AN ANALYSIS OF BIAS, USING TECHNIQUES OF

GENERAL SEMANTICS, OF THE COVERAGE OF

THE 1990-1991 PERSIAN GULF WAR, AS

PRESENTED BY TIME, NEWSWEEK, AND

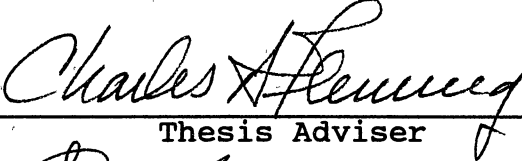U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT

BY

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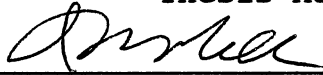the Degree of
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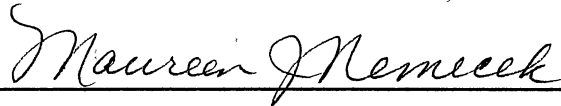December 1991

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PREFACE

The following is a case study using content analysis as the method of research. The primary objective of this study was to determine, through the use of general semantics, if Newsweek, Time, and U.S. News & World Report fulfilled their professional responsibilities to report clearly, objectively and in an unbiased manner while covering the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War.

Completion of this study was made possible by many people -- to all of whom I wish to express my thanks.

First of all, I would like to thank Dr. Charles Fleming, who introduced me to general semantics and changed my life forever. His patience, guidance, and wisdom as my adviser throughout this study were invaluable. My sincerest thanks go to Dr. Maureen Nemecek, whose insights, suggestions and encouragement as a committee member were greatly appreciated. Thanks also to Dr. Marlan Nelson for his participation in this study as a committee member.

I am extremely grateful to Edna Bautista and Jean Briggs for lightening the load and adding credibility to this study by helping code the data. For computer use, resource guidance, encouragement and general everyday help, I am deeply greatful to my friends Paul Bartlett, Lisa John and Dan Schroeder.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

General

General semantics is the application of the scientific method to communication. Called "the father of general semantics," Alfred Korzybski formulated the principles of general semantics after he noted people quite often made the same kinds of errors in a variety of fields. Korzybski collected descriptions of those errors and formulated means for correcting and avoiding such misevaluations under the name general semantics (Brunot, p.41). In essence, general semantics has to do with the relationship between language and reality.

One particular field, whose business is communication, seems a prime target for review of Korzybski's noted errors -- that is the field of print journalism. While journalists strive for "objectivity," they will often admit that it is difficult to obtain. In their haste to meet deadlines and interviews, journalists seldom keep a conscious check on how effectively they are communicating. Consequently, news consumers are often left on their own to "figure out" what it is they are reading and how or why the author wrote it (Johnson, K., p.35).

Background

Journalists have a responsibility to go beyond just reporting what is said. Those who are aware of the fundamental communication errors frequently found in their work are better prepared to fulfill obligations and responsibilities. These responsibilities include doubting, questioning, and challenging so as to rid from their observations personal opinions, feelings and inferences; striving to see from the reader's point of view, as well as the reporter's, what is needed to best understand the message being communicated. Journalists who are sensitive to frequently made semantical faults and who are trained in correcting them will communicate more effectively than journalists who remain unaware of their communication errors (Johnson, K., p.37).

The "global village" of which McLuhan spoke never has been so evident as in today's mass media. Today, people are only milliseconds instead of miles away from each other. And as each day goes by, the communication systems of the world grow faster and more efficient (McLuhan, p.17).

However, these times of great progress also bring with them an even greater need for responsibility. As the mass media reach out to the world to inform, educate and entertain, the guidelines of responsibility that were created decades ago for them, must go with them (Leigh, p. 22).

Among these responsibilities lies the need for clear,

accurate and objective reporting. Without reporting that is understandable, truthful and unbiased, consumers of the media take in useless or misleading information (Bernstein, p.14-15).

These responsibilities are defined by more than one media code, as well as a number of press theories. Identification of these theories and the media codes applicable to the data source of this study are found in Chapter II.

General Semantics: A Tool for
Examining Language

About as many methods are available to study how well the media are performing as there are theories on how they should perform. One such method involves the use of general semantics.

Alfred Korzybski's ideas on semantics first became available to the public in his 1933 book, Science and Sanity. From there, a man who might be called a disciple of Korzybski's, Wendell Johnson, took these ideas and applied them to his clinical work with university students and people with stuttering disorders (Johnson, W., p.ix).

In Johnson's book, People in Quandaries, the universality of general semantics is well defined. Johnson noted,

> General semantics can be put to use in many ways by
> doctors, lawyers, teachers and students, editors and
> writers, radio program directors, motion-picture
> executives, government officials, personnel managers,

housewives, merchants, etc., through the long catalogue
of human occupations   (Johnson, W., p.viii).

With specific reference to the field of communication,
Johnson provided "a stage-by-stage analysis of the process
of communication which is designed to clarify the functions
and the disorders involved in the various aspects of
speaking, writing, reading, and listening" (Johnson, W.,
p.viii).

The basic premise of Johnson's book is that we
(society) are prisoners of the "language which we so un-
consciously acquire and so unreflectively employ" (Johnson,
W., p.11). General semantics is a means by which we can
study and learn to prevent the miscommunication errors
resulting from our choice of words (Johnson, K., p. 35-6).

Statement of the Problem

Therefore, if general semantics can be used as a means
of preventing errors in communication, the basic principles
involved in general semantics also can be used as a tool of
analysis to study how well the mass media fulfill their
obligation to be clear, precise and impartial.

Purpose of the Study

Over the years, numerous studies have been conducted to
measure how well journalists and reporters fulfill their
responsibilities. These studies have focused on a wide
variety of topics and issues covered in the mainstream
media.

One source in particular that reaches both national and international audiences on the plethora of current events in our "global village" is the newsmagazine. The three leading United States' newsmagazines are U.S. News & World Report, Newsweek, and Time. In 1990-91 these newsmagazines, as well as almost every other news medium, were covering the Persian Gulf crisis/war.

Their reporting on this timely and important event, albeit not as instantaneous as television, was significant. However, the importance of the event and the significance of media coverage does not guarantee the media fulfilled obligations to be clear, precise and impartial in their reporting. Rather, it is hypothesized that coverage of the Gulf crisis/war by these newsmagazines contained semantical errors that prevented them from being as clear, precise and impartial as possible.

The purposes of this research were to determine if these newsmagazines fulfilled their responsibilities as defined by media codes and press theories, what types of semantical errors were most frequently made, if any, and how these newsmagazines compared in the fulfillment of their obligations.

Research Objectives and Methodology

Overall Research Goal

The overall goal of this study was to determine how well these three newsmagazines fulfilled their

responsibilities as defined by media codes, and which of the three newsmagazines best fulfilled those responsibilities, within the context of general semantics. The objectives listed below were designed to gather data that would reach this overall goal.

Research Objectives

(a) What type(s) of semantical errors were most
    frequently made by the three newsmagazines?

(b) Which newsmagazine made the most errors?

(c) What type(s) of errors were made by each of the
    three newsmagazines?

Methodology

The research method used was content analysis. The researcher analyzed randomly selected issues of Time, Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report published between August 4, 1990, and March 6, 1991. During the six-month period, operations "Desert Shield" and "Desert Storm" were put into effect by United States and allied military forces against Iraqi forces. This particular series of events was selected because of its timeliness and the importance of the events that took place.

Significance of the Research

The readers of these newsmagazines deserve to know if the information they are receiving is truthful and unbiased.

If what these media consumers are receiving is less than what media codes of responsibility demand, the consumer should know about it. Deliberate persuasion of and careless reporting to readers in news stories by the media is unethical. The results of this study may prove to be useful to journalists as they strive to improve efforts to fulfill the ethical responsibilities of their profession.

The results of this study may also be useful to both teachers and students. Teachers in the position of educating aspiring journalists will have another tool with which they can evaluate themselves and that will serve as a tool for critical analysis to offer their students. Students of mass communication with a knowledge of the difference general semantics can make in living up to their responsibilities as professionals will be better prepared to fulfill their obligations.

Limitations of the Research

This study is limited in so far as the results found cannot be applied to other media or events beyond those analyzed, and should not be applied to periods of time beyond that which was covered. It is also possible that a limitation could be noted by the duration of the study. The contention may be made that seven months is not a long enough period and that a study of this nature should involve a period of time longer than just seven months.

Organization of the Research

Chapter II examines other research studies similar or relevant to this research, and reviews the theories and codes of mass communications that are significant for this study, as well as a broader discussion of general semantics and its relation to this study.

Chapter III explains the methodology employed in this research effort.

Chapter IV presents the research findings and provides a detailed discussion of those findings.

Chapter V provides a summary of the study with conclusions and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Media Responsibility and Ethics

The broad issue of ethics undoubtedly has been around since the beginning of mankind. The Greek Philosopher Epicurus, writing around 300 B.C., gave this definition of ethics: "Ethics deal with things to be sought and things to be avoided, with ways of life and with the telos." [Telos means "the chief good, the aim"] (Altschull, p.358). Philosophers through the ages have agreed and disagreed on the definitions and limits of societal ethics. However, there seems to be uniformity with regards to the idea that ethics involves morals (Altschull, p.357). Some people believe ethics work to develop the principles that guide us, and others believe that ethics exist to help us analyze the moral dilemmas of our times (Sahakian, p.1).

In his book, From Milton to McLuhan, J. Herbert Altschull traced the pattern of interest in ethics as a topic for study and discussion. He noted a decline in the interest in ethics early in the Twentieth Century, with a turning point coming in the latter third of the Twentieth Century. Altschull stated that during this period of rediscovery in the field of ethics, "...just about every

occupation in the country had produced codes of ethics..."
where "...the emphasis was inevitably on professional
standards of morality." And, "Journalism, of course,
participated in this movement" (p.359).

Where journalism was concerned, ethics for everyday
practice in America was laid out shortly after World War II,
in 1947, with the work of the Hutchins Commission. The
foundation of this Commission essentially is responsibility
on the part of the press toward society -- an idea that
dated back three centuries to the ideology of John Milton
(p.284).

In 1957, communications scholars Fred S. Siebert,
Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm developed their Four
Theories of the Press which further underscored the need for
accountability by the press. One of their four theories,
the social responsibility doctrine, was designed
specifically with the American press in mind (p.284).

The main premise of both the Hutchins Commission and
the social responsibility doctrine lies in the ideology that
all journalists have a responsibility to society to tell the
truth behind the facts and to be fair, accurate and
objective in their reporting, as they work to bring issues
of conflict to a plane of discussion creating a place for
the exchange of ideas (p.283-4).

Objectivity

More than fifty-five years ago, in the 1840's, James Gordon Bennett wrote in the prospectus for his _Herald_: "We shall endeavor to record facts on every public and proper subject, stripped of verbiage and coloring." Almost thirty years before, between 1790 and 1800, Thomas Jefferson wrote to John Norvell, "I really look with commiseration over the great body of my fellow citizens, who, reading newspapers, live and die in the belief, that they have known something of what has been passing in the world in their time" (Schiller, p.87, vi). In 1721, James Franklin, brother of Benjamin Franklin, brought to the forefront what he felt was at the heart of a democratic society: "...controversy must be aired in public...it is essential that the collision of truth and falsehood take place in the public print" (Altschull, p.24).

The birth of objective reporting in the United States can be traced to the penny papers, which, in challenging the partisan press, refused to be a paper for the elite and instead chose to be a press that had no economic ties, only advertising and subscription dependency (Schudson, p.18-30). Another turning point in the development of an objective press came when journalists began "adopting the scientific rationale of ascertaining facts through professional methods. Instead of simply representing a democratic ideal by making information available through competitive journalism, the media and newsworkers saw

themselves as arbiters of social reality" (Tuchman, p.160).

In his book, Deciding What's News, Herbert J. Gans described how reporters frequently operate with respect to objectivity:

> Journalists justify their right to individual autonomy by the pursuit of objectivity and detachment; in a way, they strike an implied bargain, which allows them autonomy in choosing the news in exchange for leaving out their personal values. The outcome restricts the news to facts, which, journalists argue, are gathered objectively (Gans, p.183).

Past Research - Objectivity and Bias

Since the early days of the press, one of the primary goals journalists strive for is objective reporting -- free from bias and distortion. While they are sometimes incensed by charges of "prejudice," they do admit that "objectivity" is hard to attain (Johnson, K., p.35).

Numerous studies have been conducted on a variety of subjects in virtually all of the different forms of the news media to determine if journalists were being objective and unbiased in their reporting.

One such study involved a content analysis of Time magazine, where the researcher sought to determine in what ways the news magazine stereotyped presidents Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy. The opening paragraph of researcher John C. Merrill's report on this study foreshadowed the results of his findings. Merrill wrote:

> The suggestion that Time magazine selects, aligns and explains (i.e., 'subjectivizes') information will certainly not startle many persons. In fact, its editors have insisted from the magazine's founding in

1923 that objectivity in news presentation is impossible and that Time writers should 'make a judgement' in their articles (p.563).

Merrill analyzed his data by constructing six categories of bias to help determine what kind of language was used to describe each President. The categories were 1) attribution bias, 2) adjective bias, 3) adverbial bias, 4) contextual bias, 5) outright opinion, and 6) photographic bias. Each instance of bias was noted either as "positive" (favorable) or "negative" (unfavorable). Elements of bias that could have been perceived as either positive or negative were not included in the study (p.564). The results of Merrill's study indicated that Time consistently reinforced a stereotype of the President in office by using the six devices previously mentioned. Merrill concluded that:

> In addition to isolating several interesting types of subjectivizing procedure, the study showed that Time 1) was clearly anti-Truman, 2) was strongly pro-Eisenhower, and 3) was neutral or certainly moderate toward Kennedy (p.570).

Another study focused on determining whether ethics codes made an impact on judgments made by journalists. Data for this study were collected by surveying desk staff members at two large daily papers in Indianapolis. The staff members were asked about their use of and attitudes toward the ethics codes for their paper. They also were given six hypothetical situations and asked how they would deal with the different ethical issues involved in each. The results of the study indicate that

ethics codes have no direct influence on the decisions journalists make (Pritchard and Morgan, p.934-941).

Two previous studies were specifically used as guides for this study: William Jex's 1983 doctoral dissertation (New York University), "The Language of the News: A Comparative Semantic Analysis of the Language of Network Television and New York City Newspaper News Reports" and Keqin Jiang's thesis of 1990 (Oklahoma State University), "The Image of Nicolae Ceausescu, Former President of Romania, as Presented by Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report during the 1989 Romanian Revolution."

The studies were used for a variety of reasons. In both studies content analysis is used, and general semantics is an essential tool with which to measure the data collected. Jiang used the same sources used in this study, and Jex's dissertation study completely involved the use of general semantics as its only tool of measurement.

Application of Jiang's work to this study was achieved through careful observation of the basic structure of Jiang's entire study from beginning to end, with special attention given to the process of coding and reporting the study. Jex's work was most useful in the area of general semantics, with specific reference to the categories designed to gather the data and report the findings.

General Semantics - A Tool for

Evaluating Objectivity

As is evident by the above studies and previous
discussions regarding this topic, objectivity is something
that journalists, in particular, seek to obtain in their
professional endeavors. By applying the basic principles of
semantics to reports produced by journalists, one can
analyze objectivity. Kenneth G. Johnson of the University
of Wisconsin writes, "newsmen have a responsibility to
examine their assumptions about how they know what they
"know" and then to share their insights with their readers,
listeners, or viewers." Johnson said, "that general
semantics provides a methodology for examining those
assumptions in the light of modern scientific knowledge"
(p.35). In his article "Insights of general semantics would
be useful to journalists," Johnson took the approach that
journalists familiar with the principles of general
semantics will be better equipped to fulfill their
obligations and responsibilities as objective and unbiased
news reporters.

The idea of using general semantics to conduct content
analysis is not entirely new. However, it does not seem to
be an altogether common approach to content analysis,
either. And yet, as a tool for determining how objective
and responsible a particular news medium is, applying the
basic principles of general semantics can be quite
effective. This premise is made even more understandable

when Wendell Johnson's definition of general semantics is

offered:

> General semantics is not 'the study of words' or 'the
> study of meaning'...It is more nearly correct to say
> that general semantics is concerned with the
> assumptions underlying symbol systems and the personal
> and cultural effects of their use. It is concerned
> with the pervasive problem of the relation of language
> to reality, of word to fact, of theory to description,
> and of description to data -- of the observer to the
> observed, of the knower to the knowable. It is
> concerned with the role of language in relation to
> predictability and evaluation, and so in relation to
> the control of events and to personal adjustment and
> social integration (Johnson, W., p.154-156).

Of primary concern to this study is the use of

language, and "...the pervasive problem of the relation of

language to reality..." The equality of language and

reality, where language and reality match, seems to be what

people refer to as "objectivity." This study is concerned

with the responsibility that journalists have to report

objectively.   Alfred Korzybski helped put the journalist's

struggle for objectivity into perspective in his book

Science and Sanity. Korzybski stated that "the only

possible link between the objective world and linguistic

world is found in structure and structure alone."

Furthermore, "the structure which a language exhibits, and

impresses upon us unconsciously, is automatically projected

upon the world around us." Therefore, it is evident how

great a need there is for journalists to be aware of

language and how it can shape the world around us according

to how we perceive and report it (Korzybski, p.58-61. The

emphasis is Korzybski's.).

With respect to reporting on war, the discussion has been around for years, and some of the most significant arguments about war reporting center on objectivity, and/or the lack thereof.

War Coverage - General History and Government View

The words of Winston Churchill seem to express what many military leaders and politicians have believed for years about the press during times of war. First Lord of the Admirality, Churchill was quoted as saying, "A warship in action has no place for a journalist" (Knightley, p. 223). Later in World War II, Churchill complained that, "The newspapers repeatedly publish - with innocent intention - facts about the war and policy which are detrimental. Where these have not been censored beforehand, a complaint should be made in every case" (Churchill, vol.3, p.635). Roosevelt expressed similar feelings of frustration in a letter he wrote to Churchill some fifteen months later: "...we are both menaced by the so-called interpretative comment by a handful of gentlemen who cannot get politics out of their heads..." (Churchill, vol.4, p.177).

During the Korean war relations between British and American governments and their media did not improve a great deal, as expressed by Valerie Adams in her book, The Media and the Falklands Campaign. Adams showed how little the military did to aid reporters at the start of the Korean war: "Initially only one telephone line from Korea to Tokyo

was made available to the press by the military. However, by late August the situation had improved, with telephone and sometimes teletype lines available at Divisional Headquarters" (p.25).

Adams further noted the disappointment of British and American government and military forces about "open comment in the press" and "no formal system of censorship" (p.26). MacArthur, however, was opposed to censorship and felt that journalists should regulate themselves and meet both their responsibility to be balanced and to disclose nothing to the enemy. But the press involved in covering the Korean war did not want this role of self-regulation because often when it made its own judgments it was reprimanded because its judgment differed from the military's judgment. Eventually the press went so far as to demand some sort of "uniform guidance" (Fraser, p.81). However, the military further confused things by being inconsistent with the information it released regarding details about troop movements, etc. (Time, 1950).

The "uniform guidance" demanded by the press eventually came in the form of censorship and "seemed to provide a framework within which the press and the military could learn to work with each other" (Adams, p.30).

In contrast to Korea, media coverage of the Vietnam war lacked censorship, and correspondents had great freedom of access to troops and complete telecommunication facilities. However, none of these things seemed to improve relations

between the military and the press (Adams, p.39).
Journalist Peter Braestrup contended that "much of the
speculation made by reporters eventually became confused
with reality and was, therefore, newsworthy" (Braestrup,
p.623ff, 641).

Perhaps the loudest argument coming out of the Vietnam
war condemned the United States mass media for their
detailed coverage which resulted, some contend, in the
failure to win in Southeast Asia. "Particularly the often-
gory pictorial reportage by television, coming into millions
of homes across the land, morning after morning and night
after night, produced in time a popular revulsion" (Bolling,
p.2). Indeed, "The United States Mission in Vietnam called
American newsmen 'handmaidens of the foe' because they would
not endorse United States support for the Diem regime"
(Braestrup, p.4). Even so, much of the official briefings
that came out were unhelpful and frequently misleading
(Behr, p.259).

At the conclusion of <u>Journalists</u> <u>At</u> <u>War</u>, authors
Morrison and Tumber offered a rebuttal to the often-heard
argument that the press lost the war for the United States:

> If there is a media lesson to be drawn from Vietnam, it
> is not the effect of pictures on American morale, but
> the shattering effect of information on an unprepared
> public, because it was uninformed about the course and
> nature of the struggle in South East Asia. Of course,
> the pictures were unpleasant because the policy was
> seen to be unpleasant. It is only if genuine
> questioning of policy is taking place, sufficient to
> enquire over the legitimacy of the exercise, that the
> news, indeed all news, even battle victories, becomes
> bad news. It is wrong, therefore, to invest the news
> with greater power than it actually possesses. Our

argument does not mean that the news by its portrayal
of suffering can never disturb and weaken support for
war. It can, but only, within a certain context.
Nothing is static, and the news can become an
articulator of concern when the images presented
interact with other information which questions the
validity of policy (p.349).

At hearings held by the Senate Government Operations

Committee regarding Pentagon restrictions for reporters

covering the recent Persian Gulf War, Pete Williams,

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs said:

> Our goal is the same as those of our predecessors -- to
> get as much information as possible to the American
> people about their military without jeopardizing the
> lives of the troops or the success of the
> operation....The plan for combat coverage was not drawn
> up in a vacuum. We worked closely with the military
> and with the news media to develop a plan that would
> meet the needs of both....Unlike World War II, this
> will not be an operation in which reporters can ride
> around in jeeps going from one part of the front to
> another, or like Vietnam where reporters could hop
> helicopters to specific points of action. If a ground
> war begins on the Arabian Peninsula, the battlefield
> will be chaotic and the action violent. This will be
> modern, intense warfare (USA Today, p.11a).

Senator Herb Kohl, Democrat from Wisconsin, who chaired

the hearings said,

> I believe that the Pentagon is doing an honest and
> honorable and effective job of making sure that the
> American people have the information they need to make
> an informed judgment about the conduct and status of
> the war. In fact, I can personally assure you that the
> American people are getting more information through
> the press than members of Congress do in classified
> security briefings... (USA Today, p.11a).

Others at these Senate hearings felt differently.

Former Pentagon spokesman Fred S. Hoffman said:

> The Pentagon should abandon any requirement for
> 'security review' of news products before release. It
> should rely instead on a system that worked well in
> Vietnam. This amounted to self-censorship by news
> people based on sensible ground rules, with

foreknowledge of penalties such as suspension or cancellation of credentials for violations (USA Today, p.11A).

Major General Winant Sidle (U.S.A. ret.) felt both the military and the press needed to make some changes: "I have the impression that perhaps the military has been too restrictive. I also get the clear impression that the media are asking for too much information." Colonel Harry G. Summers Jr. (U.S.A. ret.) said, "...the reporting from the gulf has been excellent. And I also think that pool restrictions on the press are dumb" (USA Today, p.11A).

One of the most important points Johnson made in People In Quandaries is that truth is relative and reality is always changing -- faster than words can change to reflect it. He wrote that language is static, limited and abstract. Consequently, many journalists strive to get all the information available to them to increase their accuracy and objectivity. While this action is admirable, good and even expected according to the codes and theories journalists operate under, it is not always appreciated by everyone.

Gulf War Background - Events Leading up to the War

As a point of reference for the research conducted in this study, it was felt that an understanding of the events that led up to the Gulf War would be helpful.

According to reports from all three of the nation's leading newsmagazines (August 6, 1990), Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was fulfilling his promise to do "something

effective" to stop his putative allies (Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates) from keeping oil prices down by overproducing. Apparently, Kuwait and the U.A.E. had been driving oil prices down by exceeding agreed-upon OPEC production quotas. While their respective production limits were set at 1.5 million bbl. and 1.1 bbl. per day, each country has been producing as much as 2 million bbl. a day.

Consequently, on July 17, 1990, President Hussein, accused "...Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates of plotting with the U.S. to keep oil prices low by flouting their OPEC export quotas" (Media At War, p.7).

A little more than two weeks later, on August 2, Iraqi troops and tanks moved across the border into Kuwait. The reaction from President Bush to the Iraqi troop movement came in the form of economic sanctions against Baghdad. On August 6, a trade and finance embargo against Iraq was authorized by the United Nations. That same day, and the next, President Bush ordered United States military forces to Saudi Arabia to defend American operated oilfields from being attacked by Iraqi troops. The next day Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. On August 20, President Bush declared Americans held in Iraq to be 'hostages'. Two days later, he called up the United States Armed Forces Reserves for active duty in the Persian Gulf region (Media At War, p.7).

During the next month, under orders given by President Bush on November 8, a major buildup of American troops in Saudi Arabia took place. On November 29, the United Nations

authorized the use of force against Iraq if it did not withdraw totally and unconditionally from Kuwait by January 15, 1991 (Media At War, p.7).

On December 1, Saddam Hussein accepted President Bush's offer to talk, but no date was set. On December 6, Hussein set all hostages free (Media At War, p.7).

The month of January brought more events, beginning on Wednesday the ninth. On that day, for more than six hours, Iraqi Foreign Minister Aziz and United States Secretary of State Baker held talks in Geneva, but no progress was made. The next day the U.S. Congress held debates to decide whether Bush would be given the "authority to use military force against Iraq." After two days of debates, Congress gave Bush the authority to use military force. January 15, 1991, President Bush gave written authority for an attack on Iraq if Iraq refused to leave Kuwait when the United Nations midnight deadline to leave Kuwait expired. The next day, soon after the deadline expired, United States military forces began an air "attack on military targets in Iraq and Kuwait," and the Gulf War began (Media At War, p.7).

On February 23rd the ground war began approximately ten hours before President Bush's announcement at 10:00 p.m. that the allied ground offensive had begun. Some 100 hours later, on the 25th of February, orders came from Baghdad informing soldiers that they were to leave Kuwait, and three days later Iraq announced a cease-fire and agreed to a meeting of military commanders to arrange terms (Media At

War, p.7).

The third day of March brought approval by the United Nations of a resolution that would back President Bush's insistence that allied troops stay in Iraq until Iraq complied with the U.N. cease-fire terms.

War Coverage - Press View

Keeping in mind the responsibilities the press seeks to fulfill, it is not surprising to note the following viewpoints expressed by members of the journalism profession about war reporting.

Marvin Kalb, former diplomatic correspondent for CBS and NBC, was interviewed by USA Today reporter Barbara Reynolds concerning restrictions that were placed on the press during the recent Gulf War. When asked about Pentagon restrictions Kalb said, "...the Pentagon has gone too far. I believe the American people can absorb all of the information that the reporters can provide to them..." (Reynolds, p.11A). During the hearings on Pentagon restrictions held by the Senate Government Operations Committee, former CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite said:

> An American citizen is entitled to ask, 'What are they trying to hide?'...The fact that we don't know, the fact that the military apparently feels there is something it must hide, can only lead eventually to a breakdown in home-front confidence and the very echoes from Vietnam that the Pentagon fears the most (USA Today, p.11a).

Kalb also mentioned Vietnam when he was asked what was creating the tension between the Pentagon and the media:

The Pentagon is now run by people who have learned too
well some of the wrong lessons of Vietnam. They
believe, and they are wrong, that unrestricted press
coverage of Vietnam led to the American defeat there
(Reynolds, p.11a).

Reynolds further asked Kalb if he agreed with the

Pentagon that the press should be kept out of harm's way.

Kalb's response was, "If journalists feel they must get into

harm's way to do the job properly, that should be their call

and not the Pentagon's call" (Reynolds, p.11A).

About the recent Persian Gulf War, Sydney H. Schanberg,

Newsday columnist, and author of The Killing Fields said:

These troops are the sons and daughters and cousins and
friends of Americans back home, and since it is in the
name of Americans back home that this war is being
prosecuted, how can one justify keeping perfectly
legitimate, non-sensitive information from our people?
(USA Today, p.11A).

Gilbert Cranberg, a former editor of The Des Moines

Register's editorial page and George H. Gallup Professor at

the University of Iowa journalism school, presented another

view of the press in his article, "The Gulf of Credibility."

Cranberg pointed out how sometimes "the press uncritically

accepts the official [White House administration] version of

events" (Cranberg, p.19).

Based on testimony by retired Vice Admiral James B.

Stockdale (an eyewitness of the 1964 Tonkin Gulf episode) at

the 1987 annual meeting of the American Society of Newspaper

Editors, Cranberg used Stockdale's accounts to illustrate

how the press often just repeats reports from official

sources, i.e., the White House administration, without

questioning the accuracy of the reports. Cranberg wrote:

The first rule in journalism is -- or should be -- skepticism, which requires, at the very least, attribution. A skeptical press is a democratic nation's most important asset. Unfortunately, when a watchdog press is needed most is when it is most in danger of becoming a lapdog -- in times of crisis, when emotions run high, when the impulse is to want to believe the government and rally around the flag (p.20-21).

Richard Zoglin, in his article, "The Press: Just Whose Side Are They On?," further underscored Cranberg's warning about the press is becoming a lapdog in times of crisis. Zoglin said in response to criticism from the public about the press's coverage of the recent Persian Gulf War:

...to think reporters should put their journalistic duties behind an obligation to support their country...is a dubious suggestion at best. No responsible journalist would quarrel with the proposition that certain information -- sensitive intelligence data, secret battle plans -- cannot be published or broadcast without posing a grave risk to American troops. Yet within those security limitations, the press's job is to find out what is actually going on (not just what officials say is going on), no matter whose cause it might or might not advance (p.53). Journalists are not duty bound to coddle people with the information they want to hear, but to provide them with the information they should hear (p.55).

Zoglin also sought the reactions of other journalists to the public's criticism of their performance. Sam Donaldson, on ABC's Prime Time Live said, "If people don't like it, I'm sorry, but they really need to know what's happening." David Halberstam, winner of a Pulitzer Prize for his Vietnam reporting, said about the public's criticism of journalists' performance during the recent Persian Gulf war:

It isn't a popularity contest for us, and we shouldn't seek it to be one. The people of this country wouldn't

like it very much afterwards if it turns out that [the war] doesn't go well. Then they'll say, 'Well, where was the press?' (p.55).

While overall viewpoints from the news media and the government seem to be quite different with respect to methodology, there appears to be a stated general agreement by both sides that a real need for responsible and objective reporting exists.

It has been noted that one means to improve upon, and in some cases begin the development of, objectivity in the journalistic profession, is the use of general semantics. The consciousness-raising steps of bringing journalists to an awareness of their semantic communication errors can have positive effects on the accuracy and objectivity of their reporting.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

General

The methodology used for this study is content
analysis. The central point of concentration was
newsmagazine coverage of the 1990-1991 Gulf War. In
examination of weekly reports from the three leading
newsmagazines in the United States, Time, Newsweek, and U.S.
News & World Report, the researcher sought to determine
whether these newsmagazines were responsible in their
coverage of the Gulf War to the extent that their reporting
was clear, precise and impartial.

In the past many definitions have been offered for the
research methodology of content analysis. Abraham Kaplan
defined it as: "The content analysis aims at a quantitative
classification of a given body of content, in terms of a
system of categories devised to yield data relevant to
specific hypotheses concerning that content" (Berelson,
p.15).

In his 1950 doctoral dissertation (University of
California at Los Angeles), William Schutz defined content
analysis as "...a research technique for the objective,
systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest

content of communication" (p.3). And Krippendorff, referred to content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context" (p.21).

The use of content analysis to study media content can be effective. Hsia said, it "infers underlying intent, motivation, orientation, and effect, either implicit or manifest" (p.318). Once the contents are analyzed, those persons involved in producing the content can gain further insight into what makes them either "biased" or "objective," and, ultimately, what things must be done to insure that they fulfill their responsibilities.

Magazine Profiles

The following information is given as a means of putting into perspective the seriousness of the existence of bias when found in a media source of high readership. With circulation rates of at least 2 million, bias found in these three leading newsmagazines can have far-reaching effects.

Founded in 1923 by Henry Luce and Briton Hadden, Time is the oldest of the three newsmagazines in this study. Time is also the largest of the three newsmagazines with a circulation of 4,720,159 million (Gale, p.1104) in 1989. With a reputation for being "the most assertive of the newsweeklies" (Diamond, p.42), Time lists as a goal to "better serve the needs of busy, curious, intelligent readers" (Time, 1988, p.4). Its regular columns are

Critic's Voices, World, Nation, Milestones, Science, Religion, Cinema, Books, Medicine, Theater, Music, Sports, People and Essay (Diamond, 1988, p.42).

The second largest of the newsmagazines used for this study is Newsweek, with a circulation of 3,100,000 million (Gale, p.1081) in 1989. Founded in 1933, Newsweek fought for many years the reputation of trying to be another Time. In its efforts to be different, Newsweek developed "a hard-edged, newsy look" (Diamond, 1985, p.20). Before long, "Newsweek began to develop from a somewhat dowdy tag-along to a sharp, aggressive publication under Elliott's direction" (Chapman, p.90). Its regular columns are National Affairs, International, Business, Society, The Arts, Lifestyle and other departments such as Periscope, Letters, Perspectives and Newsmakers (Chapman, p.90).

The third newsweekly in the study was founded the same year as Newsweek. U.S. News & World Report had a circulation rate of 2,287,061 million (Gale, p.286) in 1989. Taking a more conservative editorial approach, U.S. News & World Report has become the third largest weekly newsmagazine in the United States with regular columns labeled Currents, U.S. News, World Report, Business, Horizons, News You Can Use and Editorial (Diamond, 1988, p.43).

Research Questions and Null Hypothesis

This study was designed to answer the following questions about the extent of objective coverage of the Gulf War by the three newsmagazines:

1. Overall, what types of general semantical errors were made most frequently by the three newsmagazines?

2. Which newsmagazine made the most errors?

3. What types of errors were made by each of the three newsmagazines?

The overall research hypothesis for this study was that the three newsmagazines were not objective, their reporting was biased, and they, therefore, did not fulfill their responsibilities as members of the journalistic profession.

From this hypothesis and the research questions mentioned above, the following statistical null hypotheses were developed:

1. Overall, there is no difference between the frequency of types of semantical errors made by the newsmagazines.

2. There is no relationship between frequency of semantical errors and individual newsmagazines.

3. There is no relationship between types of semantical errors and individual newsmagazines.

Definition of Content Categories of Bias

The content categories of bias were designed by William Jex after Korzybski's Intentional Characteristics of Language. The categories listed below are further explained

in this chapter under "Categories of Analysis."

1) Excessive Pronominalization (for which the context provides no--or ambiguous--referents): "Whatever Ronald wanted for breakfast would have been fine."

2) Reification (use of "to be" verbs which sets up an equation of identity): "John is a real gentleman." "John is smart."

3) Multiordinate Terms (expressions "full of conditionality"): "Her singing sounded pitiful." "She told me the facts of the case."

4) Passives (passive verb constructions which lack agents): "It has now been confirmed that all the hostages are alive." "Having been warned of the danger, the President acted quickly..." "Advised that there would be trouble, he..." The examples above were constructed by William Jex (pp.21-25).

Sampling

The Gulf War itself lasted 40 days, from January 16, 1991, and February 25, 1991. However, the conflict started in August of 1990. To gain a more accurate representation of the reporting produced by the three newsmagazines, the researcher analyzed one article (the first one on the conflict/war listed in the table of contents) from each issue of each magazine published between August 6, 1990 (the first issue published after Iraq invaded Kuwait), and March 4, 1991 (the first issue published after Iraqi troops left

Kuwait and Iraq announced a cease-fire).

Photographs, captions, stand-alone articles, inserts, interviews, summaries and "letters to the editor" were not included in the study.

Unit of Analysis

The analysis unit was each instance of bias as defined by Jex.

Categories of Analysis

The definitions of these categories came from William Jex (pp.21-25), with examples derived from instances of bias found in the content analysis for this study using Jex's categories.

1) Excessive Pronominalization (for which the context provides no--or ambiguous--referents). Pronominalization will be noted where statements employ terms used excessively to comment upon other terms or statements.

> 1. "Whatever Moscow's motives..." -- _Time_, Mar. 4,
> 1991, p.23. 2. "...avoided air-to-air combat whenever
> possible." -- <u>U.S. News & World Report</u>, Jan. 14, 1991,
> p.24. 3. "...withdrawal from Kuwait before anyone
> talks about anything else." -- _Time_, Nov. 5, 1990,
> p.39.

2) Reification (use of "to be" verbs which sets up an equation of identity). The Reification aspect is that which is built into the process of using words to represent events

(or things). Specifying a word for an event sets up this
equation of Identity.

> 1. "...knowledge is power." -- <u>U.S. News & World
> Report</u>, Jan. 14, 1991, p.23. 2. "Former Joint Chiefs
> of Staff chairmen Gen. David Jones and Adm. William
> Crowe are creatures of the post-Vietnam consensus..." -
> - <u>Newsweek</u>, Dec. 10, 1990, p.26. 3. "Without his
> military might, Saddam is just another bit player." --
> <u>Time</u>, Nov. 5, 1990, p.40.

3) Multiordinate Terms (expressions "full of
conditionality"). Depending upon context, "broad meaning"
terms might be judged multiordinate -- where usage remains
general or ambiguous. This concept seems to encompass the
other categories with only a minor loss of precision and a
major gain in consistency.

> 1. "Iraq's air-defense system is heavy on equipment..."
> -- <u>U.S. News & World Report</u>, Jan. 14, 1991, p.22. 2.
> "...which often turned up weeks later." -- <u>Newsweek</u>,
> Nov. 5, 1990, p.32. 3. "...and at home for shedding
> rivers of blood to win..." <u>Time</u>, Mar. 4, 1991, p.25.

4) Passives (passive verb constructions which lack agents).
Passive structure will be noted where ambiguous levels of
abstraction are present in passive verb construction which
lack agents. The passive verb structure specifies an event
several levels of abstraction "lower"; yet the agent of the
verb is omitted.

1. "...but the message was imprecise and a peace feeler was suspected." -- _Time_, Nov. 5, 1990, p.39. 2. "Beyond the immediate problems posed by the expected Israeli response..." -- _U.S. News & World Report_, Jan. 28, 1991, p.24. 3. "The projected loss rate..." -- _Newsweek_, Nov. 5, 1990, p.33.

Quantification System

A simple frequency count, producing nominal data, was conducted on each article for each category. Coders were instructed to count the instances of bias (for each category) that they found in each article.

Coding

Three coders were used for this study; the author, and two colleagues: Edna Bautista and Jean Briggs. All coders have had a basic course in general semantics and are graduate students of mass communications at Oklahoma State University.

A total of 45 issues of _Time_, _Newsweek_, and _U.S. News & World Report_ was used, and each coder was given fifteen issues to code with a separate tally sheet for each magazine -- one for the five _Time_ issues coded, one for the five _Newsweek_ issues coded and one for the five _U.S. News & World Report_ issues coded.

As they read through each appropriate article, coders devised their own means of noting the different

characteristics they found, i.e., circle, underline, initial, etc. Once they completed their analysis of the article, the coders then counted how many of each characteristic they found and put that number in the box corresponding to the characteristic.

To assure that coders understood the procedures, and as a means of testing intercoder reliability, a pre-test was conducted that analyzed stories about the invasion of Panama by the United States that were published in the same three newsmagazines used for the study. This pre-test was followed by an inter-coder reliability test.

Statistical Analysis

The quantification system produced nominal data; therefore, simple and complex chi-square analysis was used to examine the content for any relationships and/or differences that existed among the three newsmagazines. The standard 95 percent level of confidence was used to determine which, if any, of the differences was statistically significant.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

General

The methodology used for this study is content analysis. The point of concentration for this study was newsmagazine coverage of the 1990-1991 Gulf War. Focusing on weekly reports from the three leading newsmagazines in the United States, Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report, the researcher sought to determine whether these newsmagazines, in their reports on the Gulf War, were responsible to the extent that their reporting was clear, precise and impartial.

Intercoder Reliability

As a means of assuring reliability for counting and categorizing instances of bias among the coders, a series of pretests was administered. Once the results of the pretests were obtained the following formula was applied: $R = 2M/ N1 + N2$.

In this formula M is the number of coding decisions that two coders agree upon, and N1 and N2 were the total number of decisions made by one coder and another coder.

Rather than adapting the formula to apply to three

coders, only the results of two coders were used at one time and three reliability tests were applied for greater precision. The test results showed the reliability coefficients (R) as: .93, .96, 1.0. These results indicated high intercoder reliability among the three coders; on a scale of 0 to 1.0, 1.0 is considered to be perfect reliability.

<div align="center">Findings</div>

Extent of Coverage

The extent of coverage for this study consisted of one article about the Persian Gulf War from each of the fifteen randomly selected issues from each of the three magazines published between August 6, 1990, and March 4, 1991, for a total of 45 magazines.

As a point of reference, a preliminary study was conducted to estimate the number of words included in the analysis for each magazine. This study consisted of taking a random sample of three one-inch-by-one-inch squares of text from one issue of each magazine, counting the number of words in the samples and computing a mean score. Once a magazine's mean score was obtained, it was multiplied by a total count of square inches from the fifteen issues of that magazine, thus producing the estimate of the total number of words. The estimated total number of words for each magazine was as follows: Time - 35,334, Newsweek - 29,970, U.S. News - 34,112.

Categories of Bias

Four categories of bias were identified in this study. Table I illustrates the overall occurrences of instances of bias, without regard to category.

TABLE I

TOTAL OCCURRENCES OF INSTANCES OF BIAS BY MAGAZINE

MAGAZINES

	TIME	NEWSWEEK	U.S. NEWS	OVERALL
OCCURRENCES OF BIAS	4126	3643	2447	10216
PERCENTAGE OF INSTANCES OF BIAS (instances/ total words)	11.7%	12.2%	7.2%	10.3%

Simple Chi Square Statistic = 438.8
Table Chi Square (p <.001, df = 2) = 13.8

For the total occurrences of bias among Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News, the simple chi-square analysis showed that a significant difference at the .001 percent level of confidence existed. This indicated a genuine difference among the total instances of bias. Time had the greatest

number of instances of bias, and U.S. News had the least.

However, considering instances of bias in comparison with total words, Newsweek had the greatest percentage of instances.

Regarding the total occurrences of bias by category, multiordinate terms had the greatest number with 9,890 and passives had the least with 97. See Table II.

TABLE II

TOTAL OCCURRENCES OF BIAS BY CATEGORY

	PRON.	REIF.	MULT.	PASS.	TOTAL
OCCURRENCES OF BIAS	120	109	9890	97	10,216
	1.2%	1.1%	96.8%	.9%	100.0%

Simple Chi Square Statistic = 28095
Table Chi Square (p <.001, df = 3) = 16.266

The simple chi-square analysis for total occurrences of bias by category showed a significant difference at the .001 percent level of confidence, indicating that a genuine difference existed between categories of bias.

Significant differences were found at the .001 percent level of confidence between the following bias category

combinations: pronominalizations and multiordinal;
reification and multiordinal; passive and multiordinal,
indicating a genuine difference between the categories.
Other combinations of category bias failed to produce
significant differences.

Further analysis of categories of bias by magazines
also proved the existence of significant differences and a
genuine relationship between magazines and bias categories.
See Table III.

TABLE III

INSTANCES OF CATEGORY BIAS BY MAGAZINE

BIAS	TIME	NEWSWEEK	U.S. NEWS	TOTAL
PRON.	34	51	35	120
	28.3%	42.5%	29.2%	100.0%
REIF.	41	48	20	109
	37.6%	44.0%	18.4%	100.0%
MULT.	4022	3491	2377	9890
	40.7%	35.3%	24.0%	100.0%
PASS.	29	53	15	97
	29.9%	54.6%	15.5%	100.0%

Complex Chi Square Statistic = 27.58
Table Chi Square (p < .001, df = 6) = 22.457

The complex chi-square analysis of categories of bias by magazine showed that a genuine difference and significant relationship existed at the .001 percent level of confidence. However, a computed "C" value of .05, on a scale of 0 - 1.0 where 1.0 is the strongest, indicated that the strength of the relationship was almost negligible.

Tables IV - VII further illustrate the genuine differences found among the magazines on specific categories of bias.

TABLE IV

PRONOMINALIZATION BIAS BY MAGAZINES

	TIME	NEWSWEEK	U.S. NEWS	TOTAL
OCCURRENCES OF BIAS	34	51	35	120
PERCENTAGE OF INSTANCES OF BIAS (instances/ total words)	.10%	.17%	.10%	.12%

Simple Chi Square Statistic = 8.34 -- Table Chi Square Statistic (p < .025, df = 2) = 7.4

Regarding the bias category of pronominalization in relation to the magazines, a significant difference was

found at the .025 level of confidence which indicates a genuine relationship. Further analysis reveals significant differences and genuine relationships between _Time_ and _Newsweek_, and _Newsweek_ and _U.S. News_. No significant difference or relationship was found between _Time_ and _U.S. News_.

Both the number of instances and percentages of instances of bias in comparison with total words showed that _Newsweek_ had the greatest amount of pronominalization and only a difference of one instance separated _U.S. News_ and _Time_.

Examples of excessive pronominalization found in the study were: "Whatever Moscow's motives..." -- _Time_, Mar. 4, 1991, p.23. 2. "...avoided air-to-air combat whenever possible." -- _U.S. News & World Report_, Jan. 14, 1991, p.24. 3. "...withdrawal from Kuwait before anyone talks about anything else." -- _Time_, Nov. 5, 1990, p.39.

TABLE V

MULTIORDINAL BIAS BY MAGAZINES

	TIME	NEWSWEEK	U.S. NEWS	TOTAL
OCCURRENCES OF BIAS	4022	3491	2377	9890
PERCENTAGE OF INSTANCES OF BIAS (instances/ total words)	11.4%	11.6%	7.0%	9.9%

Simple Chi Square Statistic = 462.5 -- Table Chi Square
Statistic (p < .001, df = 2) = 13.8

The simple chi-square analysis of multiordinal bias and
magazines revealed a significant difference at the .001
level of confidence and genuine relationship between the
multiordinal bias and magazines. Further analysis indicates
significant differences between Time and U.S. News, and
Newsweek and U.S. News. No significant difference was found
between Time and Newsweek.

Despite the fact that Time had more occurrences of the
multiordinal bias, consideration of instances of bias in
comparison with total words revealed that Newsweek had the
highest number of occurrences of bias and U.S. News had the
least.

Examples of multiordinal terms found in the study were

"Iraq's air-defense system is heavy on equipment..." -- U.S. News & World Report, Jan. 14, 1991, p.22. 2. "...which often turned up weeks later." -- Newsweek, Nov. 5, 1990, p.32. 3. "...and at home for shedding rivers of blood to win..." Time, Mar. 4, 1991, p.25.

TABLE VI

REIFICATION BIAS BY MAGAZINES

	TIME	NEWSWEEK	U.S. NEWS	TOTAL
OCCURRENCES OF BIAS	41	48	20	109
PERCENTAGE OF INSTANCES OF BIAS (instances/ total words)	.12%	.16%	.06%	.11%

Simple Chi Square Statistic = 15.4 -- Table Chi Square Statistic (p < .001, df = 2) = 13.8

The simple chi-square analysis of reification and magazines revealed a significant difference at the .001 level of confidence and a genuine relationship. Analysis between combinations of magazines showed a significant difference between Time and U.S. News, and Newsweek and U.S. News. There was no significant difference found between

Time and Newsweek. Differences in word totals appeared to make no difference when considering instances of bias in comparison with word totals. Newsweek had the highest number of occurrences of reification and U.S. News had the least.

Examples of reification bias found in the study were "...knowledge is power." -- U.S. News & World Report, Jan. 14, 1991, p.23. 2. "Former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairmen Gen. David Jones and Adm. William Crowe are creatures of the post-Vietnam consensus..." -- Newsweek, Dec. 10, 1990, p.26. 3. "Without his military might, Saddam is just another bit player." -- Time, Nov. 5, 1990, p.40.

TABLE VII

PASSIVES BIAS BY MAGAZINES

	TIME	NEWSWEEK	U.S. NEWS	TOTAL
OCCURRENCES OF BIAS	29	53	15	97
PERCENTAGE OF INSTANCES OF BIAS (instances/ total words)	.08%	.18%	.04%	.10%

Simple Chi Square Statistic = 29.6 -- Table Chi Square Statistic (p < .001, df = 2) = 13.8

A genuine relationship and significant difference at the .001 level of confidence was found in the passive category of bias and the magazines. Further analysis indicates that significant differences existed between Time and U.S. News, and Newsweek and U.S. News. No significant difference was found between Time and Newsweek. Percentages of instances of bias corresponded equally with the observed occurrences of bias.

Examples of the passive bias found in the study were "...but the message was imprecise and a peace feeler was suspected." -- Time, Nov. 5, 1990, p.39. 2. "Beyond the immediate problems posed by the expected Israeli response..." -- U.S. News & World Report, Jan. 28, 1991, p.24. 3. "The projected loss rate..." -- Newsweek, Nov. 5, 1990, p.33.

Summary

This study of randomly selected issues of Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News, published between August 6, 1990, and March 4, 1991, showed significant differences with respect to categories of bias and newsmagazines.

The bias category with the greatest number of occurrences was that of multiordinate terms, while the bias category with the least number of occurrences was that of passives. Time had the most occurrences of bias and U.S. News had the least. However, considering instances of bias in comparison with total words, Newsweek had the greatest

percentage of instances.

Looking back at the earlier mentioned point of reference, it is interesting to note that out of approximately 35,334 words, _Time_ had 4,126 instances of bias, among which 4,022 of those were multiordinal terms. A closer look at _Newsweek_ reveals that out of approximately 29,970 words, the researcher observed 3,643 instances of bias, including 3,491 multiordinal terms. Regarding _U.S. News_, the approximate word count of 34,112 included 2,447 instances of bias, among which were 2,377 multiordinal terms.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Working journalists seldom concern themselves with
deeply philosophical questions nor with the
epistemological assumptions of their own profession.
Many operate on the aristotelian assumption that their
words reflect (or should reflect) reality. They are
disturbed by charges of "distortion" and incensed by
charges of "bias." They strive for "objectivity" while
admitting, reluctantly, that it is hard to attain
(p.35).

These opening words to Kenneth G. Johnson's article

from the Journalism Educator titled "Insights of General

Semantics would be useful to Journalists," basically

summarize the thoughts of the author of this thesis about

the coverage of the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War. The author

hypothesized that Time, Newsweek and U.S. News' coverage of

the war was biased, and the newsmagazines, therefore, did

not fulfill their responsibilities as members of the

journalistic profession.

One basis for this hypothesis was the theory that

journalists are often "torn" in their loyalty during times

of war and national crisis. The theory says journalists are

Americans before they are journalists and should not be used

as tools of propaganda for the enemy, but rather they should

serve the public's interest through positive reporting of

the allies' efforts.

A review of mass communication theories and general semantics served as a point of reference for defining the "preferred" type of reporting during a crisis like the Gulf War. This review included semanticists Alfred Korzybski and Wendell Johnson's general semantics principles, the Hutchins Commission, Siebert, Peterson and Schramm's <u>Four</u> <u>Theories</u> <u>of</u> <u>the</u> <u>Press</u>, and past research studies of bias in newsmagazines and general reporting.

In addition to the previously stated general hypothesis, the study sought answers to three specific null hypotheses:

1) No difference exists between the frequency of types of semantical errors made by the newsmagazines overall.

2) NO difference exists between total occurrences of semantical errors and individual newsmagazines.

3) No relationship exists between types of semantical errors and individual newsmagazines.

This study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1) Overall, what type(s) of semantical errors were most frequently made by the three newsmagazines?

2) Which newsmagazine made the most errors?

3) What type(s) of errors were made by each of the three newsmagazines?

The results of the study showed a variety of significant differences and relationships; therefore, the

null hypotheses could not be supported. The research
questions were also quite clearly answered. Overall, the
general hypothesis was supported.

With regards to the first null hypothesis and its
corresponding research question, simple chi-square analysis
indicated that genuine differences existed between the
frequency of types of semantical errors made by the
newsmagazines overall. The type of semantical errors most
frequently made by the three newsmagazines overall was that
of multiordinal terms. The frequency count revealed that
multiordinal terms constituted 96.8% of the total
occurrences of instances of bias, and the simple chi-square
analysis found this genuine difference to be significant at
the .001 level of confidence. See Table II.

For the second null hypothesis and corresponding
research question, simple chi-square analysis showed that
genuine differences existed between the total occurrences of
bias for each magazine and the individual magazines. The
frequency count indicated that _Time_ had the highest number
of instances of bias and _U.S. News_ had the least. However,
considering instances of bias in comparison with total
words, _Newsweek_ had the greatest percentage of instances.
The simple chi-square analysis found this genuine difference
to be significant at the .001 level of confidence. See
Table I.

The final null hypothesis and its corresponding
research question were answered by both simple and complex

chi-square analysis. Table III illustrates that a genuine difference and a significant relationship, albeit almost negligible in strength, existed between the types of semantical errors and individual magazines at the .001 level of confidence. The study shows that occurrences of all four types of errors existed in each of the three newsmagazines. Tables IV through VII further illustrate significant differences found between different combinations of the newsmagazines with regard to specific categories of bias.

Discussion

The results of this study confirm Kenneth Johnson's observation that journalists rarely look outside themselves to see if their words are (or as close as possible) reflecting reality. Even though the numbers varied in the study, they were consistent with regard to how many instances of what types of bias were found. These numbers support communication theory that media coverage is patterned after the ideological constraints in which it operates. Those constraints come in a variety of forms, i.e., political thought, cultural and social thought and market ideology.

Americans, some would say, are a proud people who value their freedoms and are ever-ready to defend their rights as citizens of their great country. From the summer of 1989 to the fall of 1991 there have been political and military uprisings in several countries around the globe as people

strive to build in their homelands a similar democracy to that found in America.

So where is the harm in feeling proud of where you live and all that goes with that? The author of this study contends that there is no harm, save only that of becoming a megaphone for any person, community, country, movement, economic or political power that would prevent extentional thought and analysis. We need only look at history, and recent history at that, to see what becomes of a country whose individuals casually and carelessly give up their power and rights to think and question.

There is such a thing as "the power of the press," and it seems that in an ideal press that phrase might never exist -- for an ideal press would be completely objective. However, we know that complete objectivity can never be obtained, and yet, it is the author's opinion that journalists who seek to become consciously aware of their semantic weaknesses will be one step closer to attaining objectivity in their communication efforts. Kenneth Johnson was right when he said that journalists "have a responsibility to examine their assumptions about how they know what they 'know' and to share their insights with their readers, listeners, or viewers" (p.35). Furthermore, it is the author's contention that a basic working knowledge of general semantics is one more, and effective, tool to use in working to fulfill that responsibility.

Recommendations For Further Research

Though this study was content analysis in nature, producing nominal data, and is limited to the time period specified in the study, similar research into the media's performance during the Gulf War is worth doing. Possibilities include content analysis of network and local radio and television newscasts, surveys, and national and local content analysis of newspaper coverage.

It might also be worthwhile to conduct a similar study using a media form from one of the other allied countries of the War such as Great Britain or Saudi Arabia. Other possible research ideas include comparison of the Gulf War with previous ones, i.e., World War II, Korea, Vietnam; looking for other types of bias in media reports on other wars; developing a general semantics analysis model for examining other elements of media coverage from previous wars.

Conclusion

Coverage of the Gulf War by Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News was not in keeping with the theories of the press under which the newsmagazines claim to operate. Therefore, these three newsmagazines did not fulfill their responsibilities as members of the journalistic profession.

The need for an awareness of thought and language patterns that journalists, as people of a society can become trapped in is essential. Indeed, a desire by journalists to

want to look outside themselves and strive for objectivity is necessary as our global village grows, and with it the moral obligation to be accurate, clear and unbiased messengers and citizens of this world.

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