues as part of candidates' efforts to gain votes rather than as philosophical differences; and suggests candidates are performers rather than candidates for office or governmental officials (Jamieson 1992; Patterson, 1993).

Using focus groups, Graber (1988) found that stories about election victories "were processed (by readers) as evidence that the winners were qualified," even though such stories do not address candidates' ability to govern but, rather, only their ability to win elections (203). Jamieson (1992) added "the electorate can know who is ahead, why, and what strategies are necessary to win without knowing what problems face the country and which candidate can better address them in office" (187).

Cappella and Jamieson (1996, 1997) reported that subjects viewing and reading campaign strategy stories had higher levels of cynicism than those who did not see news about the election and those who viewed and read campaign issue stories. Jamieson (1992) added that strategy coverage contributes to the electorate's disillusionment with the electoral process and governmental officials: "Those who believe that candidates are consummate sophists see strategy reports as realistic revelations of the fundamental Machiavellianism of those who seek public office" (186).

In their study on the effects of television news, Iyengar and Kinder (1987) found evidence of a "priming" effect: "By calling attention to some matters while ignoring others, television news influences the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public office are judged" (63). While they do not study the priming effects of strategy versus issue coverage, the authors suggest the following:

> If the *only* story is the campaign, then practically all voters, no matter how involved they may be with other matters, will know who is ahead and who is behind. Such a relentless promotion of a single view of the campaign reduces the electorate's capacity to choose wisely (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987, 129).

Increase in Conflict

Several media scholars have found that conflict in news coverage has increased over the past 30 years. Analyzing news reports about Congress from 1972 to 1992, Lichter and Amundson (1994) found that reporters have increasingly reported conflict between members of Congress or between legislators and other political participants, such as a member of a presidential administration. Before 1987, about one-third of congressional stories involved conflict; since 1987, about two of every three stories have focused on discord (Lichter and Amundson, 1994).

Graber's (1989) study of news coverage during the 1968, 1972, and 1976 presidential campaigns found that the news media often "focused selectively on controversial issues that lent themselves to appealing stories" (216). She also concluded that "(w)hile candidates like to talk about broad policy issues...newspeople prefer to concentrate on narrower, specific policy positions on which the candidates disagree sharply" (217).

Rozell's (1994) analysis of congressional print coverage during different periods since 1946 revealed that "coverage of Congress focuses on scandal, partisan rivalry, and interbranch conflict rather than the more complex subjects such as policy, process, and institutional concerns" (128).

While candidates often generate conflict in campaigns (Miller, Goldenberg, and Erbring, 1979), it does not happen as often as the press reports. The Annenberg study (1996) found that newspapers exaggerated conflict among candidates by overreporting candidates' arguments against their opponents in speeches and debates.

Of course, the media's focus on the strategic aspects of campaigns is not completely unwarranted. Campaigns *are* about winning and losing as well as governing. In addition, candidates engage in strategic activities, using focus groups, polls, and advertising in an attempt to attract votes. And candidates do attack each other's positions.

But campaigns are not exclusively about strategy and conflict. Moreover, candidates generally discuss issues—such as the economy, trade, and foreign policy—rather than strategy in their speeches, ads, and debates. In short, the news media's focus on conflict and strategy is often at odds with the nature of candidates' discourse.

Reporters' use of frames underscores these different aims. When candidates' thoughts reach the public through the news media, their discourse usually has been shortened into sound bites and contextualized by analysis from other sources and journalists.[20]

What is unclear, however, is how—or if—certain frames alter what is reported of candidate discourse: Is reported candidate discourse in strategy stories different from that in issue stories? In other words, do frames not only determine how journalists structure their stories but also influence the type of candidate discourse they report? To answer this question, I have examined the types of candidate arguments reported in strategy and issue stories.

Hypotheses

The concept of framing remains a subject of academic debate. However, for the purposes of this study, which is to gauge press performance, I am defining the frames as journalistic interpretations that form a single or primary theme for an entire news story.

Because strategy stories center on competition and conflict, they may be more likely than issue stories to contain candidate discourse in which opponents criticize each other rather than promote their own agendas. Because issue stories highlight differences the candidates have on public policy matters, they are more likely to contain arguments in which candidates tout their views on such matters as taxes, regulation, and social concerns:

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[20] Patterson (1993) found a 10-fold increase in interpretive" stories in *New York Times'* presidential

H1: Strategy stories are more likely to contain candidates' attack discourse than are issue stories.

Also, because strategy stories are concerned with campaign tactics rather than substantive issues, it is likely that reported candidate discourse in these stories will also be less substantive. Specifically, arguments will be less likely to include evidence. The opposite will be true for issue stories:

H2: Strategy stories are less likely to contain the candidates' arguments supported by the candidates' evidence than are issue stories.

Method

Sample

This study is based on data gathered for the Annenberg Public Policy Center's Campaign Mapping Project. The project obtained a sample of candidate speeches from September 1 to the day before the election in 1960, 1980, 1988, 1992, and 1996. The sample included the nomination speeches given at both parties' conventions, the first speech given on each Wednesday during the September 1-election eve time period, all

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election coverage from 1960 to 1992. According to Patterson, interpretive reporting focuses on "why" more than "what" and increases the role of journalistic analysis in the reporting of news. See pages 81-83.

broadcast speeches, and the election eve speech. It also gathered transcripts from debates and transcribed television advertisements. Because the sample of news coverage did not include 1960, speeches from 1960 were excluded (see below). The sample included 694 candidate arguments from speeches, ads, and debates in the 1980, 1988, 1992, and 1996 presidential campaigns.

The speech sample determined which broadcast and print news stories were analyzed. The broadcast sample consisted of stories from the day of each sample speech and coverage the day after each debate. The broadcast sample, which did not include coverage from 1960, includes ABC, CBS, and NBC.

The analysis for this paper did not include any print stories. Nor did it analyze broadcast stories as a unit. Rather, the unit of analysis was the arguments of candidates (presidential and vice-presidential nominees) within broadcast stories (see "CODING" below). It also examined arguments made in the candidates' television ads that were part of broadcast news stories.[21] If the speaker in an ad was not a candidate, he or she was coded as "surrogate in ad." If a broadcast story did not include any arguments by a candidate or by a candidate's ad, it was not included in the analysis. This study examined a total of 404 candidate or advertisement arguments in broadcast news stories for 1980, 1988, 1992, and 1996.

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[21] Often, news stories will replay a portion of a candidate's television ad. The study coded ad arguments broadcast within news stories.

Coding

Coding for news stories included two fundamental components: story structure and arguments (See Appendix One). Coders analyzed both the primary (i.e., the lead) and secondary (i.e., the remainder of the story) structures of news stories to determine if they focused on strategy or issues. The analysis eliminated stories in which the primary and secondary structures were different.

Strategy stories focus on who is winning and losing. In them, reporters explain the strategic intent of candidate statements. Issue stories center on the candidates' issue positions and statements but not their strategic significance. Stories that did not fit into either category were labeled "Other."

Coders also coded candidates' quotes that were considered arguments. Quotes that were not arguments, or arguable claims, were not coded (See Appendix One for an explanation of arguable claims). In addition, coders determined whether an argument promoted the speaker's aims or agenda (advocacy), whether it criticized the speaker's opponent (attack), or whether it included both advocacy and attack claims (comparison). Finally, coders determined whether the speakers offered evidence, or reasoning, to support their arguments.

Appendix One includes detailed descriptions of each argument type. The analysis for this paper, however, was only concerned with the questions: 1) Did the argument advocate, attack, or compare? 2) Did the argument include evidence? and 3) Did the argument appear in a strategy story or an issue story? Intercoder reliability, using Krippendorff's alpha, for all variables was between 0.7 and 0.8.

Findings

Using a Chi-Square test of independence, the analysis examined the relationship between story structure (i.e., strategy or issue) and argument type (i.e., advocacy, attack, or comparison). It also examined arguments that either contained or did not contain evidence. The analysis did not examine the *number* of arguments in strategy versus issue stories; rather, it looked at the *types of arguments* that were reported in strategy and issue stories. It controlled for election year (1980, 1988, 1992, and 1996) to see if there was any change during these years. It also controlled for speaker (presidential candidate, vice-presidential candidate, and speaker in television ad). Arguments of presidential candidates made up an overwhelming majority of the arguments, totaling 352 of the 404 arguments analyzed.

Argument Type

The analysis of 1980, 1988, and 1992 revealed significant associations in reported arguments in strategy and issue stories ($p<.05$). Advocacy arguments in these years were significantly more likely to appear in issue stories and attack arguments were significantly more likely to appear in strategy stories (See Table Three).[22] There were no associations between news frames and comparative arguments for any of the years studied.

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[22] As noted above, arguments in multi-frame stories constituted a small proportion of the sample and were

Table Three: Story Frame by Argument Type: 1980, 1988, 1992, and 1996

	News Frame		
	Issue	Strategy	n
Argument			
1980			
Advocacy*	67.6	41.1	80
Attack*	23.0	46.6	51
Comparison	9.4	12.3	16
1988			
Advocacy*	58.3	31.4	39
Attack*	29.2	57.2	34
Comparison	12.5	11.4	10
1992			
Advocacy*	70.7	44.0	75
Attack*	18.7	54.0	41
Comparison	10.6	2.0	9
1996			
Advocacy	45.9	66.7	25
Attack	40.6	25.0	18
Comparison	13.5	8.3	6

*$p<.05$

After controlling for speaker, associations for vice-presidential candidates and for ad surrogates disappeared. However, those for presidential candidates remained. The association between presidential candidates' spoken discourse and news frames is more important because they are the primary source quoted in news stories, constituting over 85 percent of the total arguments (see Table Four).

Unlike previous years, then, story frames in 1996 did not appear to influence the reported discourse of the candidates. The reasons for this change will be explored below. First, however, the results on arguments with evidence (H2) will be discussed.

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excluded from this analysis. Moreover, multi-frame stories, because they often contained both strategy and issue elements, offered neither support nor disconfirming data for the hypotheses.

Table Four: Story Frame by Argument Type for Speakers

	News Frame		
	Issue	Strategy	n
Presidential Candidates			
Advocacy*	64.9	48.8	208
Attack*	24.0	43.3	109
Comparison	11.1	7.9	35
Vice-Presidential Candidates			
Advocacy	20.0	36.4	9
Attack	60.0	59.1	16
Comparison	20.0	4.5	2
Ad Surrogates			
Advocacy	25.0	4.8	2
Attack	75.0	76.2	19
Comparison	0	19.0	4

*$p<.01$

Evidence in Arguments

The results supported H2—arguments in strategy stories are less likely to contain evidence—for 1980, 1988, and 1992 as well as for 1996 (See Table Five). While a majority of arguments in both pure strategy and pure issue stories did *not* contain evidence, there was a higher proportion of arguments *with* evidence in issue stories than in strategy stories ($p<.05$)

These associations remained significant for presidential candidates and surrogates in ads but not for vice-presidential candidates (see Table Six).

Table Five: Story Frame by Evidence: 1980, 1988, 1992, and 1996

	Evidence	No Evidence	n
Story Frame			
1980*			
Issue	36.5	63.5	74
Strategy	17.8	82.2	73
1988*			
Issue	41.7	58.3	48
Strategy	14.3	85.7	35
1992*			
Issue	42.7	57.3	75
Strategy	20.0	80.0	50
1996*			
Issue	51.4	48.6	37
Strategy	0	100	12

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*$p<.05$

Table Six: Story Frame by Evidence for Speakers

	Evidence	No Evidence	n
Story Frame			
Presidential Candidates**			
Issue	42.2	57.8	225
Strategy	18.1	81.9	127
Vice-Presidential Candidates			
Issue	0	100	5
Strategy	4.5	95.5	22
Ad Surrogates*			
Issue	75.0	25.0	4
Strategy	19.0	81.0	21

*p<.10 **p<.01

Discussion

The results of the study support H1 for coverage in 1980, 1988, and 1992: Strategy stories were more likely than issue stories to contain attack arguments and issue stories were more likely than strategy stories to contain arguments that advocated. However, in 1996, there was no significant association between story frame and argument type.

The results also supported H2 for coverage in 1980, 1988, 1992, and 1996. While a majority of arguments in both types of stories did not contain evidence, a higher proportion of arguments with evidence existed in issue stories, and a higher proportion of arguments without evidence existed in strategy stories. The exception was running mates: strategy stories and issue stories contained nearly equal proportions of arguments with and without evidence. Before exploring why story frames in 1996 did not appear to influence reported candidate discourse—at least with regard to attack and advocacy arguments—it is necessary to examine why story frames *did* affect reported candidate discourse in previous years.

1980, 1988, and 1992

One concern about these findings is that of causal direction. It is possible that candidates are initiating story frames by discussing either strategies or issues, thus reducing the media's role in framing. But this is unlikely. The candidate discourse in the sample consisted of speeches, ads, and debates, improbable sources of strategic analysis by candidates.

It is also possible that candidates are injecting negativity into political campaigns and the press is merely reporting these types of discourse in strategy, rather than issue, stories. While attack arguments are certainly a part of candidate discourse, they appear to be overrepresented by the press in both strategy and issue stories. As discussed above, other research using these data indicates that reporters misrepresent the nature of candidate discourse: Attack discourse in debates and speeches is overreported in news stories. This suggests that the press is not merely reporting negativity, but amplifying it, particularly in strategy stories.

The same pattern appears to hold in this study. In this case, reporters influence where candidate discourse is reported. Strategy stories are more likely than issue stories to highlight conflict between candidates by reporting a higher proportion of attack discourse. They are also less likely than issue stories to include evidence for candidates' claims. These findings expand the concept of the strategy frame: Not only does the strategy frame focus on the game aspects of campaigns, but it also highlights conflict between candidates by emphasizing their attack arguments and by failing to include evidence to support these attacks. This finding may offer additional evidence explaining why strategy stories activate cynicism: In strategy stories, politicians are more likely to be shown criticizing each other—without evidence—than they are in issue stories.

When strategy stories comprise a majority of campaign news stories, the public is less likely to read or hear candidate discourse that is positive and supported by evidence. In short, through the press, the public is more likely to hear arguments for voting *against* candidates than voting *for* candidates.

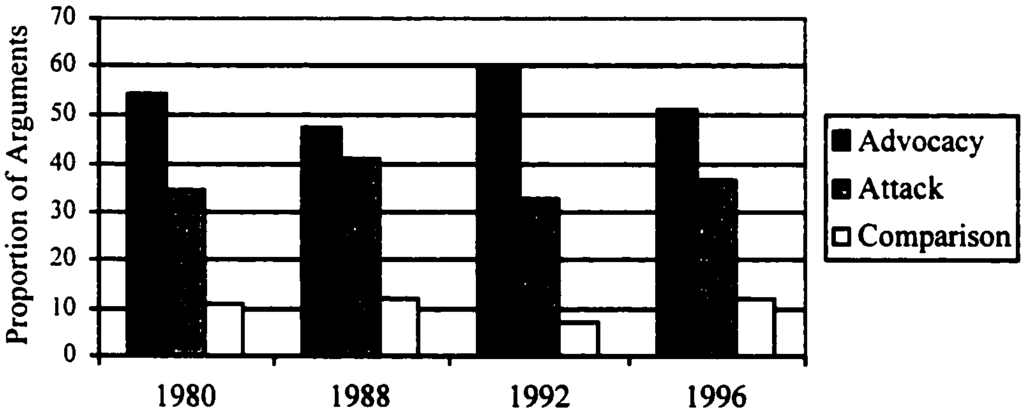
1996

Coverage of the last presidential campaign, in terms of reported discourse, was the opposite of previous years, which explains why 1996 data did not support H1. There was a higher proportion of advocacy in strategy stories than in issue stories. The reverse was true for attack. However, there were no significant associations between strategy and issue stories in terms of reported arguments.

One might hypothesize that this change occurred because the overall level of reported attack decreased. But this did not occur. As Figure Five shows, the proportion of attack was consistent with previous years.

In 1996, then, issue stories became more like strategy stories and vice versa in terms of reported candidate discourse. While these were not statistically significant associations, the results do raise a basic question: Why did the reporting of candidates' discourse depart from that of previous years? The topics raised in 1996 may, in part, explain this change. Stories on "cuts" in Medicare, Indonesian contributions to the Democratic National Committee, and character, which were often issue stories, contained a high level of attack. However, this would only explain why issue stories were more likely than those in previous years to contain attack. It does not address why strategy

Figure Five
Reported Arguments



stories contained more advocacy than in earlier campaigns. This answer requires additional study. Despite this difference from previous years, the overall level of attack was similar to that in 1980, 1998, and 1992. Also, as in earlier years, strategy stories were also less likely than issue ones to contain arguments backed by evidence.

Exit polls point to a possible effect of news coverage that overreports candidate attacks and underreports their use of evidence backing their claims. In a survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (1996), over half of those who voted for GOP nominee Bob Dole and Reform Party nominee Ross Perot said they cast their vote *against* another candidate rather than *for* Dole or Perot. Nearly a third of those who voted for President Clinton said the same about their vote. These percentages are higher than 1992 levels for all three candidates.

Conclusion

Differences in reported candidate arguments between strategy and issue stories in 1980, 1988, and 1992 indicate that media frames are even more influential than the literature suggests because they appear to determine the nature of candidate discourse reported to the public. In 1996, these differences disappeared because issue stories contained a higher proportion of attack than in previous years. Of theoretical interest is the light this study casts on the power of media frames themselves. Frames may not only influence journalists' analysis of events, but also how they report the discourse of those they cover. Consequently, a candidate's reported discourse is not solely a function of what he or she says, but also of the frame the journalist adopts in reporting this discourse.

The next chapter seeks to broaden our understanding of this research by considering a different type of news frames—visual frames.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PRIMING REPORTERS

A Study on how the Willie Horton Case Altered the Portrayal of Criminals

When a massive earthquake struck the San Francisco Bay Area on October 17, 1989, television viewers from thousands of miles away could see the destruction left by the 7.1 quake. Network news offered several compelling visuals of the wreckage: an overhead shot of the Bay Bridge, a collapsed freeway, and hundreds of people evacuating their damaged homes. Another dramatic visual invited attention, not only because of the tragedy it conveyed, but also because of how it portrayed the extent of the disaster. The picture was a close-up of a burning building—so close the viewer could see little of its surroundings, possibly leading one to conclude that much of San Francisco was in flames. However, after several minutes, the camera pulled away, offering an aerial view of the burning building and several surrounding blocks. From this perspective, the viewer could see that the fire was limited to the single burning building and that the blaze did not affect the larger area. While both visuals included pictures of the same burning building, they led the viewer to draw largely different conclusions about the magnitude of the fire and its effect on the city.

The power of visuals has been well documented. This example, however, illustrates the impact of manipulating the same visuals—that is, how the same object, person, or event may be shown in dissimilar ways to offer vastly different depictions of the same entity. This process may be labeled **visual framing**.

Framing research has generally studied verbal discourse. Scholars have analyzed how words and phrases are used to offer various descriptions of affirmative action (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987; Kinder and Sanders, 1996), health care reform (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997), and political campaigns (Jamieson, 1992; Patterson, 1993). Often left unstudied is how journalists and others frame news items *visually*—how they offer different visuals of the same event, trend, or phenomenon that alter how these matters are represented to the public. This chapter considers visual frames and the factors that may influence their construction. It analyzes how images of Willie Horton—a convicted murderer who became an important part of George Bush's 1988 presidential campaign against Michael Dukakis—may have shaped subsequent visual framing of criminals in other network news stories.

Research has also considered the forces that construct and determine frames. Scholars have concluded that both journalists and sources influence the framing process. This study takes a different approach. It argues that although producers and reporters, rather than sources, select the visuals that form visual frames, high-profile news subjects can "prime" reporters to cover subsequent news items in certain ways, thereby influencing the visual framing process.

Before discussing this process, a review of the literature is necessary to show how crime news and other news content are constructed verbally and visually.

Literature review

Research on news coverage of crime and other topics suggests reporters decide which visuals will air. Campbell (1991) described how "60 Minutes" used different camera angles and distances for story subjects and reporters to establish, or reduce, credibility. Jamieson (1992) detailed how network news selected visuals to bolster reporters' story lines. Gans (1979) came to similar conclusions, arguing that network news visuals illustrated television journalists' spoken words.

Studies on crime coverage offer comparable findings, even though they generally do not consider visuals. Rather, they study the reporting of crime topics (e.g., violent crimes). According to these studies, news stories on crime often do not reflect the proportion of crimes committed and reported to law enforcement authorities. Rather, news overreports certain crimes and underreports others, thereby offering a portrait of crime that is more consistent with news production than with reality [i.e., crime statistics] (Gilliam et al., 1996).

Several researchers have found that both television and print news overreport violent crime, such as murder and assault (Garofalo, 1981; Gilliam et al., 1996; Graber, 1980; Jaehnig, Weaver, and Fico, 1981; Roshier, 1973; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994; Skogan and Maxfield, 1981), but underreport non-violent crimes (Surette, 1994) and ignore other types of crime (Lotz, 1991). In fact, murder and other types of violent crime top the list of crimes covered (Chermak, 1995), even though the incidence of violent crime has dropped in recent years (Butterfield, 1997c). In addition, Surette (1994) found that the media overreport "predator" crime—violent crimes in which the offender is a stranger—despite its unlikely occurrence. A 1997 study by the Center for Media and

Public Affairs found that coverage of murders has increased 721 percent since 1993, even though the real-world homicide rate was dropping (Media Monitor, 1997; see also, Butterfield 1997a, 1997b).

Again, these studies analyzed the reporting of crime topics, rather than the use of visuals. However, they offer evidence that the press frames crime in ways that diverge from real-world crime rates. By overreporting violent acts, particularly murder, the news media frame crime as primarily violent, even though actual crime rates suggest otherwise.

Others have shown distinctions in the coverage of crimes committed by different racial groups. Gilliam et al. (1996) found that local television news overrepresented black violent crime and underrepresented white violent crime. Entman (1990) showed that framing of crime news extends to television visuals. He found that television news framed black news subjects differently than white ones. In a December 1989 week-long analysis of local television news coverage, Entman reported that when blacks appeared in stories, it was most likely to be in a piece on violent crime. In addition, black criminals were more likely than their white counterparts to be shown in mug shots, in handcuffs, and being led by police officers (see also Entman and Rojecki, 2000). Entman and Rojecki (2000) also reported that a black defendant's name is twice as likely as a white defendant's to be shown on screen in local television news.

Entman (1994) also found discrepancies between visual depictions of white and black criminals in network news. He reported that crime stories about blacks were more likely to be about violence or drugs than were those about whites. In addition, blacks were more likely to be shown physically restrained in violent crime or drug stories than were whites. This finding was consistent with his local news study.

While news accounts do not reflect real-world rates, the forces that generate such content—and specifically, the visual framing reported by Entman—are not clear. Do the police overreport violent crimes to beat reporters or do journalists simply choose to report certain crimes while ignoring others? Also unclear is why crime topics change over time. For instance, if the press is largely interested in murder, why does its reporting of such crimes fluctuate over time, independent of real-world rates? Are there identifiable factors that prompt these changes? In sum, what is the dynamic that prompts the construction of visual frames?

Researchers have offered a variety of explanations, which are discussed below. I am going to explore five of them and argue that they do not account for visual framing. Specifically, I will examine the following views: 1. Journalists index source discourse, 2. News norms determine crime reporting, 3. Crime news reflects past patterns of coverage, 4. High-profile crimes prompt overreporting of similar crimes, and 5. High-profile crimes may alter news structures. I will then offer a sixth, visual priming, and test it, using as a case study network news coverage of crime before and after the Horton issue became prominent. The results suggest this is a viable alternative to explaining the construction of visual frames.

1. Journalists index source discourse

Several studies have analyzed how elites' perspectives are reported in news. These works have concluded that news organizations replicate the range of elites' views in their coverage, a process labeled "source indexing." Bennett (1990) described source indexing as a practice by which "(m)ass media professionals…'index' the range of voices and viewpoints in both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about given topic" (106). According to this theory, by focusing on certain types of crimes and their causes, sources influence how crime is framed. It may also explain why coverage of crime varies over time: news content reflects the changing views of sources. But this theory may not account for the needs of journalists, which may be quite different than those of sources. In fact, source activities are often geared to meeting the press' needs rather than vice versa.

Research by Gamson and Modigliani (1987) addressed this matter. Their study was in done in the area of news frames, which they defined as rhetorical devices embedded in news coverage to advance arguments. The authors found that sponsor activities—i.e., actions taken by sources to promote their organizations in the news media—led to the rise of "no preferential treatment" and "reverse discrimination" frames in news coverage of affirmative action (166). "No preferential treatment" frames argue that affirmative action programs are contrary to the "American way" because race-conscious policies inevitably lead to preferential treatment. A sub-set of these frames, "reverse discrimination" frames, contend such programs advance the welfare of certain racial groups at the expense of individual rights (145-149).

However, the inclusion of these frames in news content does not wholly support the existence of source indexing. They noted the presence of several other frames in the affirmative action debate that were not prominent in news. They concluded that the successful frames—those that appear in news, such as the "no preferential treatment" and "reverse discrimination" frames—are in part based on the news media's needs for balance and drama. Those that do not meet these criteria are generally excluded from coverage.

In sum, source indexing does not appear to fully capture the relationship between reporters and sources with regard to news content. According to Gamson and Modigliani, reporters do transmit the views of sources—in this case, frames—but only those that meet standard news norms of balance and drama. However, their analysis does show that sources may be responsible for *introducing* elements that eventually become prominent aspects of news content. This will be explored below.

2. News norms determine crime reporting

Gamson and Modigliani concluded that news content is partly explained by criteria that satisfy journalists' needs. These include the need for balance and drama. In crime reporting, this standard has often meant the reporting of certain offenses that often bear little relation to the rate and nature of crimes committed in a community, state, or region (Jerin and Fields, 1994; Skogan and Maxfield, 1981). Instead, news organizations in different communities tend to cover crime in the same manner, in terms of the amount and nature of crimes reported (Skogan and Maxfield (1981); Surette, 1992).

Surette (1992) concluded that these findings suggest media messages about crime depend not on the volume or nature of crimes, but on the application of a consistent set of criteria as to what constitutes news—i.e., news norms. Chermak (1994) added that novel and dramatic crimes are likely to be selected as news stories because they meet important criteria for news. Violent crime is both novel, because it happens less frequently than non-violent crime (Surette, 1992), and dramatic. As discussed above, this perspective also explains Gamson and Modigliani's (1987) finding on the prominence of certain frames in news coverage of affirmative action.

News norms may also explain the findings of Althaus et al. (1996). They found that journalists simplified the reporting of congressional debate on U.S. actions toward Libya to include sources who were either opposed to or in favor of proposed actions, but excluded the views of elected officials who had alternative perspectives. This is evidence of the journalistic practice of reporting "both" sides of a story (Tuchman, 1972, 665), while not acknowledging an issue may have more than two sides.

This perspective broadens the concept of source indexing. It notes the influence sources have on news while contending that these views must meet news norms in order to appear in the news pages or on the airwaves. Sources may provide journalists with viewpoints and information, but these items must meet news norms in order to gain journalistic acceptance. Journalists are the ultimate arbiters of the views present in news content.

While news norms address why certain views become prominent and others are neglected, they do not explain fluctuations in coverage. Murders, for instance, are not covered at the same rates over time. A study by the Center for Media and Public Affairs found that coverage of murders has varied in the 1990s, with no apparent relation to real-world murder rates (Media Monitor, 1997). If news norms were the sole determinant of content, the types of crimes reported would not fluctuate, unless, of course, news norms continually changed, which is unlikely. Moreover, news norms do not account for how crime may be framed visually. Instead, news norms explain the number of views and types of crimes reported. Other research addresses these matters.

3. Crime news reflects past pattern of coverage

Surette (1992) discussed media "consonance," in which a news event is linked to previous news themes and accepted public images and explanations. Unexpected and unusual events will be reported, but will be presented in terms of previously established stories and explanations. Consequently, a cycle of newsworthiness is created in which once a type of crime is defined as news, it will continue to be news. This process occurred in the media's reporting of crimes against the elderly in New York in the 1970s. Initial reporting of such crimes fed future reporting of the same types of offenses so that crimes against the elderly dominated the news agenda and led to the false perception of a crime wave (Fishman, 1978). In short, the seriousness of the crime problem was defined inside newsrooms rather than outside of them, in part based on the original reporting of a single type of crime (Fishman, 1978).

Skidmore (1995) reached similar conclusions in her study of the British media's coverage of sexual abuse of children. She found the reporting on past cases influenced that of future incidents because reporters examined earlier news stories in covering current cases. In addition, she found that journalists tended to focus on stereotypes in reporting such matters. These included blaming social workers for incidents of abuse (89).

Ericson, Baranek, and Chan (1987) produced comparable findings, arguing that journalists are often not experts in areas they cover and rely on previous news items rather than "definitive professional texts" in writing their stories (348, 350). As a consequence, they wrote, news comes closer to reflecting "the social and cultural reality of its own organization than to mirroring the events it reports on" (350). Others reached analogous conclusions (Cook, 1998; Ericson, Baranek, and Chan, 1991; Fishman, 1978; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994).

These studies, then, point to an explanation for changes in coverage. It is not simply news norms that determine content, but also the initial reporting of certain types of crimes. These crimes feed the coverage of future crimes. In addition, because reporters rely on earlier coverage, rather than on public officials or other resources, it appears news organizations are responsible for this phenomenon. Moreover, this practice extends beyond the reporting of news topics. It also explains *how* news events are covered. Specifically, reporters consult on earlier news items, such as stories on child abuse, and offer similar explanations for contemporary crimes.

While this research reveals the nature of journalistic practice, it does not explain *why* certain types of crimes become prominent in the first place or why others are ignored. Consequently, this process does not explain the Horton case's impact on visual framing. Additional studies address this matter.

4. High-profile crimes prompt overreporting of similar crimes

Other research has suggested that high-profile, but possibly isolated, crime incidents have prompted the news media to overreport subsequent, similar crimes. Findings from the Center for Media and Public Affairs indicate that the O.J. Simpson case may have increased network news coverage of murders. The researchers found that network news stories on murders—*excluding* those on the Simpson case—increased by 356 percent after 1993, the year before the killings of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman. Chibnall (1977) detailed how two British teenagers came to personify delinquency in that country's news pages. Katz (1980) reported similar phenomena with regard to Watergate. Reviewing the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, he found that after Watergate stories on government investigations of white-collar crime increased. He added that the *New York Times* began listing articles under a category for white-collar crime in 1975, a year after President Nixon's resignation (180, fn. 7).

Bennett and Lawrence (1995) found evidence for this phenomenon in other types of coverage. They concluded that the prominence of a garbage barge in search of a port that would accept its cargo increased subsequent *New York Times*' coverage of recycling and environmental issues. They also found that journalists—rather than sources—often introduced the barge as a symbol for the nation's waste problems. They labeled the barge and similar high-profile entities "news icons." News icons, they wrote, begin as visual images—such as the raising of the American flag at Iwo Jima—and are "sustained through narratives that journalists, sources, and audiences project onto them" (23).

These studies, then, offer an explanation for *why* news organizations overreport certain types of crimes and other matters. High-profile crimes, such as Watergate, serve as a beacon for journalists, who then overreport similar crimes in future coverage. As a consequence, the image of crime—as it appears in news—is not related to real-world crime rates, but, rather, to high-profile crimes.

While this research explains the rise of certain types of crimes, it does not consider how news icons, including high-profile crimes, change the way news is structured. Are news stories constructed the same way in terms of relying on the same sources and images, or do news icons encourage reporters to alter the way they cover related topics? Consequently, these studies only address changes in news topics, not framing or other aspects of news content. Other work shows how news icons may bring about changes in news structures and as well as news topics.

5. High-profile crimes may alter news structures

Other studies on news icons have shown that they may alter news content. Lawrence (1996) found that the *Los Angeles Times* changed the nature of its coverage of police brutality after the 1991 Rodney King incident. Not only did coverage of the issue increase after the beating—a finding consistent with research on news icons—but also the paper's range of sources on police brutality expanded to include non-officials, thereby altering how the subject was framed verbally. Unlike earlier coverage, stories after the King incident were more likely to contain views that police brutality was caused by departmental racism, lax police management, and an "ugly police subculture" (447).

Similarly, Dahl and Bennett (1996) studied the impact of George Bush's illness during a trade mission to Japan—which they consider a news icon—on subsequent press coverage. They concluded that the image of the president collapsing and vomiting on the Japanese prime minister encouraged future coverage in which reporters portrayed the United States' economic status as weaker—and Japan's stronger—than economic data suggested. They wrote that "news icons invite journalists to become active participants in a process of public problem definition without presenting a formal argument...(N)ews icons provide moments for uncharacteristically direct journalistic authorship of the news narrative" (48). Icons, then, can alter the depiction of larger phenomena, independent of real-world data.

This research takes us a step closer to understanding how high-profile events can alter news content. However, this research only considers how news icons influence the verbal—rather than the visual—framing of news. This is a significant distinction, which will be explored below.

As a whole, research on crime news suggests that the media report certain types of crimes (i.e., those that are consistent with news norms) and that certain, high-profile crimes can influence the reporting of future crimes. Moreover, not only do high-profile, or salient, crimes (i.e., news icons) encourage the reporting of similar offenses, but, also, that such crimes may prompt journalists to alter the nature of their stories by quoting a wider range of sources. Other research in this area has concluded that news icons may lead reporters to offer a portrait of reality that is consistent with the icon but conflicts with real-world data.

However, research on news icons does not address how they may influence reporting in other ways, such as the visual depiction of news items. The news icons analyzed by Bennett and his colleagues are, in fact, unusual occurrences. Images of the president of the United States vomiting in public or of a garbage barge in search of a port do not occur with any great frequency. Consequently, reporters do not have the opportunity to highlight visually similar instances in subsequent coverage. Rather, they link icons with related phenomena, such as recycling or trade. Because similar instances are unlikely to occur, it is improbable that such icons can influence how future news is framed visually, short of repeatedly showing the original icons. However, there may be instances in which news icons are similar visually to re-occurring phenomena, such as plane crashes or "perp walks," in which law enforcement officials lead a handcuffed accused criminal, usually to or from jail. With the availability of visuals that are similar to those of news icons, icons may influence how news is framed visually. This will be explored in the next section.

Before discussing a theory that may explain visual framing, a re-cap of existing theories is necessary to understand how source-reporter relations may affect this process, specifically with regard to crime coverage. While studies on news icons suggest that reporters can drive changes in coverage, the role of sources cannot be ignored. Source indexing appears to partially capture sources' function in crime coverage because it may account for why salient crimes enter the news agenda in the first place. Certainly, journalists must rely on others to bring the occurrence of crimes to their attention, whether it is police officers, district attorneys, or non-elite citizens bearing videotape. Yet, as Gamson and Modigliani (1987) concluded, such crimes must meet news norms. More importantly, it is up to the news media to give them prominence by either repeatedly mentioning the original crime or by overreporting similar crimes. It appears, then, that sources bring incidents to reporters' attention. Reporters, in turn, make them salient based on news norms. Finally, according to research on news icons, high-profile incidents can alter the verbal depiction of real-world phenomena.

What is still uncertain, though, is how these forces interact to account for visual framing. Part of the answer may lie in psychological research, specifically studies on priming. These studies, combined with media's tendency to overreport crimes that are similar to high-profile crimes, offer a sixth explanation of news coverage: visual priming.

6. Salient incidents activate visual priming

Iyengar and Kinder (1987) described priming in the following way: "By calling attention to some matters while ignoring others, television news influences the standards by which governments, presidents, and candidates for public office are judged" (63). In other words, if the news media generally focus on the economy in their coverage, the public will judge the president's overall performance based on his handling of economy.

While priming is a psychological effect and news icons reflect the practices of news organizations, in combination they may explain the changes in news coverage that I just discussed. Bennett and Lawrence (1995) found the repetition of the same news icons in news stories over time. Dahl and Bennett (1996) concluded that news icons may alter the verbal depiction of real-world phenomena. This research suggests that high-profile events can influence subsequent coverage. Similarly, Fishman (1978), Katz (1980), and Skidmore (1995) found changes in news based on coverage of earlier, high-profile crimes. But this coverage did not suggest the presence of news icons. Rather, it appears, the significance of earlier high-profile events is often implicit: e.g., reporters increasingly focused on white-collar crime without necessarily mentioning the Nixon administration. As a consequence, certain crimes influenced the reporting of future crimes, thereby altering the definition of what constituted criminal activity. After Watergate, greater news coverage of similar misdeeds suggested that white-collar offenses defined crime. Also, after the Simpson and Goldman murders, heavier news coverage of murder indicated that homicide typified America's crime problem, even though real-world rates were declining.

What appears to take place in these instances is the priming of reporters. This occurs when the news media alter the portrayal of issues or phenomena to reflect a salient incident. This contention is based on research of news topics and verbal frames. However, if this occurs with written or spoken news content, it may also apply to visual content. This process may be labeled **visual priming**. *Visual priming occurs when the news media alter the visual portrayal of issues or phenomena to reflect a salient incident.* In other words, prominent occurrences or people "prime" reporters so that they increasingly focus on similar examples in subsequent coverage, thereby altering the visual depictions of relevant issues or phenomena. Network news coverage of crime after the Horton case became prominent may be an instance of media priming. In this case, reporters may have begun portraying criminals in ways similar to Horton, implicitly suggesting that Horton—and criminals like him (i.e., black and violent)—defined America's crime problem. A brief recounting of its impact on the 1988 presidential campaign reveals how the case became so prominent among news organizations.

The Horton Issue

During the 1988 presidential campaign, Republican presidential nominee George Bush attacked his Democratic counterpart, Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis on furloughs given to criminals in Massachusetts. These, said Bush, included first-degree murderers not eligible for parole. Bush often cited one such prisoner, "Willie" Horton, who escaped during a furlough and raped a woman in Maryland before being apprehended. Complementing Bush's discourse was advertising from a pro-Bush group—the National Security Political Action Committee—that featured Horton. Network news also covered the Horton case repeatedly, both as a crime story and, as the campaign wore on, as an effective Bush campaign tactic. Stories included both pictures of Horton (e.g., his police mug shot, Horton being led away in handcuffs) and the ads featuring Horton, an African-American male convicted of murder. In short, like the Simpson case and Watergate, the Horton issue became a high-profile crime case.

Previous studies focused on how high-profile crimes influenced the *types* of subsequent crimes the media reported (e.g., murder, attacks on the elderly). This chapter analyzes how network news portrays criminals visually. It is not concerned with how the television media overreported or underreported the *type* of crimes Horton committed (i.e., murder and rape). Rather, it is concerned with how network news portrayed criminals in relation to Horton. Were black criminals more likely than white ones to be shown as Horton was shown? (e.g., handcuffed and restrained by police) Were white criminals more likely than black criminals to be shown in ways far removed from the Horton visuals? (e.g., in suits and in courtrooms) In short, did the Horton case prime network news to portray white and black criminals differently?

Research I did with Jamieson (1992) found some evidence for visual priming. The study compared the portrayal of criminals in network news stories from 1985 to 1989 to that in stories covering the crime issue in 1988 presidential campaign. The latter sample coded all criminals, with the exception of Horton. The proportion of blacks identified or shown as criminals in the 1988 stories was significantly higher than in non-campaign stories in other years. This finding suggests that Horton may have served as the visual template for criminals in presidential campaign stories on crime because black criminals were more likely to be shown in these stories than in those in other years. In short, the Horton case may have primed the news media to portray criminals to resemble Horton in succeeding news stories. However, unlike previous work on news icons, the icon—Horton—does not appear in the stories. Rather, his impact is implicit.

Here I take these findings a step further by analyzing whether Horton served as a visual template, or news icon, for other crime stories in 1988 and for crime stories in 1989: Did the case prime reporters to portray criminals differently in subsequent stories? Our research showed that Horton appeared to influence the proportion of black criminals featured in presidential campaign coverage. This study asks if similar phenomena occurred beyond campaign coverage in 1988 and into 1989: Did the networks portray black criminals differently after the Horton case became prominent? It also asks if network news portrayed *white* criminals in ways that were quite different from Horton, such as in suits, in interviews or press conferences, or in courtrooms. Such visuals make criminals appear less menacing because they do not show them detained; rather, they show them communicating to the public, dressed formally, or as part of the legal process. In short, they do not appear as criminals.

Entman's (1990) work offers some support for these phenomena. He found that black criminals were more likely than white ones to be shown in mug shots and restrained by police. However, his study only included news coverage *after* the Horton incident became prominent, preventing a comparison with pre-Horton crime news.

This explanation for visual framing also addresses the impact reporters and sources have on this process. Consistent with the concept of visual priming, I will argue that reporters, rather than sources, determined the hypothesized changes in the visual frames in crime coverage. Previous research has concluded that high-profile crimes influence the reporting of subsequent crimes. In some instances, reporters refer to previous crime stories in reporting contemporary ones. In others, journalists broaden the scope of sources, thereby diminishing the influence of official sources. Additional studies have found that coverage of certain types of crimes, such as murder, often has no relationship to their actual rate of occurrence. As a whole, this research suggests that reporters determine which crimes are covered and how they are covered. This study advances this research and argues that reporters, drawing upon high-profile crimes and criminals, determine how criminals are framed visually.

Hypotheses

The study's hypotheses fall into two basic categories. First, alleged black criminals[23] in 1988 and 1989 were more likely than alleged black criminals in 1986, 1987, and January 1988 (i.e., the period before the Horton issue reached national prominence) to be shown as Horton was shown. In the now-famous "Willie Horton" ad, produced by the National Security Political Action Committee (Simon, 1990), and in network news coverage, Horton was shown in more than one type of visual. He was shown in handcuffs, in a mug shot, and being restrained by police. He was not shown in prison. However, because Horton was shown in custody, the study coded for visuals that showed criminals in prison. Visuals of criminals in prison are similar to those of criminals restrained by police or in handcuffs because they show criminals detained by law enforcement or corrections officials. Moreover, prison visuals—as opposed to those of courtrooms or press conferences—clearly show those pictured as criminals.

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[23] The term "alleged" criminal is necessary because those depicted in news stories were sometimes later acquitted. The methodology section explains this definition in greater detail.

If the Horton visuals influenced the portrayal of black criminals in subsequent crime stories, black criminals in June 1988 and January 1989 (Time 2) would be more likely to be shown as Horton was shown than were black criminals in 1986, 1987, and January 1988 (Time 1):

H1: Alleged black criminals were more likely to be shown in handcuffs in Time 2 than in Time 1.

H2: The mug shots of alleged black criminals were more likely to be shown in Time 2 than in Time 1.

H3: Alleged black criminals were more likely to be shown led or restrained by police in Time 2 than in Time 1.

H4: Alleged black criminals were more likely to be shown in prison in Time 2 than in Time 1.

The second category of hypotheses pertains to alleged white criminals. If the Horton visuals influenced those of black criminals, it follows that white criminals were shown in ways quite different from Horton:

H5: Alleged white criminals were more likely to be shown with attorneys in Time 2 than in Time 1.

H6: Alleged white criminals were more likely to be shown in suits in Time 2 than in Time 1.

H7: Alleged white criminals were more likely to be shown in courtrooms in Time 2 than in Time 1.

H8: Alleged white criminals were more likely to be shown in interviews or press conferences in Time 2 than in Time 1.

Because they do not show criminals detained, these visuals suggest that those pictured are not criminals at all. Rather, they resemble other types of news subjects: public officials, experts, celebrities, and white-collar employees. Moreover, they suggest a stark divergence from the visual portrayal of black criminals after the Horton case became prominent.

Method

The database for this study is network news coverage (ABC, CBS, and NBC) from 1986-1989. The sample included every crime story aired in the last half of January and June in these years. Crime stories selected were based on descriptions in the Vanderbilt News Archive abstracts. The sample excluded stories on the Iran-Contra affair, which would have skewed the sample toward white criminals had they been included. The heaviest coverage of Iran-Contra in the sampled period occurred during the June 1987 congressional hearings.

The study coded every criminal or alleged criminal in these stories. The term "alleged criminal" is necessary because some individuals shown were acquitted of the crimes they were tried for or their convictions were later overturned on appeal, and because in the United States one is presumed innocent until proven guilty. Some of those coded appeared in backdrop inserts in stories about crime. However, because both criminals and alleged criminals were often shown in the same manner (e.g., in handcuffs), the legal distinctions were often meaningless in relation to the visuals. Therefore, both alleged criminals and criminals formed a single category: alleged criminals. Because every alleged criminal was coded, a single visual could have included 10 alleged criminals. This often required replaying the tapes of stories several times to determine how many alleged criminals appeared in a single visual and how they were portrayed.

The analysis coded several aspects of these visuals. First, the study coded the race of every alleged criminal: white, black, Hispanic, or unidentifiable, in which the race could not be determined. Of the 871 alleged criminals in the sampled stories, 675 were white, 131 were black, nine were Hispanic, and 56 were unidentifiable. It also coded the visuals of alleged criminals in ways that were consistent with—and quite different from—those of Horton. The Horton visuals showed him in the following ways: in a mug shot (i.e., a close-up picture of his face), in handcuffs, with police officers, and being restrained by police officers. The study coded these visuals. The study also coded the following: alleged criminals in prison, in suits, in interviews or press conferences, in courtrooms, and with their attorneys. The visual categories were not mutually exclusive. For instance, criminals could be shown in courtrooms and in handcuffs. I ran separate cross-tabulations for the race of the criminals and each visual and compared the proportions of alleged criminal visuals within racial categories. Because there were so few visuals of alleged Hispanic criminals, I only compared proportions of black and white criminals.

I considered mid-June 1988 the point at which the Horton case could have reasonably begun to influence the portrayal of criminals in network news.[24] Even though Bush did not use Horton's name in a speech until June 22, 1988, Bush and the Republicans began attacking Dukakis on the furlough issue on June 9 at the Texas Republican state convention in Houston (Cramer, 1992, 1010-1011; Simon, 1990, 217-

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[24] CBS ran a story on the Massachusetts furlough program on December 2, 1987 and NBC did the same on January 21, 1988. Both stories mentioned the Horton case. However, none of the networks began regularly featuring Horton until the summer of 1988.

218).[25] In addition, the Massachusetts furlough program and Horton had been circulating among news organizations much earlier. In 1987, the *Lawrence Eagle-Tribune* did more than 200 stories on the furlough program—which included coverage of the Horton incident—and won a Pulitzer Prize for them in March 1988, giving the case national prominence. *Newsweek* ran a story in January 1988 on a voter registration drive in Massachusetts prisons that mentioned Horton (Simon, 1990, 212). On March 28, *Business Week* ran an opinion column attacking Dukakis, in part over the Horton case (Simon, 1990, 212). By late June, *Time* had run a story on the Massachusetts furlough program using Horton's picture (Simon, 218-219). In addition, then-Senator Al Gore raised the furlough issue in mid-April 1988 during a New York primary debate (Simon, 1990, 212-213). Given the attention the Horton case received among news organizations during the winter and spring of 1988, one could reasonably expect changes in network news visuals beginning in the second half of June.

Proportions of black and white criminals in each visual (e.g., in handcuffs, in a courtroom, mug shot) were calculated. A Z score was calculated to determine if the proportions of visuals within racial groups were significantly different between Time 1 (1986, 1987, January 1988) and Time 2 (June 1988, January 1989). There were 499 visuals of criminals in Time 1 and 372 in Time 2. Of these, 806 were analyzed: 367 white criminal visuals and 90 black criminal visuals in Time 1 and 308 white criminal visuals and 41 black criminal visuals in Time 2.

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[25] Kinder and Sanders (1996) wrote that Horton and the furlough program became "a fixture" in Bush's speeches even sooner—in early June (234). For more on the Bush campaign's use of the furlough issue see John Roberts, "The Other Bush Behind the Willie Horton Attack Strategy—George W." *George*, February/March 2000, pp. 22-23.

Results

Alleged Black Criminals

Hypotheses 1 through 4 predicted that alleged black criminals were more likely to be shown in visuals similar to those in which Horton was shown. The findings supported two of these hypotheses and did not support two others (see Table Seven). H1 predicted that black criminals were more likely to be shown in handcuffs in June 1988 and January 1989 (Time 2) than in 1986, 1987, and January 1988 (Time 1). A higher proportion of black criminals were indeed shown in handcuffs in Time 2—27 percent to 21 percent—but the difference was not statistically significant (Z=.734). H2 predicted that mug shots of alleged black criminals were more likely to be shown in Time 2 than in Time 1. The findings did not support this hypothesis, either. In fact, the proportion of mug shots of black criminals slightly declined from Time 1 to Time 2. Perhaps this finding is not surprising. The use of mug shots is longstanding and common device in network news. As we shall see, the proportion of mug shots of white criminals also remained unchanged over the two time periods.

H3 predicted that alleged black criminals were more likely to be shown led or restrained by police in Time 2 than in Time 1. The findings supported this hypothesis. Twenty-nine percent of alleged black criminals in Time 2 were shown led or restrained by police, consistent with the way Horton was shown in the PAC ad and in network news coverage. In contrast, less than 6 percent of alleged black criminals in Time 1 were shown in this manner (Z=3.7).

The findings also supported H4, which predicted that alleged black criminals were more likely to be shown in prison in Time 2 than in Time 1. Twenty-seven percent of alleged black criminals were shown in this way in Time 2, but only 11 percent in Time 1 (Z=2.32).

TABLE SEVEN: Black criminals in visuals similar to Horton visuals

	Visual							
Time Period	*Handcuffs* (%)	n	*Mug shot* (%)	n	*Restrained* (%)**	n	*Prison* (%)**	n
Time 1	21	19	19	17	5.6	5	11	10
Time 2	27	11	12	5	29	12	27	11

**Z>1.96

Though not part of my hypotheses, I also compared proportions of alleged black criminal visuals that were quite different from those of Horton over the two time periods. These visuals were the following: with an attorney, in a suit, in a courtroom, and in an interview or press conference. As Table Eight shows, alleged black criminals were no more or less likely to be shown in with an attorney, in a courtroom, or in an interview or press conference in Time 2. In addition, they were significantly *less* likely to be shown in suits in Time 2 (Z=2.81). As a whole, these findings reveal that alleged black criminals in Time 2 were significantly more likely to be shown in ways similar to Horton (i.e., restrained and in prison), but they were not any more likely to be shown in ways that were different from Horton. In sum, alleged black criminals began to appear more like Horton, not less like him.

TABLE EIGHT: Black criminals in visuals dissimilar to Horton visuals

			Visual					
Time Period	*Attorney* (%)	n	*In suit*** (%)	n	*Courtroom* (%)	n	*Interview/ Press conf.* (%)	n
Time 1	3.3	3	29	26	8.9	8	13	12
Time 2	4.9	2	7.3	3	4.9	2	15	6

**Z>1.96

Alleged White Criminals

Hypotheses 5 through 8 predicted that alleged white criminals were more likely to be shown in visuals different from those in which Horton was shown. The findings supported two of these hypotheses and did not support two others (see Table Nine). H6 predicted that alleged white criminals were more likely to be shown in suits in Time 2 than in Time 1. The findings supported this hypothesis: 18 percent of alleged white criminals were shown in suits in Time 1 while 28 percent were shown in this way in Time 2 (Z=3.12). Alleged white criminals were also significantly more likely to be shown in press conferences or interviews in Time 2 than in Time 1 (Z=1.67), as predicted by H8. The findings did not support H5 or H7, which predicted higher proportions of white criminals with attorneys and in courtrooms in Time 2 than in Time 1 (see Table Nine).

TABLE NINE: White criminals in visuals dissimilar to Horton visuals

			Visual					
Time Period	*Attorney* (%)	n	*In suit*** (%)	n	*Courtroom* (%)	n	*Interview/* (%)* *Press conference*	n
Time 1	8.2	30	18	66	17	63	17	63
Time 2	9.1	28	28	85	18	56	22	69

*Z>1.65
**Z>1.96

Although not part of the hypotheses, I calculated the proportions of visuals of white criminals to determine if they, like black criminals, were more likely to be portrayed as Horton was portrayed in Time 2 than in Time 1. This was not the case. The proportion of alleged white criminals in these visuals did not significantly change from Time 1 to Time 2 (see Table Ten). These findings reveal a sharper contrast between the portrayal of alleged white and black criminals in Time 2. While alleged black criminals in Time 2 were more likely to be portrayed as Horton was portrayed, alleged white criminals were no more likely to be shown in this manner. This reveals a divergence in the portrayal of alleged black and white criminals after the Horton issue became prominent. This will be further discussed in the final section. Also, as was the case with alleged black criminals, there was no significant increase in the proportion of mug shots of alleged white criminals. This is further evidence that mug shots are a standard feature of news, unaffected by the visual of Horton's mug shot.

TABLE TEN: White criminals in visuals similar to Horton visuals

					Visual			
Time Period	*Handcuffs* (%)	n	*Mug shot* (%)	n	*Restrained* (%)	n	*Prison* (%)	n
Time 1	9	33	23	85	3.5	13	4.1	15
Time 2	6.2	19	26	79	2.6	8	4.5	14

Public Figures

The findings suggest that the Horton visuals may have influenced the visuals of subsequent black criminals in network news. It is also possible that these visuals influenced the portrayal of white criminals, who were more likely to be shown in ways dissimilar from Horton. By increasingly showing alleged white criminals in suits and in interviews, network news significantly contrasted the depictions of alleged white and black criminals after Horton became a prominent figure.

Besides Horton, however, another factor may have influenced this change. Network news may have increasingly focused on other types of criminals (i.e., those not convicted of committing violent crimes), which may have altered the visuals of white criminals. One possibility is that network news increasingly covered crimes committed by public figures (e.g., celebrities, elected or appointed public officials), who are overwhelmingly white and who may be less likely to be shown in handcuffs or in prison. The prevalence of these types of criminals may explain why there was an increase in white criminals shown in suits and in interviews or press conferences.

The study coded for public figures in both time periods. Criminals or alleged criminals in this category included the following: Reagan administration officials Lyn

Nofziger and Michael Deaver, evangelist Jim Bakker, former Arizona governor Evan Mecham, and Washington, DC Mayor Marion Barry. The findings showed that there was indeed an increase between Time 1 and Time 2 in the proportion of white criminals who were public figures (Z=1.94). There was no corresponding increase in the proportion of black criminals who were public figures (see Table Eleven). It is possible, then, that the increase in the proportion of white criminals in suits and in interviews or press conferences may be explained by the expansion in coverage of public figures.

TABLE ELEVEN: Visuals of Public figures

	Race of Criminal			
Time Period	*White** (%)	n	*Black* (%)	n
Time 1	29	108	22	20
Time 2	36	112	22	9

Z>1.65

However, because there was no increase or decrease in the proportion of alleged black criminals who were public figures, this does not explain why the visuals of alleged black criminals changed to resemble those of Horton. It also does not explain why network news increased its coverage of public figures. Was there an increase in crimes committed by white public figures or did network news simply begin giving greater attention to these types of criminals?

These data cannot answer such questions. But they can shed some light on whether the increase in white criminals shown in suits and interviews or press conferences was due to an increase in visuals of public figures. I removed criminals who were public figures from the sample and compared the proportions of alleged white and black criminals who were not public figures. Specifically, I compared proportions of these alleged black and white criminals who were shown in suits and in press conferences or interviews. In both instances, white criminals were more likely to be shown in suits and in press conferences or interviews than were black criminals (see Table Twelve). However, the difference between white and black criminals in suits was not significant (Z=1.28). Even so, this finding suggests that the increased attention paid to public figures does not entirely explain why the visuals of white criminals changed over the two time periods. If it did, there would be no differences between these visuals of white and black criminals who were not public figures.

TABLE TWELVE: Non-public figures in suits and interviews/press conferences

	Visual			
Race of Criminal	*Suit* (%)	n	*Interview/Press Conference** (%)	n
Black	10.8	11	9.8	10
White	15.8	72	16.7	76

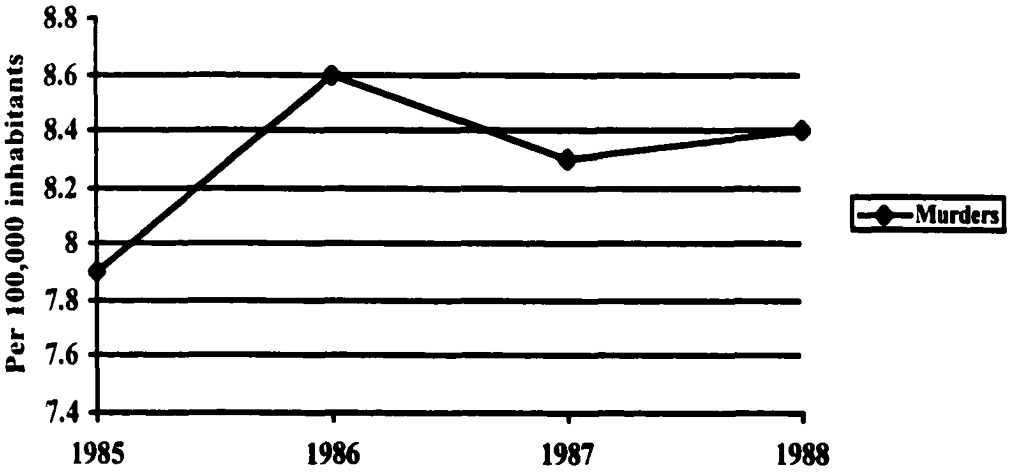
Z>1.65

Crime Rates

Another explanation for the change in network news visuals might be an increase in violent crime, particularly murder, in 1988 or an increase in the proportion of blacks committing these types of crimes. Violent criminals may be more likely to be shown restrained, as was Horton, or in prison. And, if blacks were committing a higher proportion of violent crimes during this time period, the media may have shown a greater proportion of black criminals in this manner. Such a change in real-world crime rates would reduce the possibility that Horton influenced the portrayal of criminals on the networks.

Statistics from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's *Uniform Crime Reports* offer a mixed picture of crimes committed during this time period.[26] The nation's murder rate in 1988 was higher than in 1987 and 1985, but lower than the 1986 rate (see Figure Six). Overall, the proportion of black offenders increased from 1985 levels while that of white offenders declined. However, the proportions of both black and white offenders increased *and* declined in the intervening years (see Figure Seven).

Figure Six: Murder Rates



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports

In sum, there was neither a consistent increase in the proportion of black offenders nor a steady decrease in that of white offenders from 1985 to 1988. Therefore, neither overall homicide rates nor the proportions of offenders explain the change in the portrayal of black and white criminals. Had real-world crime influenced these changes, distinctions between white and black criminals in network news would have appeared in 1986, disappeared in 1987—when the proportions of offenders were equal—and re-appeared in 1988. Moreover, differences in the proportions between black and white offenders in these years are relatively small, never separated by more than 5 percent. These data, then, do not explain the divergent portrayals of alleged black and white criminals in network news, beginning after the Horton case became prominent.

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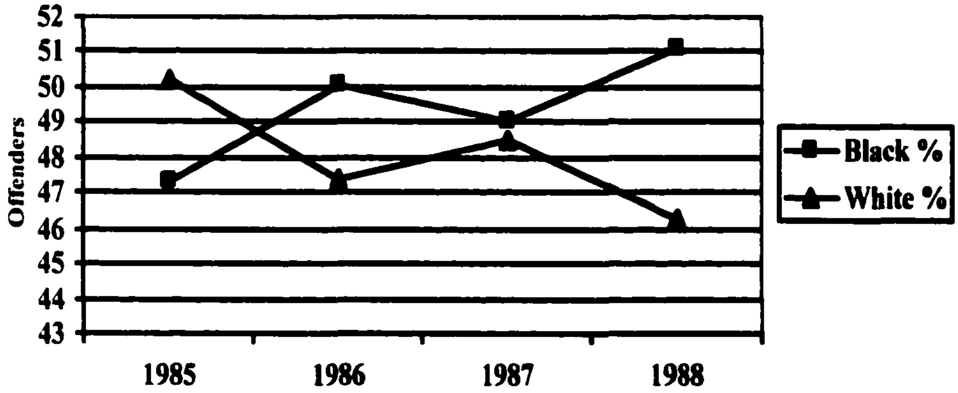
[26] I excluded 1989 because the network news data included only January, making 1989 crime rates meaningless to this analysis. Interestingly, while the murder rate increased in 1989, the January murder rate was below that year's monthly average.

Figure Eight shows a rise in violent crime during the studied time period. Violent crimes include murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. This change may justify increases in the portrayal of criminals who are detained, either in prison or by law enforcement officials. However, while 1988 marked a peak year among the four in violent crime, there was a bigger increase in violent crime between 1985 and 1986 than between 1987 and 1988.

Figure Seven: Proportion of Offenders



Moreover, as displayed in Figure Nine, the proportion of black individuals accused of violent crimes was lower than that of white offenders in all four years, including 1988. The racial-makeup of violent criminals, then, did not change, even though the networks' portrayal of criminals certainly did.

Figure Eight: Violent Crime Rates

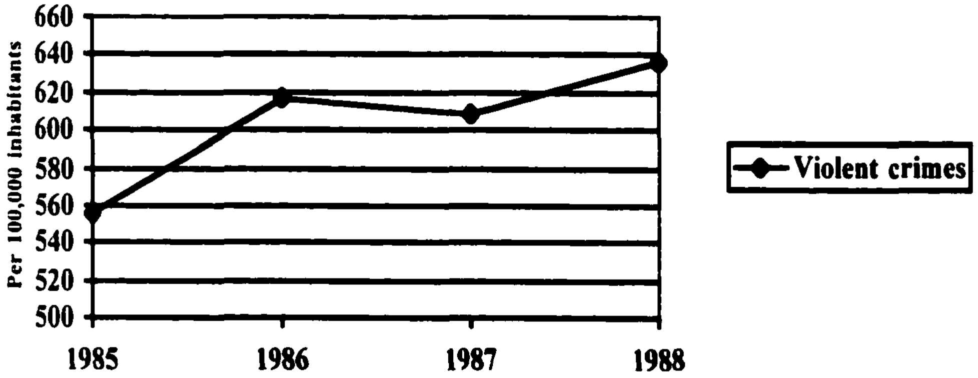
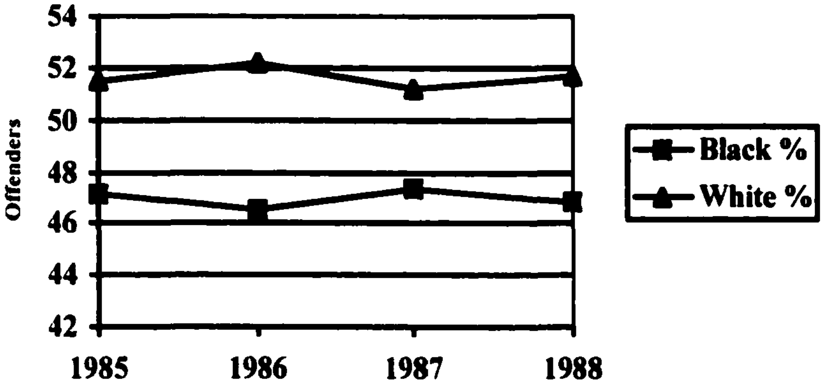


Figure Nine: Proportion of Violent Offenders*



*Based on arrests

Discussion

The data supported four of the eight hypotheses. However, taken as a whole, the findings suggest a marked change in the way alleged black and white criminals were portrayed in network news after Willie Horton became a prominent figure. Black criminals were more likely to be shown detained by law enforcement or corrections officials in mid-June 1988 and January 1989 (Time 2) than in 1986, 1987, and January 1988 (Time 1). In contrast, white criminals were not any more likely to be shown in these ways in Time 2. In addition, white criminals were more likely to be shown in ways that did not show them detained in Time 2 than in Time 1 (i.e., in suits and in interviews or press conferences). By comparison, black criminals were no more likely to be shown in these or similar ways, such as in a courtroom or with attorneys.

Another possible explanation for this change was the increase in coverage of white criminals who were public figures. Because of their celebrity status, it seems likely that these types of criminals would be shown in suits and in interviews or press conferences rather than in prison or restrained by police. However, even after removing public figures from the sample, white criminals were still more likely than were black criminals to be shown in suits and in interviews or press conferences, though not significantly so in the former instance. This indicates that increased coverage of white public figures does not explain why the visuals of white criminals changed.

Real-world crime rates also do not explain the data. Murder and violent crime rates, and the proportions of black and white offenders in both categories, fluctuated in ways that are not consistent with the divergent portrayal of criminals in network news, beginning in 1988. In fact, the proportion of white offenders for violent crimes was higher than that for black offenders in all four years. Moreover, the differences between the proportions of black and white offenders are too small to explain their discrete portrayals after the Horton case became prominent.

In sum, the network news data reveal a divergence in the portrayal of alleged black and white criminals after the Horton issue reached prominence. Black criminals increasingly appeared in visuals similar to those that depicted Horton while white criminals increasingly appeared in those starkly different from the Horton visuals.

These findings are evidence of visual framing in network news coverage of crime. Criminals were not portrayed uniformly over the time periods analyzed. Rather, they were shown in significantly different ways, thereby altering the visual representations of what constituted black and white criminals. However, previous studies have not accounted for the production of visual frames. As an explanation for visual framing I offered the concept of visual priming. This was defined as a process by which the news media alter the visual portrayal of issues or phenomena to reflect a salient incident. Indeed, the data suggest the Willie Horton visuals were a catalyst for these frames. After Horton—and the visuals showing him restrained by police—reached prominence, network news altered the way it portrayed both black and white criminals. Alleged black criminals began to look more like Horton, alleged white criminals less so. Given the high-profile nature of the Horton case and the visuals used to depict him, it is not surprising to find that other black criminals were increasingly shown in similar ways, beginning in the summer of 1988.

Reporters, not sources, account for visual frames

While visual priming does not explicitly account for source influence, certainly sources have a role in this process. Yet, it is a limited role, consistent with the findings of Gamson and Modigliani and with research on news icons. While sources, in this case the Bush campaign, may introduce an occurrence, journalists must accept it and make it salient.

Previous research indicates that this is the process by which visual framing occurs. Studies have shown that the reporting of certain types of crimes bears little relation to real-world crime rates. Other studies have suggested that high-profile crimes have increased coverage of subsequent similar crimes, independent of their rate of occurrence. Moreover, scholars have noted that reporters rely on previous news stories in covering crime. Together, prior research indicates that reporters determine which crimes are covered and how they are covered.

Given the widespread attention it received in 1988, the Horton case certainly qualifies as a high-profile crime and, therefore, a source of media priming. Unlike earlier analyses, however, this study did not examine which *types of crimes* became prominent after the Horton case surfaced nationally. Rather, it analyzed the types of visuals that appeared. Consistent with previous research, the findings here suggest that the portrayal of criminals—like the coverage of certain crimes—may change after a major crime or criminal becomes familiar.

Additional evidence bolsters the claim that news coverage—rather than sources—primes subsequent coverage. Not only did the press help make the Horton case prominent to begin with (Slass, 1990), but they also selected visuals in subsequent crime stories. By selecting certain visuals and excluding others, journalists may define reality through pictures. Epstein (1973) recounted how the networks diminished the use of combat footage in Vietnam War in order to fit producers' conception of reality, even though the nature of the conflict had not altered (17-19). Jamieson (1992) chronicled how network news reporters selected certain campaign visuals to signify the standing of competing candidates: favorable visuals were used for leading candidates, unfavorable ones for trailing candidates. Waldman and Devitt (1998) reached similar conclusions in their study of newspaper photographs in 1996 presidential campaign coverage.

Certainly, news subjects have some influence over the visuals available to reporters. Candidates and public officials hold speeches or press conferences in front of national landmarks or breath-taking natural treasures, thereby encouraging reporters to use these visuals (Crouse, 1973; Hertsgaard, 1988). However, such actions mark the introduction of certain visuals and topics. They do not account for why these items are covered and repeatedly made prominent in subsequent coverage. They also do not explain why similar visuals appear in future stories.

This is because journalists ultimately select which issues are covered and which visuals are used. As Cook (1998) argued, while government officials provide the stages, actors, and lines, journalists "cut and paste these elements together according to their own standards of quality and interest..." (15).[27] One might add that it is also journalists who make issues and people salient by repeatedly covering them, independent of the actions of sources. Furthermore, the sample included news coverage of crime, not the 1988 presidential campaign. While it is possible the Bush campaign influenced journalists covering the election, it is less likely that it affected reporters covering crime or that it intended to do so.

It is also conceivable that journalists covering crime followed the lead of campaign reporters, who were initially swayed by the Bush campaign. Yet, the study included stories in January 1989—two months after the election—reducing the likelihood of direct links between the Bush campaign, campaign journalists, and reporters covering crime. If anything, the Bush campaign may have affected subsequent coverage by initially raising the Horton crime, but it was the networks that gave it "high-profile" status. Over the course of a campaign, candidates raise several issues, not all of which capture the media's attention, primarily because they do fail to meet journalists' criteria for novel and dramatic happenings (Lichter and Noyes, 1995; Patterson and Davis, 1984).

As Mendelberg (1997) noted, the Horton case was "only one of several elements in Bush's discussion of crime" (138). However, because of its symbolic power, the Horton case was an obvious choice for the media to trumpet in their coverage. If anything, then, the Horton issue met—rather than changed—the networks' criteria for drama and compelling visuals. Ansolabehere et al. (1991) reached this conclusion, arguing that the Bush campaign's news strategy was "tailored to the requirements of television" (115) rather than the other way around.

Reporters could have simply ignored the Horton issue and continued to portray criminals in ways they had been depicted in 1986 and 1987. However, the press did neither. Instead, it amplified the Horton case in its campaign coverage, a maneuver that appears to have affected future crime coverage.

Linking these findings with Iyengar and Kinder's (1987) studies, I have characterized this process as visual priming, which occurs when the news media alter the visual portrayal of issues or phenomena to reflect a salient incident. However, unlike Iyengar and Kinder's term, this is not a psychological effect; rather, it describes news practices.

Beyond offering insight into how news is constructed, these findings may also have some bearing on whites' attitudes toward blacks and on governmental policies designed to ameliorate racial discrimination. Mendelberg (1997) found that a network news story on Horton activated prejudiced attitudes and inflated opposition to racially egalitarian policies—such as government spending on blacks and affirmative action in schools—among prejudiced white subjects. At the same time, the Horton story did *not*

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[27] See also, Cook, Timothy (1989). *Making Laws and Making News: Media Strategies in the U.S. House of*

increase the significance of crime as a social problem among subjects, suggesting that the Horton issue influenced the public solely on racial matters.

Gilliam et al. (1996) showed that similar effects may apply to coverage of other black criminals. Exposure to news stories with a black perpetrator—as opposed to a white perpetrator—increased subjects' concern about crime. Racial attitudes also influenced some subjects' perceptions of the causes of crime and solutions to reducing crime. Subjects with high negative stereotypes of blacks were more likely than those with low negative stereotypes to offer group-based attributions of responsibility (i.e., breakdown of the family and religious values in the black community) and favor punitive policies. Moreover, only racial imagery triggered these sentiments; the level of violence in news coverage of crime did not affect viewers' opinions. Oliver (1999) found that anti-black attitudes were associated with misidentification of black criminal suspects. By increasingly portraying other black criminals in the way Horton was shown, networks may have activated similar attitudes among white network news viewers.

In sum, this analysis reveals changes in the way criminals were portrayed in network news visuals *after* the Willie Horton case became prominent. Newscasts showed black and white criminals in divergent ways, with black criminals more closely resembling Horton and white criminals appearing in suits and press conferences. Given past research, it is likely journalists, rather than sources such as law enforcement officials, engineered this shift. These changes are evidence of visual framing, in which the visual representations of a person, event, or phenomenon are altered to fit the news media's perceptions of these entities. As a catalyst for visual framing, I offered the

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Representatives. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution. Chapter 6.

concept of visual priming, which occurs when the news media alter the portrayal of issues or phenomena to reflect a salient event or person. The results supported this as a factor of visual priming. As a consequence of visual priming, real-life depictions of people and events may bear little resemblance to reality.

The next chapter turns to reporters for an explanation of the findings presented in this and previous chapters.

CHAPTER EIGHT

EXPLAINING THE NEWS

Perspectives from Network and Newspaper Reporters on the Processing of Political Discourse

Research presented so far has analyzed how news stories report political discourse. It has found—with some exceptions—associations between how candidates are quoted and news frames. Similarly, the chapter on network news visuals has documented how a salient image—in this case, that of Willie Horton—may spur changes in visual depictions of crime. This chapter seeks additional explanation for these findings by surveying journalists who wrote or aired the news stories included in this study.

One of the specific questions raised by my research is: Do journalists structure their stories based on what candidates say or do they select portions of political discourse to fit a pre-existing news frame? Responses from journalists, described in this chapter, offer evidence for the latter conclusion: reporters chose which type of political discourse to include based on a pre-existing news frame.

By describing the perspectives of those who actually wrote the stories analyzed for this research, I am moving toward a fuller understanding of the relationship between political discourse and news content.

Methodology

Reporters

Reporters chosen to respond to this survey were those who had aired stories I analyzed. I selected network reporters who aired stories on either the 1992 or 1996 presidential campaigns during the month of September. I obtained their names by reviewing transcripts provided by the Annenberg School for Communication. I also included responses from *Washington Post* reporters in order to better illuminate how journalists in another medium—in this case print—process political discourse. *Washington Post* reporters were originally interviewed to explain the results of a chapter I chose not to include in my study. However, I have included their responses that are relevant to my central question: Is our sense of verbal discourse distorted by press reports?

I contacted twenty *Washington Post* reporters via phone, fax, and electronic mail, receiving five completed surveys. I contacted ten network reporters via phone, fax, and electronic mail, receiving five completed surveys. I elected to have journalists respond in written form because I thought this would give them more time to contemplate the questions and to respond at their convenience. I also gave respondents the option of not using their name in filling out the survey.

Questions

The questions in both surveys were straightforward. They simply recounted my findings and asked journalists to explain the results (see Appendix Two for both surveys). They also included broader questions, such as how journalism has changed over the years. As a whole, the questions were intended to explore the relationship between reporters and sources by seeking out factors that contribute to news content: Has journalism become more "interpretative"? Why are certain journalistic descriptions (e.g., strategy analysis) juxtaposed with certain types of quotes? Has the relationship between reporters and sources changed over the years and, if so, how has this affected journalism? Though in some instances reporters could not explain my findings, their perspectives helped illuminate certain areas of how news is constructed.

Findings

Responses from both print and television journalists covered two areas: the question of increased interpretation in journalism and changes in the relationship between reporters and sources. Questions to television journalists sought explanations for my findings (e.g., the association between reported political discourse and news frames).

Increased Interpretation in Journalism

All ten of the respondents acknowledged the rise in interpretive journalism. This is consistent with broader research on perceptions of reporters. Sixty-nine percent of national journalists say the distinction between reporting and commentary has seriously eroded, compared to 53 percent in 1995, according to a January 1999 survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. In addition, more than two-thirds of print reporters say that providing an interpretation of the news is a core journalistic principle, compared to less than 50 percent of television journalists (The Pew Research Center, 1999).

Both the *Washington Post* and the network reporters I surveyed tended to offer the same explanation for the rise in interpretive journalism: the advent of 24-hour news, from which news consumers can immediately obtain the basic facts of a story.

Consequently, they contended, reporters are expected to offer something different when their stories appear hours later or even the next day. The *Washington Post*'s Dan Morgan wrote that "a lot of our readers already know that Congress passed a budget bill when they pick up their paper in the morning" (Survey, December 8, 1999). Added another *Post* reporter:

> As TV political news coverage became more pervasive and sophisticated (providing instantaneous reporters on breaking events), there was increased pressure on newspapers and magazines to provide not only the basics of developing stories (the traditional who, what where, when, and why), but also more interpretative and predictive stories. Given the competitive demands and the needs of an increasingly sophisticated audience and readership, it is no longer sufficient to merely report what politicians say and do...I think, in the end, viewers and readers are better informed (Survey, May 17, 2000).

Network reporters agreed with this assessment. Among those was CBS' Eric Engberg, who wrote the following:

> In the age of CNN, all-news radio, C-SPAN, and the Internet, there is little point in a major news organization simply reporting what the candidates are saying. Thirty years ago, (candidates') words would be real news when reported by the CBS "Evening News". Today, the 7 p.m. audience already knows the basic facts (Survey, March 2, 2000).

Beyond the need to evolve in order to meet changes in journalism—and corresponding competitive pressures—some of the reporters also thought the rise in interpretive journalism does the news consumer a service. The *Post*'s Kevin Merida, now a reporter for the paper's "Style" section, wrote that "readers need to be led through the minefield of contradictory statements (by public officials), confusing policy pronouncement, (and) political speak" (Survey, May 10, 2000).

The *Post*'s Morgan, who contended that journalism has not become dramatically more interpretive, particularly compared to news stories written in the nineteenth century, felt that many of the changes in print journalism amount to giving the reader more information, not interpretation. "We…want to provide additional information (to the reader), such as how a deal was cut, who was involved, what lobbyists had a say in it, etc," Morgan wrote. "That's our 'added value' in the oversaturated media world of today" (Survey, December 8, 1999).

A CBS reporter thought interpretive reporting was necessary in order to avoid "parrot(ing) what the candidate is saying" (Survey, March 6, 2000). But she expressed some reservations about this process:

> I think part of this is due to a general cynicism on the part of the public and the press that believes candidates are not sincere, that everything they say and do is pandering to some constituency, and some believe it's "up to us" to expose the motives. I'm not sure journalists do a good job of this, though, and in the process of "interpreting," journalists often insert their own biases into the story" (Survey, March 6, 2000).

Two other reporters also had concerns about the effects of interpretive stories on journalism. A former *Post* reporter said that "the amount of interpretation that goes on in political reporting makes me personally very uneasy" (Survey, May 9, 2000). A CBS reporter added the following:

> It seems to me that this (rise in interpretation) began in the early 90s, (when) we started paying so much attention to the politics of some development we'd often forget the development itself. So, we'd do a story on how (the president's) health care plan was hurting Clinton's popularity, without ever explaining to the poor viewer what the health care plan was" (Survey, March 1, 2000).

These responses point to the next component of these surveys: the impact of interpretive journalism on how sources are quoted and on how reporters interact with sources.

Impact on How Sources are Quoted and on How Reporters Interact with Sources

Reporters offered different opinions on whether the rise in interpretive journalism has changed how sources are quoted and on how it has altered the interactions between the two. Some said there had been no changes in how sources are quoted, in terms of quality and quantity, while others saw some differences. However, most said there is an increasing reliance on anonymous or unnamed sources. This is, according to one CBS reporter, because journalists want to make it appear as if "they are getting some sort of inside track" or an "exclusive" (Survey March 6, 2000). Quoting unnamed sources offers this appearance because it suggests a story is so ground-breaking that the source does not want to be named, even if "the same sources may be talking to lots of other journalists" (Survey March 6, 2000).

Contending that journalists do not quote sources differently than before, a *Post* reporter added that "many officials or congressional aides are reluctant to be identified in a news story but nonetheless want to get their point across. I think reporters too often give these people a free ride—using their quotes but attributing them to a 'congressional aide' or 'administration official' " (Survey, May 17, 2000).

CBS's Engberg posited a link between the rise of interpretive reporting and the use of unnamed sources. But he added that this approach means candidates are quoted less frequently:

> Analysis by definition means an attempt to get behind the words the candidate said to reach his strategy, core beliefs, and the history behind the policies he is articulating. Consequently, a reporter finds himself using the words of the candidate less and the words of those who understand these deeper matters more. If these sources are employees or close associates of the candidate they will almost always insist on some form of anonymity before speaking to a reporter...Conversely, if the sources are political opponents of the candidate, they will also want anonymity for different reasons" (Survey, March 2, 2000).

ABC's Mike Von Fremd echoed these sentiments. Noting the rise in interpretive journalism, he added, "The length of the sound bite gets shorter and shorter, and the public is cheated (as a result)" (Survey, August 4, 2000).

Another CBS reporter also noted that the rise of interpretive journalism has changed who is quoted: "There's more of a reliance on pundits and prognosticators than there used to be" (Survey, March 1, 2000). ABC's Von Fremd echoed this perspective: "As the (stories) become more interpretive, many college professors or political analysts are used to make a point about a candidates qualities" (Survey, August 4, 2000).

This suggests an association between one type of interpretative journalism—i.e., strategy coverage—and the use of certain sources. Specifically, strategy coverage has meant quoting pundits, who predict the outcome of elections. Because strategy stories focus on who is winning and who is losing, it is no surprise that pundits now assume a larger role as news sources in campaign coverage. However, a former *Post* reporter contended journalists still quote the "usual suspects...There's no diversity and there's no variety in sourcing political stories" (Survey, May 9, 2000).

In sum, while most of those surveyed agreed interpretive journalism had increased, there was no consensus on how reporter-source relations have changed—if at all—as a result. Some reporters contended there have been no changes in this area of newsgathering, while others detected noticeable shifts. The viewpoints suggest that developments in this area of reporting are too numerous and varied to apply to the profession as a whole.

Despite the divergent views expressed here, there was some acknowledgement that journalism has indeed changed in ways that affect reporter-source relations. I used these perspectives as a springboard for their commentary on my findings, which did detect a relationship between journalistic interpretation—or framing—and how sources were quoted.

News Frames and Quotes

Because I did not examine the *Washington Post*'s coverage of presidential campaigns, I did not ask how its reporters processed quotes from candidates. Questions centered on how they reported uncivil words uttered by of members of Congress. These responses are not relevant to my overall findings and have been excluded from this analysis. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the responses from network reporters.

The questions for network reporters were based on my findings. To re-cap, I found an association between unsubstantiated candidate attack and strategy stories and between substantiated candidate advocacy and issue stories in network presidential campaign coverage. While the question wording was open-ended, I sought to determine whom journalists thought was the stimulus for the association between news frames and reported discourse: reporters, sources, or both.

Network reporters did not challenge the findings that revealed an association between news frames and reported political discourse. One CBS reporter said, "I don't find the discrepancy surprising" (Survey, May 10, 2000). And, the network journalists offered no uniform explanation on what triggers this characteristic in news content. In fact, asked to explain this association, one CBS reporter simply wrote, "I don't know"

(Survey, March 6, 2000). ABC's Von Fremd added, "I don't have an explanation" (Survey, August 4, 2000).

However, network reporters did suggest that journalists—not sources—are at least somewhat responsible for the association between quotes and news frames. One veteran campaign reporter wrote that "sources...are sometimes quoted to buttress the interpretation or analysis the reporter is trying to make" (Survey, May 10, 2000). However, this perspective does not necessarily bolster my findings. My analysis included only candidates quotes. But in defining sources, this reporter referred only to non-candidates (i.e., staffers, pollsters, etc.), not candidates, meaning only non-candidate quotes may be used to help illustrate a journalistic interpretation. Despite this distinction, this reporter acknowledged that reporters select quotes to fit a pre-determined analysis.

CBS' Eric Engberg said he had "no ready explanation" for the association between news framed and reported discourse. However, he added that strategy and issue stories are structured differently: "My offhand opinion is that horse race stories tend to be shorter, more superficial, and more formulaic...than issues stories" (Survey, March 2, 2000). Given these different structures, journalists select quotes that fit either strategy or issue stories:

> A reporter writing a (strategy) story looks for crisp, necessarily brief, quotes from the candidate to illustrate the tactics of how "X" is trying to turn it around. He will invariably fix on what professional politicians call the "raw meat" lines in the stump speech... "Issue" stories will de-emphasize tactics and thus focus on how the candidate argues the wisdom of his policy positions. If the reporter has time, he will also supply the candidates' (generally negative) comments on their opponents' policy views. But most of the time there is not sufficient time. I think that explains the discrepancy (Survey, March 2, 2000).

Another CBS reporter offered a similar perspective, contending that time limits on strategy stories limited the chance to include candidates' evidence for their claims. But she added that "it's also possible that reporters figure it's punchier just to let the guy throw out a charge!" (Survey, March 1, 2000).

The responses from network reporters indicate that journalists—at least in part—drive the association between reported political discourse and news frames. None of the network journalists surveyed suggested candidates or their staffs influenced this component of news content. In addition, the network reporters pointed to different story structures and time constraints as reasons for including substantiated advocacy in issue stories and unsubstantiated attack in strategy ones.

The next area of this chapter focuses on how network journalists report candidate arguments, independent of news frames.

Reporting of Candidate Arguments

Content analysis of network presidential campaign coverage found that compared to candidates' discourse in speeches, advertisements, and debates, reporters underreport comparative claims and candidates' use of evidence while overreporting attacks. With one exception, network reporters did not contest these findings.[28] Their explanations for this practice ranged from the need to appeal to the viewer to the perceived value of quoting certain elements of candidate discourse to the desire to report what is at the heart of a political campaign.

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[28] In response to the finding that the networks underreport candidates' use of evidence, one CBS reporter wrote, "I'm surprised your findings show this because it's not what I believe to be the case—though I have done no such study." ABC's Von Fremd acknowledged that in daily reporting, attack is likely to be the focus of news stories. But he added that the networks do give substantial time to candidates' issue positions, often in designated segments, such as ABC's "Closer Look."

Some of the responses on overreporting of attack and underreporting of comparison were not surprising. The practice of emphasizing conflict is consistent with previous research on news norms and organizational perceptions of audience interest (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Graber, 1989; Kerbel, 1997; Robinson and Sheehan, 1983; Rozell, 1994). Primarily, candidate attack "makes for sharper-edged television," one reporter wrote (Survey, May 10, 2000). Another added that this practice is possibly the result of "the perceived need of news these days to be compelling television" (Survey, March 1, 2000). ABC's Von Fremd agreed. "A love-in does not make for much news," he wrote, "and I think it is a basic instinct to get excited when the gloves come off" (Survey, August 6, 2000). Another wrote that there is a "demand from news executives for conflict and controversy. Stories that simply state positions without conflict are less appetizing to the people who control what goes in the newspaper or on television...Stories without conflict are thought to be, by these executives, less interesting to viewers" (Survey March 6, 2000).

Others felt emphasizing conflict was necessary to accurately cover the candidates. In addition, this approach is also a justification for both strategy coverage and interpretive reporting. According to CBS's Eric Engberg:

> In a speech or debate, the candidate is in control of how he comes across. He is free to straddle, smile, and double-talk his way to a fuzzy, voter-friendly position. The broadcast reporter, if he is doing his job, will cut through this verbal persiflage and demonstrate—through sound bites or narration—an honest picture of what the candidate is really saying (Survey, March 2, 2000).

Another veteran reporter added that "conflict draws sharper distinctions and makes it easier to shorthand candidates' positions, which often leads to a better story" (Survey, May 10, 2000).

Engberg added that attack is at the heart of political campaigns, making it necessary to highlight this form of discourse:

> Reporters know that when they report the attacks they are reporting the decisive element in the campaign. Attacks are nothing more than the candidate's most sharply honed portrayal of why he should be elected rather than the other guys. Voters evaluate who made the best case, and vote accordingly, largely on the basis of who makes the strongest "attacks." *The attacks are not some peripheral side show. They are what the election is about* (emphasis added). Journalists want to write stories on what the elections are about (Survey, March 2, 2000).

In sum, reporting candidate attack—and underreporting comparisons—serves three primary purposes: appealing to the viewer based on perceived audience interests, reporting what the candidate is "actually" saying, and cutting to the heart of the nature of political campaigns. Implicit in the latter two points is the notion that candidate advocacy is camouflage that masks the reality of the candidate's discourse and detracts from the substance of electoral politics. Engberg labeled advocacy "fuzzy," indicating that reporting this type of discourse makes it is difficult to draw contrasts between campaigns. Television is hardly a subtle medium. It is therefore necessary to make clear where candidates are coming from. As journalists see it, this is best accomplished through the reporting of attack.

This line of inquiry also addressed why journalists' underreport candidates' use of evidence. Explanations for this practice were much more clear: it is difficult to weigh the value or accuracy of candidates' evidence, nor does it add much to public debate, so it is often omitted. Wrote CBS' Engberg:

> The "evidence" is very often dubious or arguable. The reason politicians are debating these questions is because nobody agrees on what the solution should be because the evidence is not clear. Political reporters know this, and they tend to leave so-called "evidence" to the political scientists and historians. (However), (i)f a candidate is inventing evidence and making stark misstatements of known

> facts, my experience is that reporters will jump on this and cover it extensively (Survey, March 6, 2000).

Another reporter added that this component of political discourse is "written off (by journalists), as in 'Well, of course that's what he *would* (emphasis not added) say.' Also, often the evidence really is useless (and) one-sided" (Survey, March 1, 2000). A third noted that candidates' evidence or reasoning is excluded because of time and space constraints. However, he said that the perceived quality of the evidence employed by candidates can determine if the journalist includes it in his or her stories: "(I)f the evidence is compelling, as opposed to flimsy, it's more likely to be seen or heard. In general, if a candidate has a well-constructed or ingenious argument rather than just the usual rhetoric, he or she will get better coverage" (Survey, May 10, 2000). But Von Fremd suggested that reporting evidence is simply not newsworthy: "...quoting many old scientific studies is not a great way to present the news of the day" (Survey, August 6, 2000).

In explaining the underreporting of candidates' use of evidence, journalists pointed to the quality and validity of this element of political discourse. Surprisingly, only one reporter noted space constraints in describing this practice, which suggests journalists actually do believe it is the perceived value of candidates' evidence that determines its inclusion in network news coverage. But, more importantly, journalists acknowledged reporting candidate discourse that is not representative. I shall return to the significance of this at the conclusion of this chapter.

The final element of this survey explored network reporters' opinions on the causes for visual framing. These are detailed in the next section.

Visual Framing

The visual chapter found that after the Willie Horton case became prominent during the 1988 presidential campaign, network news altered visual depictions of black and white criminals. Black criminals increasingly appeared in visuals similar to those that depicted Horton while white criminals were shown in different ways. These findings are evidence of visual framing, which occurs when subjects are shown in dissimilar ways to offer distinct depictions of the same entity. As an explanation for visual framing, this chapter suggested the concept of visual priming, a process by which the news media alter the visual portrayal of issues or phenomena to reflect a salient incident.

Unlike the stories on presidential candidates' discourse, the journalists responding to the question on visuals did not necessarily report the stories I analyzed. The visual chapter examined crime stories. Some of these were part of the 1988 presidential campaign coverage; others were stories on crimes that aired from 1986 through 1989. However, because this research was based on visuals used by network news, it was logical to interview these reporters.

Explanations for these findings were wide-ranging, making it difficult to isolate the factors that influenced the networks' use of visuals during this time. One reporter's thoughts captured this uncertainty:

> There are a thousand things that could explain (the results), from the changing climate as to what is "politically correct" to see on the news from year to year to the changing tastes of news executives who determine what is shown to pure chance—and other factors that have nothing to do with decisions by news organizations. The truth is probably a combination of a number of factors (Survey, March 6, 2000).

In addition, unlike other parts of my research, reporters questioned the methodology used to obtain the results as well as my conclusions. Journalists surveyed may have offered strong reactions because the findings were at odds with the perceptions of their work or because of the inflammatory nature of racial issues. In addition, the findings in the visual chapter marked the strongest indictment of network news. While I worded this survey question as neutrally as possible,[29] the substance of my findings may have nonetheless set of alarm bells in reporters' minds.

One reporter implied that journalists did indeed "tailor" their coverage to fit their perceptions of the 1988 presidential campaign (Survey, March 1, 2000). And CBS' Engberg acknowledged that the networks frequently showed two ads that pertained to the crime issue during the 1988 campaign: the Bush-sponsored furlough ad, which did not show or mention Horton, and the National Security PAC ad, which both mentioned Horton and used Horton images. But, he added that "coverage overall made only infrequent mention of the actual crimes that Horton had committed in Massachusetts and later in Maryland" (Survey, March 2, 2000).

With these exceptions, most responses offered two perspectives: 1) the results were due to the methodology I employed or they disagreed with my analysis; and, 2) the visuals accurately reflected an element of crime or the public's perceptions of crime during the period studied.

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[29] The following is the wording for this question: "...my study found that after the Willie Horton case received national news attention during the 1988 presidential campaign, black criminals were more likely to be shown as Horton was shown on network television stories—in handcuffs and restrained by police officers. By contrast, white criminals were increasingly shown in different ways—in suits and in interviews. Murder rates did not significantly change during the period studied (1986-1989). Also, changes in the proportions of blacks and whites committing crimes do not explain the changes in visuals. Can you help me account for the increase in the number of visuals of criminals during this period?"

The following response commenting on methodology and analysis was typical:

> When you compared how black criminals were shown versus white criminals were shown, did you compare the types of crimes committed? (Author's note: I did not)…It just so happens that I studied the anatomy of studies in college and I think you may be looking for relationships where there may be one. *Any* (emphasis not added) comparisons you make over time will fluctuate depending upon the time period you choose to study (survey, March 6, 2000).

Another asked, "Did the situation revert back to some norm or mean after the period studied?" (Author's note: I did not study crime coverage after January 1989, so this question remains unanswered).

The next set of responses noted that network visuals likely captured an element of reality during the period studied. "Another (explanation for the findings) may be that the time you've picked coincides with the crack epidemic, which received saturation coverage at the time and had a disproportionate influence on poor, black neighborhoods" (Survey, March 1, 2000). Engberg added the following:

> Disputes among drug traffickers led to many high visibility and brutal murders in the nation's cities. Because of the demographics of urban America, these were crimes that involved a disproportionate number of youthful African-American males. The news media—national and local—gave significant space and air time to this story, and quite properly so…Willie Horton had nothing to do with that interest (Survey, March 2, 2000).

These explanations are plausible. Refuting them is challenging because of the lack of data on crack cocaine use during this time period. However, by piecing together drug-use data and crime statistics—specifically, violent crime, which is associated with the crack cocaine epidemic—one can diminish the likelihood that the crack cocaine epidemic is an explanatory variable for the change in network news visuals.

As noted in the visual chapter, violent crime rates and the proportion of black and white offenders fluctuated between 1985 and 1988, according to the FBI's Uniform

Crime Reports. In fact, murder rates between 1986 and 1987 declined, as did the proportion of black offenders. Murder and violent crime rates did increase in 1988—as did the proportion of black violent crime offenders. However, these totals are based on all of 1988. The 1988 stories I examined were from January and June—well before these statistics were available to reporters. The rate of violent crime in urban areas fluctuated during this time period, according to the annual Crime Victimization Survey. It went from 39.9 violent crimes per 1,000 persons in 1985, down to 36.3 in 1986, up to 41.5 in 1987, and back slightly to 40.7 in 1988.[30] In sum, there are no patterns in violent crime or the race of the offenders that are consistent with the change in network news visuals.

Gauging cocaine use—particularly crack cocaine use—is trickier. However, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the use of cocaine plunged in the second half of the 1980s, a decline that began in 1985. The number of Americans age 12 and older who reported using cocaine "in the past month"—a measurement of habitual use—declined from nearly 6 million in 1985 to fewer than 3 million in 1988. This survey did not make a distinction between cocaine use and crack cocaine use until 1991. Yet, these figures do show that cocaine use as a whole was *not* increasing during the time period I examined. In fact, it was declining. The figures for crime and cocaine use suggest it is unlikely the crack cocaine epidemic explains the change in network news visuals.

Another reporter said that the visuals depict an unfair justice system. This reporter wrote the following: "One explanation might be that black criminals are disproportionately poorer (and) less likely to be released on bail, less likely to have an attorney representing them, and protecting them from being shown in unflattering ways" (survey, March 6, 2000). While this socioeconomic circumstance may be true, this explanation fails simply because it doesn't account for the change in network news visuals beginning in 1988. It is unlikely the justice system all of a sudden became less fair to blacks in 1988 than it was from 1985 to 1987.

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[30] Criminal Victimization in the United States: 1973-92 Trends. Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S.

Engberg also suggested that even though murder rates did not change markedly during the period studied, there was nonetheless "public concern over trafficking in crack cocaine and other drugs." Of course, this view raises the issue of causal direction often explored in agenda-setting research: heavy coverage may have created public concern over these types of crimes. However, Engberg's point is that network visuals reflected a perceived societal reality and did not change as a result of the Horton issue. Nonetheless, I have shown that crime and drug-use data are not consistent with this perception.

Department of Justice, p. 16.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of questioning reporters was to better understand how and why they process political discourse in the manner revealed by my findings. Specifically, why were there associations between certain frames and specific types of political argument? These reporters generally offered different—though not necessarily conflicting—interpretations for these results. Often, the same reporter gave alternative explanations for a single finding, which suggests either the uncertainty or the complexity in understanding the forces influencing the construction of news content.

However, the responses from reporters helped inform my conclusions because they addressed a fundamental question raised by my research: Do journalists structure their stories based on what candidates and public officials say or do they select which portions of political discourse to quote in order to fit them into a pre-existing news frame? These responses offer evidence for the latter conclusion: reporters chose which type of political discourse to include based on a pre-existing news frame.

Network reporters acknowledged—either implicitly or explicitly—that they report political discourse that matches the news frame of a given story. They added that the components of issue and strategy stories, which include different time constraints, encourage the reporting of substantiated candidates advocacy in issue stories and unsubstantiated attack in strategy ones.

The results from the indexing chapter reinforce this conclusion. These findings showed that the networks, in their coverage of presidential candidates, underreport comparisons and the use of evidence and overreport attack. The network journalists surveyed not only acknowledged this practice, but also offered reasons for it: the need to appeal to the viewer based on perceived audience interests, the desire to report what the candidate is "actually" saying, and the necessity of cutting to the heart of the nature of political campaigns.

If reporters agree that the candidate discourse they report is not representative, then it follows that they select quotes to fit news frames. Their work is dedicated to airing a story that matches their perceptions of reality. Doing so means establishing a theme—or frame—then choosing which portions of candidate discourse to quote, even if they are not representative of a candidate's arguments. By contrast, if reporters chose news frames based solely on what candidates said, it is likely reported candidate discourse would be more representative.

The survey of network reporters also asked them to explain the findings of the visual chapter. Their responses in this area were less helpful because, unlike the other findings, they either contended the results were due to the methodology I employed or disagreed with my analysis. However, the questions they raised pointed to the need for future research, such as analyzing network visuals over a longer period of time or coding for the types of crimes committing by those depicted in network news. To the extent they accepted the results, network reporters wrote that the visuals used by the networks accurately reflected an element of crime or the public's perceptions of crime during the period studied.

The most significant result of these interviews pertains to the question of causal direction in the processing of political discourse. The responses from network reporters suggest that they select portions of candidates' speech based on a pre-established news frame. These results help substantiate my earlier conclusions and broaden our understanding of press theory. I shall address this points in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER NINE

HOW TELEVISION NEWS FAILS POLITICAL DISCOURSE

My research examined how the press processes political discourse. It analyzed how journalists report political speech and how they select visuals. But the study was not limited to how sources are quoted. It also explored the relationship between how political discourse is reported and how journalists contextualize these quotes with their own analysis (i.e., framing). In doing so, this study has sought to develop a greater understanding of how the press functions in relation to newsmakers in creating news content. This chapter summarizes the findings from Chapters Five through Eight and takes these results into account in offering a new understanding of the impact of strategy frames. It then describes how this dynamic meshes with existing communication research and points to areas for future scholarship.

Chapter Five examined how broadcast journalists report candidate discourse in their stories. The analysis found that reporters overreport candidate attacks and underreport their use of evidence in backing claims. I concluded that this process is consistent with the following news norms: reporting discourse that either supports or criticizes a proposal (instead of that which compares positions), focusing on conflict between political elites, and turning candidate discourse into sound bites by shortening it (i.e. by removing evidence).

Chapter Six broadened the inquiry by considering the relationship between the type of political discourse journalists report and the interpretations, or frames, they use in structuring their stories. *As noted in the introduction, I have defined framing as journalistic interpretations that form a single or primary theme for an entire news story.* This chapter found that in stories focusing on public policy issues, reported discourse was more likely to be self-promotional and supported by evidence; by contrast, messages in strategy frames were more likely to be oppositional and not supported by evidence. These differences disappeared in 1996 broadcast news coverage. This change may have been due to a decline in overall coverage of the 1996 presidential campaign (Plissner, 1999), which resulted in a lower proportion of strategy stories.

But the overall results showed an association between the type of political discourse reported by television campaign journalists and the frames they use in reporting news from the campaign trail. This finding has a larger significance. Because so much of campaign coverage focuses on political strategy—rather than public policy—news consumers are more likely to hear candidates attacking each other with evidence-free claims than they are to hear office seekers describing their own positions and the reasons for taking them.

Chapter Seven considered how broadcast journalists process another type of communication: visuals. Noting the prominence of the Willie Horton issue during the 1988 presidential campaign, it examined how journalists employ visuals in the wake of a salient incident or image. This chapter found that the visuals of criminals in broadcast news changed after the Horton issue became public. Black criminals were increasingly more likely to be shown in visuals that were similar to the Horton visuals while white criminals were increasingly more likely to be shown in visuals that were quite unlike the Horton visuals. Real-world crime rates did not explain this change in the visual depictions of black and white criminals. To account for the findings, I introduced the concept of visual priming, a process by which the news media alter the visual portrayal of issues or phenomena to reflect a salient incident. Once again, the results revealed how journalists process political discourse—in this instance, images arising during a political campaign—in constructing news content.

In Chapter Eight, I turned to the network journalists who aired the stories analyzed in previous chapters. Responses from journalists indicated that they select elements of candidates' and public officials' speech based on a pre-established news frame. I also asked network reporters to explain the findings of the visual chapter. Their responses in this area were less informative because, unlike the other findings, they contended the results were due to the methodology I employed or they disagreed with my analysis. However, the questions they raised pointed to the need for future research in this area.

The findings of Chapters Five and Six as well as my interviews with reporters offer insight into how the press processes campaign discourse (I shall discuss the chapter on visuals below). Candidates are not quoted in ways that are representative of their discourse in speeches, ads, and debates. Rather, television journalists alter the arguments of candidates by overreporting the level of attack and underreporting comparisons. In addition, television journalists underreport candidates' use of evidence or reasoning to back their claims.

The fact that journalists are selective in the reporting of political discourse is not, by itself, extraordinary. What makes this process significant is that these selections are made in concert with specific types of journalistic interpretations. As Chapter Six showed, there are associations between strategy stories and the reporting of unsubstantiated attack as well as between issue stories and the reporting of advocacy backed by evidence.

Of course, elements of both strategy and issue stories arise from real-world events—i.e., campaigns discuss and implement tactics to win votes and put forth their candidates' positions on public policy issues. But the use of strategy frames is significantly more likely to result in the reporting of unrepresentative candidate discourse. Consequently, the reporting of political discourse, aligned with journalists' strategic analysis of campaigns, results in news depictions that do not accurately reflect how candidates actually communicate with the electorate. As noted in the introduction, this misrepresentation is significant because it prevents candidates from communicating their contrasting priorities and preferences on the role and direction of government for subsequent years. If journalism obscures candidates' discourse on these matters, reporters are depriving the electorate of the opportunity to better understand how candidates will govern once in office.

The association between strategy frames and the reporting unrepresentative political discourse raises additional questions about the nature and impact of strategy coverage. Again, strategy stories include a level of journalistic interpretation not found in issue pieces. In strategy pieces, reporters pick over the tactics and motivations behind candidates' voter appeals, analyzing which methods are effective and which are futile. By contrast, issue stories as defined by my study do not include this type of analysis. They are a reporter's recounting of the candidates' public policy proposals and record. Issue stories may include journalistic evaluations of a candidate's public policy successes and failures, a type of content I did not code for.

Interviews with reporters also indicated issue stories contain a lower level of journalistic interpretation than do strategy pieces, thereby allowing the candidate to make a case for his or her proposals. " 'Issue' stories will de-emphasize tactics and thus focus on how the candidate argues the wisdom of his policy positions," wrote CBS's Eric Engberg (Survey, March 2, 2000). Kerbel (1998) also concluded that issue stories offer less journalistic interpretation than do strategy ones.

While issue stories certainly contain some level of journalistic analysis, there is additional evidence that issue stories are fundamentally different from strategy stories. Part of this evidence lies in how political discourse is reported. As noted earlier, reported candidate discourse in issue stories is more representative than that found in strategy stories. By reporting political discourse that is unrepresentative in strategy stories, journalists are engaging in another form of interpretation. By contrast, in reporting candidates' speeches and debates in ways that more closely fit with the actual pattern of candidate discourse in issue stories, journalists do not perform the same interpretive function. Piecing together these characteristics of news content suggests a positive association between journalistic interpretation in strategy stories and the reporting of unrepresentative candidate discourse. I shall return to this point in a moment.

Effects research bolsters the contention that strategy stories function differently than issue ones. Several studies have shown strategy stories can affect perceptions and knowledge (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Meyer and Potter, 1998; Zhao and Bleske, 1998). By contrast, Cappella and Jamieson (1997) found that issue stories—unlike strategy stories—did not activate cynicism. Neuman et al. (1992) and Iorio and Huxman (1996) also reported limited effects on how the media frame issues. In sum, it appears that issue frames, as analyzed in my research and as tested by others, are quite dissimilar from strategy frames in both form and function. They represent a straightforward recounting of candidates' public policy positions, with minimal interpretation. In addition, other research has shown issue stories do not produce the effects on news consumers that strategy stories do.

This is not to suggest that issue coverage cannot bring about effects on news consumers. Research on agenda setting (Shaw and McCombs, 1974), priming (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987), and the frames analyzed by Gamson and Modigliani (1987, 1989) and Kinder and Sanders (1996) have made clear stories on certain topics and public policy can activate changes in subjects' viewpoints. However, these types of issue frames typically originate with political leaders, not journalists (see Jacoby, 1999). Therefore, they are quite different from strategy frames, which center on journalistic interpretation.

My research also analyzed how the press processes visuals in its reporting. An examination of news media's coverage of crime pointed to a relationship between journalistic interpretation and selection of real-world occurrences, in this case, visuals of criminals. After the Willie Horton issue rose to prominence during the 1988 presidential campaign, selected images of black and white criminals changed. Black criminals were increasingly shown in ways similar to Horton (i.e., restrained by police and in prison) while white criminals were depicted quite differently, shown in suits and at press conferences. Black criminals were visually portrayed as violent perpetrators while white criminals were shown in more benign ways, even though these visual depictions were inconsistent with real-world crime rates during the periods studied. I argued that journalists altered the visual portrayal of criminals to reflect salient incident, in this instance, the Willie Horton case.

The findings presented in the visual chapter also show the impact of strategy coverage. Certainly, the Bush campaign and a pro-Bush political action committee used the Horton incident to attack Michael Dukakis' record on crime. While this matter was used to make a larger point about an issue—specifically, crime—journalists often treated it as a tactic during the 1998 campaign. *Time* magazine declared that Horton became "Bush's Most Valuable Player" in the campaign against Dukakis (Simon, 1990, 227). Then-CBS reporter Bruce Morton noted that "the Bush campaign has scored big with TV ads on crime, especially on a Massachusetts furlough program under which murderer Willie Horton on furlough committed rape and assault (Jamieson, 1992, 27). In covering the 1988 campaign, CBS' Leslie Stahl noted that "Republicans will keep pushing the Horton line. Bush intends to keep up the pressure, which might even include a campaign commercial starring Willie Horton's victims" (Jamieson, 1992, 27). NBC's Lisa Myers reported that "Bush's aides say they would have used the Horton case even if he weren't black. A key part of Bush's strategy has been to drive up negative opinions of Dukakis, to cast him as a liberal. That strategy clearly has worked..." (Jamieson, 1992, 28).

My analysis of visual frames did not include coding for journalistic interpretation. Therefore, I cannot isolate which visuals accompanied journalists' strategic analysis. In addition, Chapter Seven analyzed the impact of the Horton visuals for both 1988 and 1989, without isolating 1988—the year of the presidential campaign.[31] However, as the Appendix Three shows, the results generally held for stories aired in June 1988 (see Appendix Three). The only exception were the visuals of black criminals in prison. While black criminals were more likely to be shown in prison in network news stories in June 1988 than they were in these stories from 1985 through January 1988—a finding consistent with my hypothesis—the difference was not significant. More importantly, however, the above examples of news coverage from the 1988 campaign illustrate that journalists frequently treated the Horton issue, and its accompanying visuals, as a campaign tactic. It is then reasonable to conclude that strategy coverage drove the changes in network visuals resulting from the Horton issue.

The findings in these chapters support how strategy coverage functions in network television news. Piecing together my research on news frames and the reporting of verbal and visual discourse, I offer the following explanation for press performance with regard to strategy coverage:

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[31] For all of the years studied, I analyzed the second half of both January and June.

The strategy news frame, the result of real-world cues, drives the selection of unrepresentative verbal and visual discourse in television news. By contrast, the absence of verbal strategy frames produces reported discourse that is more consistent with the level of attack and evidence found in candidate discourse.

I shall first describe this dynamic with regard to verbal frames. As discussed above, news frames are undoubtedly created by drawing upon real-world events and phenomena. The inclusion of strategy frames in campaign news follows this practice. Campaigns are, in part, about using tactics to win votes, and strategy frames describe and evaluate what candidates do to capture public support prior to Election Day.

However, the use of strategy frames in covering campaigns appears to influence another journalistic practice: the quoting of candidates. More significantly, this association results in the reporting of political discourse that is not representative of candidates' speeches, ads, and debates. Candidates advocate and back their claims with evidence far more frequently than is suggested in stories that focus on political strategy.

By contrast, campaign news that covers public policy issues is more likely to report advocacy and candidates' use of evidence, which is more representative of candidate communication. This is because issue frames focus on the specifics of candidates' public policy views and records in office, necessarily excluding analysis of the impact they may have on voting behavior.

My conclusion raises the question of causal direction: Is it possible that sources, through their public discourse, influence the frames reporters use? This is certainly a reasonable view. But for this to be the case, candidates would have to publicly discuss strategy, thereby generating strategy coverage. However, this is unlikely simply because candidates generally do not talk publicly about strategy; instead, they focus on issues

(Lichter and Noyes, 1995).[32] While campaign strategy is definitely part of a candidate's mind-set, it does not often appear in his or her public discourse. Candidates may state that they are going to be victorious ("We'll win in November!!"). But these declarations do not amount to the detailed analyses of candidate maneuvering that reporters engage in.

Rather, candidates more often focus on public-policy issues, their own records, and those of their opponents. By contrast, journalists inject strategy into the campaign dialogue by interpreting candidates' words and actions as appeals for votes. Moreover, because my findings showed that candidate discourse appearing in strategy stories is unrepresentative of how candidates actually speak, it appears that journalists selectively or inadvertently quote unsubstantiated attack to correspond with their strategy frames. If candidates were truly prompting journalists, it is unlikely there would be an inconsistency between actual candidate discourse and that found in strategy but not issue stories. Interviews with network campaign reporters supported this contention.

In addition, other research has found patterns in news coverage that are consistent with my conclusion. Kerbel (1998) reported that issue stories included a higher proportion of source quotes, including those from candidates, than did strategy stories. It is unlikely that candidates and other sources speak less in discussing strategy than they do in talking about issues. Rather, as Kerbel concludes, strategy stories are characterized by more journalistic interpretation and less source input than issue stories because reporters originate strategy stories with their analysis. The opposite is true of issue stories, which emanate from sources. In sum, strategy stories contain candidate discourse that is not representative because the strategy frame is initiated by the journalist, not the candidate. Perhaps more striking, it appears that certain characteristics of candidate quotes are used bolster the themes of a strategy story. Strategy stories are about campaign combat—who is winning and who is losing. In turn, candidates are quoted attacking each other—a form of verbal jousting that helps to establish consistency for this journalistic narrative.

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[32] See also Assessing the Quality of Campaign Discourse: 1960, 1980, 1988, 1992. The Annenberg Public Policy Center (1996). Preliminary research for this study showed that candidates do not discuss strategy in their public discourse.

The findings in Chapter Seven, which analyzed visual rather than verbal frames, suggest a similar conclusion. I defined visual frames as the process by which the same object, person, or event may be shown in dissimilar ways to offer vastly different depictions of a single entity. In this case, I found visual frames may depict criminals in ways that are not consistent with actual crime rates. In producing stories, editors feature events captured by television cameras. In the case of crime coverage, events are the arrest of alleged criminals and other steps in the legal process (e.g., trials, "perp walks," etc.). For the purposes of this analysis, I shall argue that these events are the visual equivalent of candidate discourse: real-world occurrences that journalists process in constructing news content.

In this chapter, I concluded that a salient incident—in this case, the furlough of Willie Horton as featured by Republicans in the 1988 presidential campaign—influences the construction of visual frames. I have also argued that these results show the impact of strategy coverage on network news visuals. During the 1988 presidential race, political reporters treated the Horton issue as a campaign tactic. Just as Chapter Six revealed that strategy coverage influenced the reporting of verbal discourse, this perspective may also have resulted in changes in the visuals of alleged criminals. Specifically, network news visuals of black alleged criminals more closely resembled Horton, whom reporters described as a fundamental component of the Bush campaign's electoral strategy. By contrast, visuals of white alleged criminals were quite different from those that depicted Horton. In neither case were these changes in visuals consistent with real-world crime rates.

Given the similarities in the construction of verbal and visual frames, it becomes clearer how visual frames also drive the selection of unrepresentative discourse—in this case, visual discourse. Specifically, a salient incident affects the visual depiction of real-world phenomena, such as crime. Certainly, there are real-world cues that initiate the visual framing process—Willie Horton was a real person who was convicted of committing real crimes. However, such cues bring about visual portrayals that are not consistent with reality. In this instance, the Horton case served as a springboard for the visual depiction of crime that did not reflect the rate or nature of actual crimes committed by African-American men during the studied time period.

My findings add to our understanding of the impact of strategy coverage on the construction of news content. I shall describe below how these findings contribute to existing communication theory.

Communication Theory

My findings—and the explanation for them—contribute primarily to the field's research on news frames. My conclusion also broadens scholarship on reporter-source relations and refines our understanding of indexing. I shall address these latter two areas below.

My study merges existing research on news frames and alters our conception of how frames function in strategy coverage. Previous studies have generally viewed news frames as either journalistic interpretations (e.g., Jamieson, 1992, Patterson, 1993) or source discourse (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987, 1989).[33] My research explored how the contributions of both sources and journalists affect the content of news frames. In doing so, I have concluded that journalists assume a primary role in the construction of strategy frames. Taken together, strategy coverage goes beyond interpretations and affects how sources are quoted and how social phenomena are depicted visually.

These findings also contribute to our understanding of reporter-source relations. Existing scholarship in this area has not reached a consensus about the determinative factor in news content: reporters, sources, the audience, or some combination? Research on agenda-setting, framing, and indexing also addresses this dynamic. My research suggests that in terms of reporting political argument in campaign strategy stories and in processing crime visuals, journalists are the deciding factor. Certainly, sources drive news coverage in many other ways, often in terms of which topics are covered and which opinions are quoted. But, when it comes to strategy coverage in presidential campaigns and the selection of crime visuals, journalists appear to have the upper hand.

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[33] There are differences between the source discourse analyzed by others and that which I examined. Gamson and colleagues have examined specific arguments (e.g., pro- and anti-affirmative action discourse) while my study analyzed argument structure.

My research also refines the field's understanding of indexing, which contends news content reflects the range of elite opinion. Indexing studies have demonstrated how the press reports specific opinions to reflect the nature of debate among elites (e.g., views supporting and critiquing U.S. policy toward Nicaragua). When elites agree, the range of reported opinions on a given issue diminishes. However, my findings suggest indexing does not apply to the reporting of argument structure, it least in presidential campaigns, because candidate discourse reported in strategy stories did not reflect candidates' speech. My research does not discount the existence of source indexing; it merely suggests it is limited to the reporting of opinions and excludes argument structure.

While my study makes contributions to existing communication theory, the findings also point to the need for additional research. The next section outlines the specifics of future scholarship.

Future Research

Areas for additional research may be divided into two categories: 1) studies aimed at testing the generalizability of these findings and employing other methods to clarify mixed results; and 2) studies to test the effects of news content described by this research on news consumers.

This study analyzed only network television coverage of presidential campaigns, raising questions about how other media—particularly newspapers—process campaign discourse. Previous studies (Annenberg, 1996) have shown that newspapers also overreport candidate attacks. But the relationship between reported discourse and frames employed by newspapers in presidential campaigns remains unexplored.

In addition, this research examined only how candidates' arguments are reported. Left unstudied is the relationship between news frames and other elements of political discourse—such as candidates' opinions and the topics they discuss. As noted above, other researchers have explored these aspects of political communication. By merging these the findings with an analysis of how they appear in strategy and issue stories, communication researchers can refine their understanding of the relationship between political discourse and journalistic interpretation in news content.

The results of the visual study point to other areas of future research. Questions raised by journalists I surveyed offered two possible lines of inquiry: analyzing network visuals over a longer period of time in order to better gauge fluctuations in crime visuals and coding for the types of crimes committed by those depicted in network news. Pursuing the latter, to the extent that it is possible, would allow researchers to compare visual depictions of alleged criminals with the types of crimes they are accused of committing. For instance, if black and white murder suspects are shown differently in news visuals, our understanding of visual framing is significantly enhanced.[34] However, such an undertaking would be substantial as newscasts often show alleged criminals without noting the types of crimes they are accused of committing.

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[34] While my study did not examine this distinction, anecdotal evidence suggests whites accused of murder may be depicted differently than are blacks. For instance, serial killer Ted Bundy was frequently shown in the courtroom, wearing a coat and tie.

On another note, there is a fundamental challenge in analyzing crime coverage: bias in the criminal justice system itself. For instance, members of racial minority groups are disproportionately sentenced to the death penalty (Alter, 2000) and disproportionately convicted in drug crimes (Holmes, 2000). Consequently, reporters are left to cover alleged criminals who may be charged and convicted because of their race. Future studies should take this into account in analyzing the media's portrayal of crime. Nonetheless, my study and others (for instance, see Entman and Rojecki, 2000) have documented how crime visuals still misrepresent the rate at which members of racial minority groups commit crimes, demonstrating that the news media offer slanted coverage in depicting alleged criminals.

Additional scholarship should also explore whether these findings apply to visuals beyond those of race and crime. Other examples of visual priming may go beyond these matters. For instance, have the many photos arising from the Elian Gonzalez case spurred new visual depictions of immigrants, families, law enforcement, or gun control?

The second component of future research pertains to effects studies. This method of research would test the impact of my conclusions. My findings have shown that journalists process political discourse and visuals in ways that are unrepresentative. I have argued that this process shows the impact of journalistic framing—reporters adopt a news frame and alter the presentation of verbal and visual discourse to fit this frame.

Future effects studies should explore the components of the news content I analyzed by isolating reported political discourse from journalistic descriptions of strategies and issues. This would enhance our understanding of what portions of news content activate different perceptions of American politics held by news consumers. Specifically, in an experiment, subjects would be separately exposed to different forms of candidate discourse—e.g., unsubstantiated attack and advocacy with evidence—as well as to different journalistic descriptions—i.e., strategy stories and issue stories. By separately testing the effects of political discourse and journalistic descriptions, researchers may better understand which elements influence the perceptions of news consumers: what candidates say, how journalists describe candidates' activities, or a combination of both. Moreover, by isolating the effects of specific components of news content, researchers can refine their understanding of news frames—from how they are constructed to how they affect the viewpoints of news consumers.

Two, testing for the effects of the news content analyzed in this study would help to measure the significance of the relationship between journalistic descriptions and reported political discourse. Evidence of effects on news consumers' perceptions of candidates and public officials may show that how reporters interpret news events and how they quote sources have an impact on the electorate. Because so few Americans have the opportunity to personally interact with their elected officials, they rely on the news media to provide access to those holding and seeking public office—albeit in a filtered manner. This circumstance makes testing the effects of the content analyzed in my study an important undertaking.

The final section takes my findings into account and offers areas of improvement for journalism.

Suggestions For Improving Journalism

Because my most robust findings occurred in the analysis of presidential campaign coverage, I shall focus on it in offering suggestions for improving journalism. These recommendations pertain to how the networks process and analyze political discourse in presidential campaigns. These suggestions are modest, but realistic and constructive because they take into account both my findings and the perspectives offered by journalists in my surveys.

While my research did not analyze the amount of strategy coverage in political campaigns, other studies have noted how it has come to dominate news content. Many outside of journalism have decried the rise of strategy coverage, calling for more news on the candidates' issue positions. Journalists defend strategic coverage by claiming that 1) campaigns are about strategy, and 2) candidates repeatedly deliver the same speech, forcing journalists to focus on campaign tactics in order to report new developments in a campaign.

My concern is not the level of strategy coverage, though journalists' reliance on it certainly has consequences for the electorate (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Jamieson, 1992; Patterson, 1993). My worry is that strategy coverage brings about an overreporting of unsubstantiated candidate attack. These suggestions, then, focus on how the improve political journalism through changes in the reporting of political discourse.

Candidate discourse is not primarily negative. In fact, candidates contrast positions much more frequently than journalists report. If journalists are going to continue to focus on the tactical aspects of campaigns—a likely scenario—they should report comparisons candidates make at a greater rate. This practice would allow journalists to continue to include candidates' criticism of each other—which reporters believe is at the heart of political campaigns—while still allowing the electorate to see the candidates advocating.

The networks also underreport candidates' use of evidence in backing their claims. Network reporters surveyed almost uniformly said they exclude the evidence candidates use because it is "flimsy" or difficult to evaluate. This may be so. But, shouldn't the reader or viewer have the opportunity to weigh this portion of political discourse and either accept or reject it? After all, it is also difficult to gauge the validity of claims, yet journalists do report these. Is Texas Governor George W. Bush a "Reformer with Results"? Many journalists reported this claim during the 2000 GOP presidential primaries without quoting the evidence he gave for this conclusion. Why, then, should candidates' support for such claims be excluded? Certainly, there are time constraints, which may discourage the reporting of evidence. However, the reporters surveyed did not emphasize these limitations in their responses. Certainly, news organizations do long pieces evaluating candidates' records and claims. But these stories are often part of a series that appears early in a campaign—before many Americans are paying attention to the election.[35] They are not an element of the daily campaign coverage that defines political journalism.

Specifically, journalists should more frequently report candidates' evidence for their claims, then attempt to evaluate it. Journalism has already become more interpretive, most reporters believe. It seems appropriate that journalists should gear their interpretations to the evaluations of candidates' claims and evidence rather than focusing on which electoral demographic a politician is trying to reach. Granted, political reporters probably have a greater understanding of campaign strategy than they do of public policy. The prominence of strategy coverage is an indication of this (see Jamieson, 1992). And, it is difficult to research the validity of evidence in a short period of time while out on the campaign trail. However, when evidence used by candidates is "flimsy" on its face, journalists should indicate so in their stories.

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[35] For example, see "Where Gore and Bush Diverge on the Issues Has Become Crucial," the *Wall Street Journal*, July, 28, 2000, pp. A1, A6.

Some of this type of analysis occurs already, often in the form of ad watches. However, it happens far too infrequently. In general, when candidates make claims in their speeches and ads or during debates, they offer supporting evidence or reasoning. This tendency provides ample opportunity to provide evaluation or perspective in how candidates are substantiating their claims.

My next suggestion pertains to the networks' use of visuals. To summarize, I concluded that a salient incident leads reporters alter the visual depiction of social phenomena. There is also evidence for this practice in terms of news topics. Researchers have found that after reporting on a high-profile crime, the news media's subsequent coverage of the same type of crime has increased (Katz, 1980; Media Monitor, 1997).

Decisions on which visuals to include in crime stories may be unconscious ones. In addition, there are often limitations on the visuals available to news organizations. However, reporters and producers must take into account high-profile events and make a concerted effort not to let them influence the visual portrayal of related stories. Certainly, news organizations were aware of the Horton case in 1988. Going the extra mile to ensure that coverage on related topics more closely matched reality would have improved journalism.

My study warrants many avenues of future research, both to address unanswered questions and to test the impact of the results. However, my conclusion that journalistic interpretation has greater ramifications for news content than previously realized enhances our understanding of how news content is produced and offers ways to make political discourse more fit to print—and broadcast.

APPENDIX ONE

Methodology

The speech, debate, and advertising portions of the database used a common coding structure. This structure was carried over to the broadcast and print news sections for candidate arguments. However, evidence presented in news was not evaluated for verifiability and sourcing.

The following is the coding instructions given to the graduate and undergraduate students who performed the coding:

The Mapping Campaign Discourse Codebook

Our main goal for this project is to "map" the type and quality of discourse in candidate speeches that will help voters make informed decisions about the candidates and the issues. We believe there are certain types of information and argumentation that do a better job of this.

Arguments

The first task of the coders is to identify **Arguments**. For this study, Arguments will consist of a **claim** by the Speaker which he supports through the use of **evidence or reasoning**. Occasionally, the claim will be implied through the use of sufficient evidence; however, the evidence can never be implied from a claim.

Some Definitions and Examples:

Claims: Claims announce a statement which the speaker believes is true, but which is nonetheless an arguable position for which there can be contrary evidence. Not all claims will be coded. We are interested in ones that deal with policy, issues, attacks or events (future, current or past). We are not concerned with statements that are platitudinous or unarguable.

Examples:
America's prestige is low. (An arguable claim)
We lack the policy to control nuclear missiles. (arguable)
I like strawberry ice-cream. (Statement of personal taste for which there are no sharable grounds of support)
I believe that the U.S. should recognize Taiwan. (Arguable; not personal belief, but rather a policy statement; issue is never *whether* the Speaker actually holds this view)

Claims we code:
America should recognize Taiwan.
We need more soldiers in Korea.
Our country will fall apart if we do not have a health plan.
We should have interceded in WW II earlier than Dec. 1941.

Claims we don't code:
We stand for moral and spiritual strength.
It is shameful when Americans go to bed hungry.
Minnesota is a fine state.
The people of this country want no more Willie Hortons.
I love America.

Claims can also be presented in the form of a **question**. When the question can be answered with "of course" or "of course not," it is a **rhetorical question**, and not a basis for an argument. The audience already knows the answer to the rhetorical question, whereas a speaker can use a Question to involve the audience more in his line of reasoning about an arguable claim.

Questions (We code):
Did our hubris cause us to get involved in Vietnam?
If we don't have national health care, how can the U.S. stay number one in the world?
Shouldn't the U.S. recognize Taiwan?

Rhetorical Questions (Don't code):
Do Americans want more Willie Hortons?
Do we not all love America?
What is this nation if it is not the land of the free and the home of the brave?

Types of Arguments

There are three types of arguments that we will be coding: Oppositional (Attack), Self-promotional (Advocacy), and Comparative. Please code each argument accordingly.

Oppositional is a negative assertion about the opponent.

Self-promotional is when a candidate presents his view on an issue.

Comparative is when a candidate presents his view on an issue and criticizes his opponent.

Evidence

Once coders have identified the speaker's claim, they should look for the evidence that supports the claim. Evidence may precede the claim or follow it. Coders should look first to the paragraph from which the claim is made for Evidence, but Evidence may also be offered in preceding and succeeding paragraphs. Words which *may* signal an argument (claim + evidence) are **because, for, so, so that, therefore, since.** However, these words can be implied through the juxtaposition of two parts of the argument. If these words are not present, coders should ask whether information given prior to or after an arguable claim answer questions such as:

- Does this information give reasons for the claim?

- Does this information answer the questions How does (did) this claim operate or What will it (did) it entail or Why will (was) it being done?"

Following are some definitions and examples of arguments and their structures:

Explicit Arguments:

Examples:	Claim:	Americans are good
	Evidence	**because** they care about the environment.
	Claim:	America's prestige is low
	Evidence:	**because** the international poll indicated that people around the world view Russia as stronger than the U.S.
	Claim:	I know that we are lacking in our policy to control missiles,
	Evidence:	**for** in the entire U.S. government, only 3 people are working on this problem.

Implied claim, based on sufficient evidence creating an argument:

Examples:	Evidence:	The U.S. economy grew at 4.5 percent under
	Claim:	Democratic presidents are better for the economy than Republicans.
	Evidence:	Kennedy: "In 1952, my opponent voted against ending the war in Korea. In 1954, he proposed that we get enmeshed in a hopeless colonial war in Vietnam. In 1958, he practically caused a riot when he visited South America."
	Claim:	**Implied, not stated**: Nixon doesn't know how to handle foreign policy.

Coding Story Structure

Structure

Identify a Primary Structure and Secondary Structure for each story. The categories are as follows:

Strategy: The story is concerned with who is winning and losing. Candidate statements and actions are interpreted with regard to their strategic intent.

Issue: A story about the candidates' issue positions and statements.

Ad analysis: A story analyzing candidate advertising.

Other

The story's Primary Structure can almost always be found in the opening two to three paragraphs. Only code a Secondary Structure different from the Primary Structure if the Secondary Structure makes up a significant portion of the story.

APPENDIX TWO

CAMPAIGN JOURNALIST QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How do you usually develop stories in covering a campaign?

2. You've probably heard news observers say that political coverage is becoming increasingly interpretive, in which journalists interpret the words and actions of politicians. Do you agree with this assessment? (If yes, why? If no, then how has political coverage changed over the years, if at all? *See follow-up questions below*)

   2a. [**If yes**] Has this affected how journalists quote sources? Are they quoted less or just differently?

   2b. [**If no**] Have *any* changes in campaign coverage influenced how you interact with and quote sources?

3. My study examined how sources are quoted in both horse-race stories and issue stories (i.e., pieces that highlight candidates' public policy positions) in network news during the 1980, 1988, 1992, and 1996 presidential campaigns. My findings show that in horse-race stories on presidential campaigns, candidates were more likely to be quoted attacking their opponents and less likely to be quoted backing these attacks with supporting evidence. By contrast, in issue stories, candidates were more likely to be quoted advocating their own agenda (rather than attacking) and supporting these claims with evidence. How do you explain this discrepancy in how candidates are quoted?

4. Broadcast news reports on presidential campaigns are less likely than candidate speeches or debates to show candidates comparing their positions with those of their opponents and more likely than speeches and debates to show them attacking. What explains this?

5. As you may know, candidates almost always back their claims with some type of evidence or reasoning. However, my findings showed that candidates' use of evidence is not reflected in press reports. What explains this practice?

6. Certainly, during campaigns candidates attack each other's positions. However, my findings show reporters actually prefer to report candidate attacks and do so disproportionately. Why does this occur?

7. A study two years ago found that during OJ Simpson trial, news coverage of murder increased dramatically—even after excluding coverage of the trial itself. Similarly, my study found that after the Willie Horton case received national news attention during the 1988 presidential campaign, black criminals were more likely to be shown as Horton was shown on network television stories—in handcuffs and restrained by

police officers. By contrast, white criminals were increasingly shown in different ways—in suits and in interviews. Murder rates did not significantly change during the period studied (1986-1989). Also, changes in the proportions of blacks and whites committing crimes do not explain the changes in visuals. Can you help me account for the increase in the number of visuals of criminals during this period?

Thank you for your participation. Please return the questionnaire to:

James Devitt
11 Alden Road, Apt. 5L
Larchmont, New York 10538
Fax: (212) 785-6007

CONGRESSIONAL JOURNALIST QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How do you usually develop stories in covering Congress?

2. You've probably heard news observers say that political coverage is becoming increasingly interpretive, in which journalists interpret the words and actions of public officials. Do you agree with this assessment? (If yes, why? If no, then how has political coverage changed over the years, if at all? *See follow-up questions below*)

   2a. [**If yes**] Has this affected how journalists quote sources? Are they quoted less or just differently?

   2b. [**If no**] Have *any* changes in political coverage influenced how you interact with and quote sources?

3. Media analysts have contended that reporters exaggerate incivility in Congress. But, my findings show that the *Washington Post* did not overreport the use of uncivil terms by members of Congress in 1995 and 1997. However, they did show that in 1995, strategy stories (i.e., stories that highlight the tactics used to pass or block legislation) were more likely to contain uncivil terms than were issue stories (i.e., stories devoted to the substance of legislation or policy). Can you help me account for this finding? (*Author's Note*: This question was excluded from my analysis. See Appendix Two for a summary of responses to this question)

Thank you for your participation. Please return the questionnaire to:

James Devitt
11 Alden Road, Apt. 5L
Larchmont, New York 10538
Fax: (212) 785-6007

APPENDIX THREE

TABLE 1: Black criminals in visuals similar to Horton visuals

				Visual				
Time Period	*Handcuffs* (%)	n	*Mug shot* (%)	n	*Restrained* (%)*	n	*Prison* (%)	n
Time 1	21	19	19	17	5.6	5	11	10
June 1988	20	3	33	5	20	3	20	3

*p=.05

TABLE 2: Black criminals in visuals dissimilar to Horton visuals

				Visual				
Time Period	*Attorney* (%)	n	*In suit*** (%)	n	*Courtroom* (%)	n	*Interview/ Press Conf.* (%)	n
Time 1	3.3	3	29	26	8.9	8	13	12
June 1988	6.7	1	0	0	6.7	1	13	2

**p<.05

TABLE 3: White criminals in visuals dissimilar to Horton visuals

				Visual				
Time Period	*Attorney* (%)	n	*In suit*** (%)	n	*Courtroom* (%)	n	*Interview/ Press Conf.* (%)**	n
Time 1	8.2	30	18	66	17	63	17	63
June 1988	6.2	13	27	55	12	25	25	51

**p<.05

TABLE 4: White criminals in visuals similar to Horton visuals

				Visual				
Time Period	*Handcuffs* (%)	n	*Mug shot* (%)	n	*Restrained* (%)	n	*Prison* (%)	n
Time 1	9	33	23	85	3.5	13	4.1	15
June 1988	8.3	17	26	54	3.4	7	6.3	13

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