MEDIA NARCISSISM AND SELF-REFLEXIVE REPORTING:
METACOMMUNICATION IN TELEVISION NEWS BROADCASTS
AND WEB COVERAGE OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

By

ANDREW PAUL WILLIAMS

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2004
This dissertation is dedicated to my parents. I owe a great deal of gratitude to my mother, Lois Virginia Strickland Williams, who has been extremely supportive and actively involved in helping me pursue my graduate education. Equally important is the vital role my father, the late Reverend Grady H. Williams, Sr. had in encouraging me to continue my formal education. I am thankful to these role models and friends for instilling in me a quest for knowledge, a desire for civic engagement, and sense of humor. They both encouraged me to view my life as a journey to be enjoyed, instead of just focusing on specific destinations and accomplishments. I am thankful for their generosity, their kindness, and their leadership, and perhaps most importantly, their helping me gain a feeling of resilience by developing in me an appreciation for the absurd, which has proved quite essential, especially at times when things in life have seemed dire. For all of this, and much more, I am grateful.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very fortunate to have benefited from the mentorship of Dr. Lynda Lee Kaid. From my first contact with her, Dr. Kaid treated me with respect and encouraged a collaborative research relationship which over the past three years has developed into a close personal friendship as well. Dr. Kaid has helped me to develop a programmatic approach to my research, while at the same time encouraged me to explore new ideas that will serve to advance my own personal development and to contribute to the mass communication discipline. As an eminent scholar who has been at the helm of political communication scholarship for a little over three decades, this research luminary has never ceased to amaze me with her kindness, her respect for differing points of view, and her quest for advancing knowledge. Words cannot express the gratitude and admiration I have for this great scholar and teacher. Dr. Kaid leads by example and is so inclusive and generous to a point that is almost beyond belief.

It is also with much appreciation that I thank Dr. Spiro K. Kiousis. I had the privilege of taking Dr. Kiousis’ graduate mass communications theory class and also developing an ongoing research and professional friendship with him. He is a top-rate scholar and rising star in the discipline of political communication whose collegiality and willingness to offer guidance is always above and beyond the call of duty.

Also noteworthy is the interest that Dr. Justin Brown took in me as I constantly ran research ideas and questions about scholarship by him. Dr. Brown helped to encourage,
guide, and inform my research as I sought ways to address my many issues and concerns about the mass media.

Another stalwart supporter who never tired of my almost endless questions and need for guidance is Dr. David M. Hedge. Dr. Hedge met with me frequently to address how I could merge my research in mass and political communication with the developing scholarship in the field of political science and to stay focused in my efforts. His patience and own intellectual curiosity have helped to send me in new directions with my research projects.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the friendship, guidance, and support that Dr. Bernell E. Tripp has offered me over the last three and one-half years. At a time when I was very uncertain about my abilities, Dr. Tripp counseled, directed, and protected me. Without her help as a teacher and confidant, I would not have been able to have endured my first semester in this graduate program. Dr. Tripp was also selfless in her expectations of me and most supportive of my choice to focus on quantitative research in the area of political communication instead of historical media research which is her expertise.

Last, but not least, Jody Hedge was the very first person I spoke with when I was considering applying to this graduate program, and since that first conversation, she is still the first person I turn to for help on matters of not only proper policies and procedures, but also for personal and professional guidance. Jody has been the stabilizing force in the graduate division of the College of Journalism and Communications on whom I and countless other students rely when we feel there is nowhere else to turn. And she never fails any of us, which is quite a feat, as there is almost always a rather long line
of students in need of her help. Jody has become a dependable friend to me, and I could never have made it through this experience without her.

These are the primary people who have helped me through the hazing ritual of the doctoral program, but there are many others who helped along the way. For all of you who helped me on this arduous journey, you know who you are, and how much I am grateful for contributing to an experience that was both the best and worst of times.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the Journalist</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatekeeping Theory</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Coverage</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Web as a News Source</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framing</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacommunication</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypotheses and Research Questions</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 METHODS</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories and Definitions</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Information Efforts</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding Process</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 RESULTS</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of News Stories</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Televised News Broadcast Source Reliance</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Coverage Source Reliance</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episodic and Thematic Frame Prevalence</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame Prevalence</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacommunication Frame Prevalence</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame Prevalence over Time</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacommunication Frame Prevalence over Time</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of Metacommunication Frames</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self-Reflexive Metacommunication Frames ..............................................................49
Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frames ...........................................................50
Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame Categories ..........................................51
Episodic and Thematic Frame Media Comparisons .................................................52
Bush Administration Public Information Assessments ..............................................54
Iraq Government Public Information Assessments ...............................................56

5 DISCUSSION .............................................................................................................57

Findings and Implications ...........................................................................................57
Source Reliance .........................................................................................................57
Episodic and Thematic Frames ..............................................................................59
Frame Prevalence ......................................................................................................61
Metacommunication Frames .....................................................................................63
Self-Reflexive Metacommunication Frames .............................................................64
Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frames .........................................................66
Strategy/Process Metacommunication Categories .....................................................68
Public Information Assessment .............................................................................70
Limitations .................................................................................................................70
Future Research .........................................................................................................71

APPENDIX

A CODEBOOK FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TELEVISED NEWS BROADCASTS ..............................................................73
B CODEBOOK FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS OF WEB COVERAGE ..........79
C CODESHEET OF CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TELEVISED NEWS BROADCASTS ..............................................................85
D CODESHEET FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS OF WEB COVERAGE ..........88
LIST OF REFERENCES ...................................................................................................91
BIографICAL SKETCH ...............................................................................................105
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-1</td>
<td>Episodic and Thematic Frames across Three Periods of Time</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-2</td>
<td>Frame Prevalence in Stories by Media Channel</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-3</td>
<td>Self-Reflexive and Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frames by Media</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-4</td>
<td>Frames Relied on in Stories Covering Operation Iraqi Freedom across Three Periods of Time and by Media Channel</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>Self-Reflexive Metacommunication Types by Media Channel</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>Strategy/Process Metacommunication Types by Media Channel</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-7</td>
<td>Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame Categories by Media</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>Bush Administration Public Information Efforts</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-9</td>
<td>Episodic and Thematic Frames across Three Periods of Time and by Media Channel</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-10</td>
<td>Iraqi Government Public Information Efforts</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

MEDIA NARCISSISM AND SELF-REFLEXIVE REPORTING:
METACOMMUNICATION IN TELEVISED NEWS BROADCASTS
AND WEB COVERAGE OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

By

Andrew Paul Williams

August 2004

Chair: Lynda Lee Kaid
Major Department: Journalism and Communications

This study examined the prevalence of metacommunication in televised news
broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Prior scholarship on
metacommunication, media narcissism, and self-reflexive reporting has primarily been
conducted in analyzing the news coverage of political campaigns, through the content
analysis of televised and print media. This study was a quantitative content analysis that
explicated the metacommunication concept by applying it to a military conflict and
comparing two electronic media channels.

Building on the prior established metacommunication frames that examined the
extent and type of self-reflexive media coverage and the media’s evaluation of the
strategy/process of public information efforts, the current study’s findings indicated that
metacommunication was a prevalent news frame in the coverage of the U.S. war with
Iraq in 2003. Of the two types of metacommunication frames that were examined in this
study, findings indicate that the self-reflexive frame was relied on more frequently than the strategy/process frame.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

It is a given fact in today’s highly mediated society that the public turns to the news media—print, radio, TV, and Internet—for vital information, especially pertaining to matters of national import, such as politics and homeland security. It is perhaps in no other arena than the political one in a democratic society, where according to classic democratic theories (Berelson, 1966), citizens rely on accuracy of information in order to govern themselves. The mass media play a vital role in keeping the public up-to-date on the facts about political figures, issues, and events.

However, a review of literature from the discipline of political communication over the last four decades indicates that a number of scholars have identified five areas of concern regarding troubling problems with the media’s providing sufficient objective information to the public: an emphasis on sensationalism and focus on clash; the shrinking soundbite; an emphasis on image over issues; an emphasis on horserace coverage in campaigns; and a focus on the negative.

This dissertation seeks to focus on a fifth emerging area of concern: media narcissism and metacommunication. This dissertation largely builds on the research of Esser and D’Angelo (2003, 2002) who view metacommunication to be a byproduct of an adversarial relationship between professional political public relations strategists and the media. Esser and D’Angelo’s work has been greatly influenced by that of Kerbel (1995, 1997, 1998, & 2000) and Kerbel, Apee, and Ross (2000) who have identified the self-reflexive nature of media coverage, in which journalist have become apt to insert
themselves into the stories on which they are reporting as problematic trend. The metacommunication concept has previously been limited to political campaigns.

The purpose of this exploratory study is to advance the research on the electronic media’s coverage of war, the framing thereof, and to examine the role metacommunication played in this reporting. Prior research has applied the theory of metacommunication almost exclusively to political campaign coverage, and this dissertation will explicate the metacommunication concept by applying it to a military operation. Additionally, this dissertation adds to the prior research on metacommunication in electronic news coverage, which has previously been limited to television news by adding Web coverage of the war to the analysis.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This dissertation seeks to examine how the media covered the 2003 U.S. war with Iraq. A number of prior studies that explored assumptions and theoretical underpinnings of what the role of the media in a democratic society should be were drawn upon in this analysis of media coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom with the goal of advancing knowledge of how the media function during a time of crisis.

Role of the Journalist

The notion that the media have become increasingly self-reflexive or narcissistic in their coverage of politics, major public events, and even war has received serious attention and debate over the last few decades about just what the role of the journalist is in society as compared to what this role should be. Theoretically, such concerns of media self-reflexivity or metacommunication have been grounded in perspectives such as framing or second-level (attribute) agenda setting. This research attempts to examine expectations of established journalistic norms and practices and attempts to address key concerns based on these given expectations.

A foundation for this exploration of media responsibility is the notion of classic democratic theories (Berelson, 1966). This perspective asserts that it is essential in a democratic society that citizens have access to information in order to make informed decisions that enable self-governance.

Historically, in late 18th-century England, Edmund Burke is credited with labeling the media as the Fourth Estate. This concept was based on the idea that the press should
have equal political power in relation to the other three estates of the British Empire: the Lords, the Church, and the Commons. Freedom of the media was a cornerstone of this concept, and these freedoms not only enabled the media to report, comment on, and critique the government, it also was considered a responsibility of the press to do so.

Similarly, a concept called Social Responsibility Theory emerged in the United States in the 20th Century. This normative theory asserts that the media serve to inform, entertain, sell, and most importantly, raise conflict to the plane of public awareness. This concept was developed from the writings of W.E. Hocking, The Commission on the Free Press, and journalists’ practitioner codes. This theory asserts that everyone should have access to the media and that the media should respect privacy and not infringe on the rights of individuals. The concept is grounded in freedom of the press from governmental control, unless the government felt that there was a compelling need that justified its intervention. The Social Responsibility perspective differs from Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm’s other three theories of the press—Authoritarian, Libertarian, and Soviet-Totalitarian—in that it argues that the media must fulfill its obligation of providing information to the public, and if it does not do so, someone should ensure that it does. This notion of an obligation of journalistic social responsibility is largely based on the fact that the media are the only industry that was guaranteed protection and freedom in the Bill of Rights (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1963).

Based on these historical underpinnings, the role of the journalist has been shaped and discussed by numerous scholars and practitioners. For example, it is argued that freedom of the press is essential in a democratic society (Baker, 2002). Additionally, with this freedom comes the journalistic responsibility to provide credible information to the
public (Lule, 2001). It is noteworthy that two major media organizations—the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) and the Radio-Television News Directors Association (RTNDA)—have developed codes of ethics and professional practice that overlap in three specific areas of responsibility: (1) truth; (2) independence; and (3) accountability.

**Gatekeeping Theory**

In terms of applying theory to actual practice—to these journalist ideals and norms—gatekeeping theory has guided research that has helped to inform these concerns about the media fulfilling their public role. In both the seminal gatekeeping study (White, 1950) and in its subsequent replication (Schneider, 1967) researchers went into the newsroom to observe how editors actually fulfilled their gatekeeping roles. These initial studies defined gatekeeping as the way in which the editors, or gatekeepers, selected and shaped what messages, out of the myriad content available, actually garnered media coverage. These field reports indicate that gatekeeping decisions were primarily based on newsworthiness, organizational norms, and space constraints, and the gatekeepers had the power not only to select, but also to shape and present information. Newsworthiness and space constraints (also referred to as the limited news hole) are the two primary considerations that emerged from these studies of how newsroom decisions were made, in terms of how the media gatekeepers responsibly serve their public duties (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Dimmick (1974) views gatekeeping as a complex process that can be highly subjective, as the initial studies indicated. However, he views the standardized norms of media coverage and ethical concerns to be components of the gatekeeping process.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) assert that there are three essential aspects to gatekeeping that can help to reduce chance of irresponsible journalism and bias. These
three governing aspects are news value, objectivity, and organizational structure. It is perhaps the notion of objectivity, in terms of evaluating true news value, that is at the center of this dissertation’s evaluation of self-reflexivity, narcissism, and metacommunication in news coverage.

In contrast to Shoemaker and Reese’s views of responsible gatekeeping practices, there are growing concerns about the lack of, or relinquishment of, gatekeeping. It is argued that the trends of infotainment, tabloidization, and sensationalism in the news media are evidence of a fundamental disregard, or breakdown of, gatekeeping in the press (e.g., Shaw, 1994; Kiousis, 2002a; Williams & Delli Carpini, 2004).

Research on media bias seems particularly relevant to this exploration of the growing concerns about metacommunication and the role of the journalist. While prior research on the press has long-established categories of bias, such as partisan, structural, and situational, there appear to be new forms of bias emerging. Scholars and media critics as well have noted that there tends to be a negative news bias (Kurtz, 1995; Lichter, Noyes, & Kaid, 2000). Also, Williams (2002), for example, has argued that a “synergy bias” has emerged due to the significant amount of media consolidations, mergers, and strategic alliances in recent years. Williams posits that media coverage is now biased in favor of those organizations that the given media outlet is associated with. Similarly, Williams and Kiousis (2004) have explored the concept of corporate bias and have found evidence that suggests that media ownership and cross-promotion do, in fact, have a direct relationship with what does, and does not, get covered, by the media. The current dissertation seeks to investigate whether one of the most potent forms of media bias is not partisan, structural, or situational, but it is perhaps the media’s bias towards itself.
Based on the previously mentioned foundations that have shaped the role of the journalist, the free press, gatekeeping, and media bias, a major concern that is at the center of this dissertation is that of the media fulfilling the public’s trust. For purposes of this dissertation, trust is defined as a three-part relationship: “A expects B to do X” (Hardin, 2001). Based on the freedom and responsibility that the media have, it would be a fair assessment to say that A, the public, expects B, the media, to do X, what it is obligated to do in a democratic society: provide timely, accurate, newsworthy, unbiased, and objective information. Work by media critics and scholars indicates that the media have violated such a reciprocal form of trust and are not fulfilling their role as objective, impartial observers who report to, and serve, the public.

This possible violation of the social obligation of the media is evidenced in several ways. For example, scholars have noted that the actual amount of critical information needed by the public to make informed decisions, such as during the time of a political campaign, has dramatically decreased (e.g. Kiousis, 2002a). The media has been criticized for lack of substantive political coverage: The shrinking sound bite and shifting coverage emphasize the horserace aspects of a campaign—focusing on moments of clash and spectacle—and even violates viewers’ expectations by ambushing and arguing with candidates or elected officials (Graber 1976; Kaid & Cryer, 1990; Morello, 1998).

These problems, while noteworthy in their own right, are directly related to the concerns in this research, specifically because an issue of concern about such troubling journalistic practice is what type of coverage is offered as a result of these practices? Essentially, the byproducts of journalism run amuck are areas of growing concern. Often one byproduct that replaces substantive issue information by the media is instead
coverage in which the journalists present themselves as participants of the process or information they are covering. For example, in a recent campaign cycle, it is reported that journalists were evaluating the election as “boring” and discussing why they felt it was so (Jamieson, 1998). Instead of providing the public with actual policy information, candidate issue stances, or other substantive facts, the journalists were instead acting as commentators and filling the news hole with their own inane chatter.

Nimmo and Combs (1992) have similarly expressed concern about the excessive reliance of the media on the political pundits to fill valuable air time. Some mainstream publications (e.g., The New Yorker and Vanity Fair) have commented on this practice of filling news shows with these so-called “talking heads” and passing off their volatile, argumentative dialogue as informative television. Washington Post media critic Howard Kurtz has also chimed in on this troubling practice and asserts that it has contributed to what he has labeled a “media circus.” The American Journalism Review and Columbia Journalism Review have also addressed the issues that arise when the media rely on the media as information sources as areas of concern. Those who are being interviewed and portrayed as so-called “experts” who provide “insider” reports often turn out to be either members of the media, partisan pundits, or quasi-scholars who are often pushing their latest book.

What is particularly problematic about this practice of the media covering themselves instead of focusing on their traditional, established role is that the discourse is generally that of running subjective commentary and pontification, instead of objective reporting of information that could be provided if the media would offer it from readily available sources other than the media participants themselves. One might ask why the
media are interviewing themselves instead of expert sources or actual participants in the events or issues they are covering. It appears that the answer is that the media tend to readily give up their vital function of serving as a watchdog for the public, because they are largely too busy watching themselves—enamored by the spectacle of the unfolding news process and their own involvement in it.

Additionally, the media seem to have become wrapped up in what is now being labeled as spin, by the media players themselves as well as media critics. CNN even airs a “news show” that deals exclusively with spin: Spin Cycle. Isn’t it a fair assumption, based on the underlying and clearly established principles of the press, that the professional journalists should rise above the so-called spin? Based on these established journalistic norms, it would seem that it is the media’s job to sift through the public relations/public information materials they are provided, synthesize this, and provide objective information to the public. Instead, it appears that the media practitioners are so wrapped up in the process that they literally spin the spin and take up valuable time and space away from the business of providing actual news and factual data in the process of doing so. Could not this synthesis of public relations information or so-called “spin” be done behind the scenes, and does not this airing of the news process appear to violate the trust and considerable responsibility that has been bestowed upon the media?

In a Canadian documentary, titled *Truth Merchants*, a picture is painted for the audience of the media players and the public relations professionals playing an ongoing, daily game of cat and mouse to see who can get the best of the other party. The contest for each to best the other is played out on a daily basis, and it appears that it is the public that pays the price for this game (McMahon, 1998).
**War Coverage**

From newsreels to radio to television to the Web, electronic news has been able to provide coverage to the public during these most dire of circumstances, and it is especially in a time of war when such coverage literally means life or death. Audiences tune in, watch, or log on, in order to get up-to-date information.

Just as the media channels and the wars reported on have changed over time, so of course, has the content:

Before the first civilian war correspondents in the middle of the nineteenth century, generals reported their own wars. Today, in the war on terrorism if we want a version of what is happening, we turn on CNN or BBC television and there is an American general at the Pentagon, or the British Defense Secretary Geoff Hoon at the Ministry of Defense, telling us what they have decided we should know about the war. Unfortunately this flood of material, coupled with the insatiable appetite of the 24-hour rolling TV news and the demand of the foreign desks for scoops, made the temptation to invent stories difficult to resist. (Knightley, 2002, p. 170)

Additionally, the reasons for the use of sensationalized content and graphic visuals can be attributed more to ratings than to helping the public interpret the complexities of warfare: “Historical evidence shows that wars are generally good news for television networks; the global success of CNN in the wake of the Gulf War is a prominent case in point. Televising live conflict can be particularly profitable if it concerns a patriotic war” (Thussu, 2002, p. 210).

While a period of war might be a time of higher ratings and profits for televised news, it is also a period in which these broadcasts face greater criticism: “In a society at war, the media are even more carefully scrutinized—both by leaders and by scholars—from the point of view of content and control. Assumptions are made about the functions of the media in the maintenance of civilian morale, the bolstering of convictions about
justice of the cause, the countering of rumors, the strengthening of solidarity, and so on”
(Peled & Katz, 1974, p. 50).

One reason for this adversarial relationship between the press and the military is the issue of access to accurate information, or the lack thereof:

Managing news and information about U.S. military interventions became more sophisticated in the 1990s with the full implantation of the pool system at the time of the 1991 Gulf War, when a select band of journalist were permitted access only to predetermined combat locations during Operation Desert Storm. This strategy, devised by the Pentagon, helped the U.S. to monitor and censor information about the war before it was broadcast. The military’s definition of “sensitive information also included anything that might undermine public support for military action. (Thussu, 2002, p. 204)

Prior research has focused on objectivity and reporting techniques during war and how to balance journalistic practices with public needs (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). For example, Hallin (1986) conducted a study on the news practices of journalists in the Vietnam War and argued that there was an emphasis in news coverage on specific events, and newsworthiness was dictated by official sources and the importance of reporting on the war itself, instead of interpreting it. Conversely, Arno (1984) critiqued the media’s coverage of the Vietnam War and asserted that personal interpretation and framing information was in fact what the reporters did engage in, instead of merely functioning as objective communication professionals.

The Vietnam War was a turning point in the media’s coverage of military conflict and was the first modern war in which television actually brought visual images of combat into homes. Despite the impact these still images and footage had on the public, they were not close-up, live reports like we see today.

Then the 1991 Gulf War took televised war coverage to a new level, one in which viewers could actually watch missiles being launched, and the coverage of this war is
credited for “making” CNN: “Television’s coverage of the Gulf War [1991], for the first time in history, brought military conflict into living rooms across the globe, thanks to networks like CNN. In the high-tech, bloodless, almost surreal visualizations of war, cockpit videos of ‘precision bombings’ . . .” (Thussu, 2002, p. 204). This view of war and destruction was at a distance, and viewing it on television, it appeared “as a painless Nintendo exercise” (Said, 1993, p. 3).

Kaid et al. (1994) content analyzed CNN’s nightly reporting during the 45-day Gulf War in 1991 from a dramatistic perspective, examining the dominant ways in which CNN framed the war: “The primary conclusions of this analysis suggest that CNN presented an American view which often focused on the media players and offered disproportionate coverage to telecommunications and military technology” (p. 148). The authors argue that the emphasis on the dramatic and the spectacle in this reporting created an alternate, mediated reality for viewers. Though not expressly labeled as media narcissism or metacommunication, the findings of Kaid et al. indicate a turning point in war coverage in which the journalists inserted themselves into the story at an unprecedented level, thus becoming participants in the military conflict that they themselves were reporting on.

Similarly, much scholarly research about the media’s coverage of the 1991 Gulf War indicates a general consensus that the reporting was biased in favor of an American point of view. Additionally these studies conclude that a reason for this bias was that the media were favorably influenced by the advanced technology used by the United States against Iraq (Carrier & Swanson, 1991; Liebes, 1992; Zelizer, 1992; Zorn, 1991). Kaid et al. (1993), however, compared how five international newspapers covered the war and
found that the international press was not as supportive and influenced by the high-tech visuals and did not find uniformity in the prevalent themes of the war coverage.

The 2003 war with Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom, was an even more unique military conflict—one in which journalists were given unprecedented access to the military, and for the first time visuals of combat were filmed close-up and electronically broadcast in real-time for viewers across the globe. This coverage was not bloodless and was sometimes shockingly violent and gritty, as compared to the images seen only a decade earlier in the prior U.S. war with Iraq.

Embedded journalists actually traveled in tanks with soldiers, and ill-fated, star celebrities such as Peter Arnett and Geraldo Rivera made spectacles of themselves as they broadcast live from battle scenes, even pointing out actual troop movements and critiquing the U.S. war effort as it was playing out behind them. In many ways, the electronic media coverage of the 2003 war made it look like the ultimate reality TV show. While the nature of showing such coverage is a controversial topic, Bennett argues that “people cannot interpret what they don’t see” (Bennett, 2001, p. 145). Whether the embedded trend can is open for debate; the ubiquity of embedded journalism raised this concept to national salience, and “embedded” was selected by yourdictionary.com as its word of the year for 2003 (yourdictionary.com, 2003).

The current dissertation will add to the body of literature about electronic media war coverage as it examines the content during a period of time when both journalists and the public had unprecedented, almost-immediate access to information about and images of actual military action.
The Web as a News Source

Not only was this an unprecedented war, in terms of journalistic access to military action in general, it was also the first official U.S. Web war. The Web was still in its very infantile stages when the first Gulf War occurred, but it has developed into a significant news source since. Therefore, not only were reports being broadcast electronically through the medium of television as they occurred, they were also being reported in real time and in multimedia on the Web.

Overall, the use of the Web as a news information seeking tool has seen a dramatic increase during the last decade. This was specifically noteworthy in the 2000 presidential election, when unlike the 1996 American general election cycle, politicians turned to the Web to communicate directly with voters, and citizens turned to the Web to seek the most up-to-date and accurate election results. In fact, the Pew Internet and American Life Project and the Pew Center for People and the press are offering regular reports now on the volume of online information gathering. These organizations have offered reports over the past decade that cite a rise in using the Internet to fulfill the public’s political information and news gathering needs.

This increasing use of the Web for information seeking proved to be evident during the 2003 U.S. war with Iraq. According to a survey conducted by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2003), the online news audience increased significantly from the time before the war began. This study indicated that 77% of U.S. Internet users reported seeking information on the Web about the war. The survey also indicates that 56% percent of American Web users accessed a Web site with the express purpose of getting news or other information about the war in Iraq. This study also reports that 20% of American Internet users relied on the Web in order to form opinions about the war.
In an initial study of international coverage of the first few hours following the U.S. attack on Iraq, Dimitrova, Kaid, Williams, and Trammell (2003) found that most news Web sites had immediately updated their homepages and were offering breaking news of the onset of this new war.

Since the proliferation of the Internet as a major source of news, numerous studies have examined how effectively news Web sites function. Such studies have examined how national breaking news is covered (Dimitrova, Connolly-Ahern, Williams, Kaid, & Reid, 2003). There are numerous studies on the effectiveness and use of online newspapers, magazines, and television news Web sites. Such studies examine the work of online reporters (Deuze, 1998), the use of the Web for information gathering (Garrison, 2001), and the pragmatics of news Web sites organizational operations and journalistic practice (Singer 2001, 2003).

Another advantage of accessing news on the Web is that control of information is in the hands of the user. While the media gatekeepers control what is linked to in articles on their Web sites, the user maintains control of which hyperlinks to use and what information they want to be exposed to (Eveland & Dunwoody, 2001; Peng et al., 1999). Kiousis (2002b) argues that users are drawn to Web sites, especially ones that offer multimedia and interactive elements.

The current dissertation will add to the body of literature about electronic media war coverage by examining how for the first time in history, a U.S. war literally unfolded on the Web. Additionally, the immediacy of Web site news coverage of the war provides a unique new medium to apply the metacommunication concept.
Framing

Framing theory posits that media not only set the agenda but also transfer the salience of specific attributes to issues, events, or candidates. A media frame is the “central organizing idea for news content that supplies context and suggests what the issue is using selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” (Tankard, 2001; Tankard et al, 1991).

Framing theory suggests that the media place a frame of reference around its audience’s thought process. Tuchman (1978) considers the organization of everyday reality to be the most important function of media frames.

According to Gitlin (1980), “media frames” organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for consumers who rely on their reports. Gamson and Modigliani (1997) suggest that journalists’ framing of the news is due to professional norms and the influence of special interest groups. Similarly, Edelman (1997, 1993) views the act of framing as being clearly impacted by authorities and groups.

In a study on the 1991 Gulf War, Kelman (1995) offers 10 dominant frames that the U.S. administration used to shape public discourse: (1) no negotiations; (2) fear of reward for aggression; (3) blinkmanship; (4) unbalanced cost-benefit analysis; (5) human costs for the enemy; (6) self-glorification; (7) stigmatization of dissent; (8) rallying around the flag; (9) overcoming the Vietnam Syndrome; and (10) a New World Order.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) and Tuchman (1978) identified at least five key factors that may potentially influence how journalists frame a given issue: (1) social norms and values; (2) ownership and organizational pressures and constraints; (3)
Pressures of interest groups; (4) journalistic routines; and (5) ideological or political orientations of journalists.

Iyengar and Simon (1993) purport that network news frames can be classified as being either episodic or thematic: Episodic frames focus on specific events and incidents, and thematic frames emphasize abstract ideas and general, broad information.

Scheufele (1999) argues that the way the mass media frame an issue affects audience perceptions and suggests the consideration of two dominant frames. First, at the media level, journalists' framing of an issue might be influenced by several social-structural or organizational variables. Second, at the audience level, frames as the dependent variable are examined mostly as direct outcomes of the way mass media frame an issue. Price, Tewksbury, and Powers (1997) have studied framing from an effects perspective and argue that how the media frames the news influences audiences’ perceptions.

Pan and Kosicki (1991, 2001) view framing and the structuring of news as a strategic practice and have identified four specific aspects of information that shape the framing process: (1) syntactic structures—patterns in the arrangements of words, phrases; (2) script structures—newsworthiness of an issue or event; (3) thematic structures—journalists’ reliance on linking news with preexisting information; and (4) rhetorical structures—journalistic voice and style of packaging news.

In an analysis of framing European politics in print and broadcast news, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) identify five main frames that they believe broadly categorize the media content: (1) conflict frame; (2) human interest frame; (3) economic consequences frame; (4) morality frame; and (5) responsibility frame.
In a study that focused on the analysis of visual framing, Messaris and Abraham (2001) investigated how African Americans were represented in television news. Based on this analysis, the researchers found evidence of “subtle racism” largely due to the selection of the types of photographic images of African Americans used, the settings of these photographs, and the “racial cues” that were provided within news stories, “through visual juxtapositions and associations [that] provide a picture of those who occupy [urban] space” (p. 223).

Framing theory also suggests that the media have the power not only to select what is covered, but also how items are covered. The implications of how items are covered are that positive or negative framing could influence public opinion.

For example, De Vreese, Peter, and Semetko (2001) assert that while frames may indeed be issue-specific or generic in nature, that framing often focuses on conflict and consequences of “events, issues, and policies” (p. 109). De Vreese (2003) argues “that frames have inherent valence by suggesting, for example, positive or negative aspects, solutions, or treatments. Given this valence, news frames can be expected to influence public support for various policy measures” (p. 4).

In 1993, McCombs and Shaw expanded their original definition of agenda setting to include the concept of framing, stating that, “Both the selection of objects for attention and the selection of frames for thinking about these objects are powerful agenda-setting roles . . . [that may] direct attention toward certain attributes and away from others” (p.62). A number of scholars since then have attempted to extend the boundaries of agenda setting theory to include the concept of framing as second-level/attribute agenda setting (Ghanem, 1997; Golan, & Wanta, 2001; Kiousis, Bantimaroudis, & Ban 1999).
While framing or attaching attributes to issues may be viewed as a component of the transfer of salience that is essential to the agenda-setting model, framing theory does not need to be examined as such a subcomponent of agenda setting, and can be tested by the use of content analysis, without comparing rank-ordered issues or attributes. The use of framing as a theoretical underpinning provides the researcher with an excellent approach to analyzing the manifest content of media coverage.

Simply put, Entman (1993) states that “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text. . . .” The current dissertation will add to the existing literature on framing theory by building on what Holloway (2001) points out are two key components of Entman’s definition of framing: selection and salience.

**Metacommunication**

Media narcissism, self-reflexive reporting, and metacommunication are three terms that are being used to describe how the media have shifted their focus more and more to their favorite subject: themselves. While the terms are different and moving towards a theory of metacommunication is relatively new, the concept of media self-coverage and the concerns of the impact of such reporting are decades old.

The study of metacommunication has mostly emphasized the role which the media have begun to play in the political process. Instead of reporting the news of a political campaign, the media have increasingly begun to appear more like a self-aware and participatory institution, and this trend of mediated politics is an area of noted concern as to its impact on the democratic process (Bennett, & Entman, 2001; Graber, 1997; Mazzoleni, & Shulz, 1999; Swanson, & Mancini, 1996).
Instead of sitting on the sidelines and reporting the facts, “The news media no longer simply report; they interpret. Journalists are quick to insert their own construction of events and issues between candidates and voters” (Lichter, Noyes, & Kaid, 2000, p. 363-364).

One major problem in the coverage of politics on network news is the decrease in actual attention to the content of candidates’ campaign messages. Studies now indicate that the amount of airtime dedicated to presenting substantive information from respective candidates is shrinking—literally. Overall, there is less coverage of political events in general. From 1992 to 1996, the cut in political coverage is staggering. In the past, conventions were covered from beginning to end. Now, they are only highlighted in most news coverage. The media are just not covering the process of political races as much as they once did. In fact, the average amount of time now allotted to air candidates’ “sound-bites” has shrunk to mere seconds—instead of minutes—in which it is utterly impossible to ascertain the true essence of the civic dialogue the candidate is attempting to have with the public (Hallin, 1992; Lichter, Noyes, & Kaid, 2000).

For example, Lichter et al. (2000, p. 4) found that “the average amount of airtime given to candidate statements on the evening news shrank from 42 seconds in 1968 to a mere 10 seconds in 1988 and an even lover 7 to 8 seconds in 1992.” It can be argued that this dumbing down or abbreviating of the candidates’ messages is irresponsible and ethically questionable since a brief quote might not—and usually cannot—be representative of a candidate’s true message. In fact, this type of compression potentially misrepresents the real nature of candidates’ communications.
Another troublesome aspect of political campaign coverage by the news media is the emphasis on what is referred to as horserace journalism and the overall political spectacle. Many scholars and media critics have noted the trend in both print and broadcast media of coverage predominately focusing on the political campaign as a contest, instead of a legitimate, substantive political process (Lichter, Noyes, & Kaid, 2000). This image-driven type of coverage does little to inform and educate voters about domestic or foreign issues or policy issues that might directly affect the voters, but instead focuses on the candidates as if they were celebrities, sports figures, or game-show participants who are in a type of race or contest instead of a political campaign to hold public office and serve a constituency (Colford, 1998; Graber, 1976; Patterson, 1997). These troubling practices take up valuable space in the limited news hole by focusing airtime on the media’s talking heads, instead of the political candidates and their issues.

This focus of the media was noted in a study of the 1996 presidential campaign that “indicate[s] that questions posed by the audience members in call-in programs often focused more on issues than those asked by journalists, who tended to focus on the strategy of the candidates” (Johnson et al., 1999). The trend of the media not to just objectively report a given news story, but instead to put themselves in the given news content and to emphasize the negative, are areas of journalistic practice that is of growing concern and has received a fair amount of criticism, both in the scholarly and the popular press. This trend is particularly alarming in a democracy where the public relies on the media to provide substantive information on political and policy issues. Researchers have noted this practice and even measured the amount of time the media spend talking to and about themselves, versus actual coverage during presidential campaigns, finding
significant decreases in the amounts of substantive coverage of issues (Lichter, Noyes, & Kaid, 2000). Alarmingly, it has been found that the amount of coverage has drastically decreased, while the amounts of media participants’ discussions have increased.

Scholars in the field of political communication note that this trend is part of a bigger pattern of campaign coverage that focuses on the spectacle of a political race, and have even deemed this “horserace journalism” (Lichter, Noyes, & Kaid, 2000). This image-driven reporting favors the short sound bite and is often followed by an instant analysis from a media personality. Similarly, Lichter and Noyes (1995) argue that the three main networks “function as intermediaries between the candidates and the public” (p. 234).

Another problematic trend is the media’s tendency to focus the emphasis of campaign coverage on itself, as media commentators report and comment on sensationalistic stories instead of ones that focus on policy. In addition to this tabloidization of news, the media also direct more attention to argumentative discussions between candidates—either from debates or the daily “spin.” This attention on argumentation is often driven by the need to boost ratings and may not accurately present the true nature of the complexity of the opposing views candidates hold on varying issues (Morello, 1998; Paletz, & Vinegar, 2001). Again, the attention is focused not just on the sensational or the unusual, but it is also focused on the media’s talking heads who are often making subjective judgments, which shifts emphasis to the unique and the commentators themselves.

In addition this type of focus could also be considered to be a media bias. From early studies on partisan bias, a number of other biases have emerged. Scholars have
acknowledged that there are unintended forms of bias, such as situational (e.g., an incumbent having more command of the media) and structural (e.g. programming time limits or print news hole), but as society and the media system have become more complex, so have the types of biases evident in the media. One such bias is the negative bias. Scholars note that not only is there a tendency for television reporters to have more airtime than the actual candidates or public servants but also tend to cover negative news much more than positive (Kaid et al., 1996; Lichter, Noyes, & Kaid, 2000). Not only are journalists focused on negative aspects of the election, they also seem to be negative about the process in general: Jamieson notes that “as early as August 1996, media commentators were characterizing the U.S. presidential election as ‘boring’” (Jamieson et al., 1998, p 232). It is noteworthy that the media personalities are not only biased towards negative content, but also that they are inclined assert their own personal views and characterizations of the political process into what one would hope would be substantive, informative coverage.

In *The Political Pundits* (Nimmo, & Combs, 1992), the authors agree that the pundits mediate reality for viewers, creating a less informed public that is a detriment to democracy, and they also argue that punditry traces its roots as far back as Biblical times and to the time of Aristotle and that the trend of having “sages” and “oracles” has become big business, especially on television where “chattering” is apparently revered.

A major problem with narrators dominating television news is that the public may be likely to buy into what these journalists are selling: “To the media conscious viewer, the television news format establishes journalistic credibility” (Snow, 149, 1983). This format influence is perhaps largely due to the visual emphasis and editing techniques
used in this electronic medium: “Packaging such emphases within formats that are visual, brief, action oriented and dramatic produces an exciting and familiar tempo to news audiences” (Altheide et al., 2001, p. 307). In addition to the packaging and format, the authoritative manner in which television personalities state opinions as facts lend a sense of credibility to what is often subjective commentary.

“There are two principal problems with political commentary on television (1) today’s political talk shows contribute little, and sometimes even detract, from the robust debate needed to sustain a healthy democracy; and (2) television leads top commentators astray, making them celebrities or converting them into cartoon figures while diverting them from their finest and most socially useful pursuits” (Hirsch, 1991, 211).

It is of concern that, “the media become part of the dialectic process of the production of consent, shaping the consensus while reflecting it” (Jensen, 1992, p. 2). This insertion of the media into the process of events was exemplified in a study of the Susan Smith murder trial in South Carolina in which Zoch (2001) argues, “The impact of the media presence on the town of Union and the trial itself was also framed through the use of exemplars that highlighted how the media were becoming part of the stories. These exemplars are identified as ‘events occurring because of the media presence’ and came in two forms: those which were representative of how the media affected the trial, and those which represented the media’s effect on the town” (p. 201).

Similarly, Johnson, Boudreau, and Glowaki (1996) explored the issue of media self coverage in political campaigns using a quantitative methodology. Their study examined both amount and tone of coverage devoted to different themes of media coverage during the 1992 presidential election in the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune and on
ABC, CBS, and NBC. The researchers identified four types of stories about the media in the campaign: (1) media performance/impact; (2) media coverage of policy issues and campaign issues; (3) candidate media strategy/candidate media performance; and (4) general media stories. They found only 8 percent of all story themes coded focused on the media in the media coverage of the 1992 election cycle, with the most prevalent theme being general media stories. While this might seem like an insignificant percentage of stories, this study of media self-coverage from the early nineties, points towards an alarming trend.

Broadly, “metacommunication is defined as the news media’s response to a new, third force in news making: professional political PR. Metacommunication is defined as the news media’s self referential reflections on the nature of the interplay between political public relations and political journalism” (Esser & D’Angelo 2001a).

Esser and D’Angelo and their colleagues have done extensive work on the role of both print and electronic media reporting during domestic and international political campaigns and have identified what they refer to as a postmodern metacommunication frame. This postmodern metacommunication frame, they argue, is one in which reporters increasingly report the role journalists play in the political process. They argue that, “The main focus of modern campaigns centers around publicity generated in television studios. They are TV-dominated, nationally coordinated and advised by (mostly external) professional consultants specializing in communications, marketing, polling and campaign management” (Esser & D’Angelo, 2001b, p. 3).

This postmodern metacommunication frame is broken down into two categories: (1) self-reflexive news and (2) strategy/process news. Self-reflexive reporting refers to
coverage that describes the role the media is playing in political campaigns. Strategy/process news refers to stories that describe how political candidates and their professional communications strategists (often negatively labeled as “Spin Doctors”) attempt to use the media to communicate crafted messages to the public. Much of this work emphasizes an adversarial relationship between the media and the political players (D’Angelo, 1999, 2002; D’Angelo & Esser, 2003; Esser, 2000, 2001a, 2001b; Esser & D’Angelo, 2002, 2003; Esser, Reinemann, & Fan 1999, 2000, 2001; Esser & Spanier, 2003).

Three key components to this theoretical argument of an existence of a postmodern political communication age are (1) viewing the news media as a political institution (Cook, 1998, 2001; Esser & D’Angelo, 2001b); (2) viewing political public relations as a strategic communication endeavor (Bennett, & Manheim, 2000; Esser, & D’Angelo, 2001b; Manheim, 1998); and (3) viewing the news media’s response to these prior two developments as metacommunication (D’Angelo, 1999; Esser & D’Angelo, 2001b; Esser, Reinemann, & Fan, 2001).

This emphasis on the strategy/process news is troubling to a number of media critics, but there are mixed interpretations of its impact on society. On the negative side, researchers argue that one type of strategy/process news is adversarial and is detrimental to the democratic process (Blumer, 1997; Kerbel, 1997, 1998, 1999). However, other scholars identify a second category of strategy/process news—educational strategy/process news, and this second category is heralded as a new type of reporting that serves to inform the electorate and enhance the democratic public sphere (D’Angelo, 1999; McNair, 2000).
Stebenne (1993) argues that this trend in media self coverage is “a logical outgrowth of the new emphasis on the political process and the growing sense of the media’s central place within it” (p. 87-88), and indeed research indicates that the metacoverage frame has become increasingly prevalent in political campaign reporting. Studies of the 1992 and 1996 presidential campaigns found use of this frame accounted for 20 percent of the coverage in the 1992 election cycle and increased to 25 percent in the 1996 coverage (Kerbel, 1998; Kerbel, Apee, & Ross, 2000). This current dissertation aims to examine the level of media self coverage in the reporting of the media campaign, in order to see if this trend appears beyond the political process of campaigning and elections and into the realm of war and national security.

Kerbel (1994) posits that this increase in self-reflexive reporting has grown out of the increase in political public relations attempting to control media content through the use of somewhat questionable tactics—tactics that always put their candidate in the best light and do not necessarily accurately represent reality. Kerbel asserts that through this process of being manipulated by campaign strategists, the media has become more self aware of the importance of its role in the political dialogue or a campaign and has therefore considered the topic of how they cover a campaign, and the relationship between candidates and the media, as content worthy of substantive coverage (86-90). The current dissertation examines whether or not this apparent cycle of strategist manipulation and media self awareness of the role it plays in the civic dialogue of a military conflict are apparent.

A study that explicates and applied the research of metacommunication to a crisis situation, specifically, the first four hours of televised news coverage following the
terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Connolly-Ahern, et al. (2002) found that both categories of metacommunication were prevalent in that reporting. The researchers found that self-reflexive reporting accounted for 43 percent of the stories. This is one of the rare cases in which the concept of metacommunication was applied to non political campaign coverage, and even though it only focuses on initial coverage, the study indicates that metacommunication in news content is not limited to an election cycle but is also prevalent during a crisis situation.

The current dissertation will add to the existing research on metacommunication by explicating a theoretical perspective that has primarily focused on political campaign reporting and applying it to the extended coverage of a military campaign. It will additionally add the component of Internet coverage, an area that has not previously been explored in terms of a war or the metacommunication concept in general.

**Hypotheses and Research Questions**

Based on the prior literature on framing theory, evidence of metacommunication frames and self-reflexive reporting in political campaigns, this study suggests the following hypotheses about televised new broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom:

**H1:** Televised news broadcasts will rely more on media sources than on independent sources in the coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

**H2.** Web coverage will rely more on media sources than on independent sources in the coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

**H3.** Overall, the episodic media frame will be most prevalent during the initial stages of the war, and the thematic media frame will become more prevalent as the war progresses.

This dissertation seeks to answer the following research questions about televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom:
R1: What were the prevalent frames relied on in the media coverage of the war, and were there significant differences in the prevalence of these frames in the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom?

R2: How prevalent is the metacommunication frame in comparison to the other frames in the media coverage of the war, and is this comparison significantly different in the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom?

R3: Did the prevalence of certain frames change over time in the media coverage of the war, and were there significant difference in the prevalence of these frames in the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom?

R4: Did the prevalence of the metacommunication frame, in comparison to the other frames, change over time in the media coverage of the war, and was this change significantly different in the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom?

R5: Where there more cases of self-reflexive or strategy/process types of metacommunication frames in the media coverage of the war, and was the amount of these cases significantly different in the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom?

R6: What were the types of self-reflexive metacommunication frames relied on in the media coverage of the war, and was the reliance on these self-reflexive metacommunication frames significantly different in televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom?

R7: What were the types of strategy/process metacommunication frames relied on in the media coverage of the war, and was the reliance on these strategy/process metacommunication frames significantly different in televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom?

R8: Which category of the strategy/process metacommunication frame was most prevalent—the adversarial, educational or neutral in the media coverage of the war, and was the prevalence of these three categories of the strategy/process metacommunication frames significantly different in the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom?

R9: Was the pattern of episodic and thematic frames over time as the war progressed different between televised news broadcast and Web coverage?

R10: How were the Bush administration’s public information efforts assessed in the media coverage of the war, and were these assessments significantly different in the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom?
R11: How were the Iraqi government’s public information efforts assessed in media coverage of the war, and are these assessments significantly different in televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom?
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

This study uses quantitative content analysis as the method to measure the presence or absence of metacommunication frames, the categories thereof, and to make comparisons between TV news broadcasts and Web coverage about Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Sample

The study used content from United States’ television news and Web coverage from March 20, 2003—the first official day of news coverage about the U.S. military strikes on Iraq, through May 1, 2003—when President Bush made a declaration of victory. For purposes of this study, the story was the unit of analysis, and all war-related stories collected during this time period were used.

Television news coverage consisted of evening broadcasts from the ABC, CBS, CNN, and Fox News. Television news coverage from the prime-time evening newscasts recorded on videotape was examined. Thirty minutes of news coverage from each network’s news broadcast was the amount of coverage from each day that was analyzed. These times for ABC and CBS were from 6:30 – 7:00 p.m. (EST), and for CNN and Fox the 7:00 – 7:30 p.m. (EST) time period was used. Viewership of these networks’ news broadcasts during the Iraqi war are reported as follows: ABC's World News Tonight—average of 9.9 million viewers; CBS evening news—average of 7.5 million viewers; CNN—average of 2.7 million viewers; and Fox news—average of 3.3 million viewers (Johnson, 2003).
The Web sites’ data that were analyzed were systematically downloaded daily—manual, saving each Web page as a separate file. This data collection captured both the text and the graphics, but not the multimedia, such as audio or video clips. The Web news coverage sample consisted of the four sites: ABCNews.com, CBSNews.com, CNN.com, and FOXNews.com, which newsknife.com rated in their list of the top Iraq war news sites, and in their rating of the overall top U.S. news sites of 2003 (newsknife.com, 2003).

A constraint that affected the sample size and prevented using the entire universe of televised news broadcasts and the compatible Web site coverage for these networks was the problem faced by NBC’s TV and Web formats. The initial goal of this study was to include NBC and MSNBC in the televised news broadcasts sample and their Web sites in the Web coverage sample. The barrier to doing so was that they do not have separate Web sites, but instead during the time of this data collection, NBC had a Web site that merged its multiple media products including NBC, MSNBC, CNBC, and Newsweek. This hybrid Web site often did not distinguish which original media channel its content is attributed to, and made it impossible to do a balanced and accurate comparison with the other TV and Web coverage being analyzed for this study and would have potentially skewed the data when comparing the two media channels of the Web coverage and the Televised news broadcasts.

This TV news and Web coverage sample was limited in that it focused only on leading U.S. media outlets’ coverage of the war. Additionally, the material from the stories were coded and compared in this analysis was the verbal/textual content only—not the graphic elements. Since the TV coverage was obviously moving video, and the Web coverage collected only provided still images, a comparison of the visuals would not
be compatible, given the differences in the manifest content of these visual elements.

However, while not officially coded this constraint of comparing two differing media channels does not prohibit using examples of noteworthy visual content to help clarify examples of stories that exemplify certain types of coverage in the discussion section of this study. The visuals were used in an illustrative way to enhance understanding of the context of a given metacommunication frame.

**Categories and Definitions**

This study was designed to analyze the types of sources used during the electronic media’s coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Therefore, each individual story was coded with a number of variables, including: television broadcast news network, Web site, length of the story (in seconds and words), main reporter or interviewer, and sources.

**Unit of Analysis**

For purposes of this study, the news story was the unit of analysis. For TV coverage a story was marked by a distinct beginning and ending of a central topic area (i.e., public information, White House communications strategy, Removal of Saddam/Regime change, etc.). A story might contain numerous sources and information related to the central topic; and until there was a distinct shift in topic area, the coders considered a unit of time devoted to one central topic a single story.

In order to determine this, coders watched videotaped televised news broadcasts of the war coverage, identified the beginning and ending of a story, watched it again and timed it using a stop watch to determine the length of the story. The coders then watched the story for a third time in order to determine the manifest verbal content of the story before coding it.
For Web coverage, a story consisted of the use of a headline and subsequent text. Story length was determined by a word count, and the coders coded for the manifest textual content of each Web story. Only the Web stories for each given day were coded—not the archived coverage that was linked to from a given story, but instead just the current story with a byline and date for each day in the time-period analyzed.

Source Attribution
Coders identified the presence or absence of sources attributed in each story from a predetermined list based on prior research: (1) Anchor (for televised news broadcasts) or Author (for Web coverage); (2) Reporter; (3) Anonymous; (4) Special Interest/Lobbying Group; (5) Military Expert; (6) Republican Political Pundit; (7) Democratic Political Pundit; (8) Non-Partisan Political Pundit; (9) Media Personality from Same Network; (10) Media Personality from Other Organization; (11) Scholar/Media Critic; (12) Embedded Journalist; (13) Associated Press or other Wire Service; (14) Citizens; (15) Bush Administration, Aides, or Advisors; (16) Iraqi Government Official Spokesperson; (17) Report/Document/Poling Data; (18) U.S. Military Official(s); (19) Iraqi Dissidents; (20) Other. The option of selecting “other” provided coders with the opportunity to identify this source in an open-ended area on the codesheet.

Coders were then asked to determine the number of Independent and Media Sources relied on in each story. An independent source was an individual or group that was not clearly identified as being a part of the media. A media source was identified as an individual or group that was clearly a member of the media.

Frames
Coders determined the presence or absence of the following list of frames, based on prior research. The list of frames to be coded were: (1) Military Conflict—frames that
emphasize the military battle itself on macro or micro levels; (2) American Patriotism—frames that emphasize citizens rallying around the flag and a resurgence of American patriotism in various manifestations; (3) Protest—frames that show individuals or groups, in the U.S. or abroad protesting or the discussion of protest of the war; (4) Human Interest—frames that emphasize the human element of the war, including soldiers, their families, and any citizens; (5) Responsibility—frames that assign responsibility for the military conflict to a given individual, government, or regime; (6) Economic Consequences—frames that focus on the either short or long-term economic consequences that the war will have domestically, in the Middle East, or internationally; (7) Diagnostic—frames that emphasize an assessment of how and why this military conflict developed; (8) Prognostic—frames that emphasize what outcome of the military conflict will be, including the removal of Saddam/regime change, regional stability, loss of U.S. soldiers, etc.; (9) Rebuilding of Iraq—frames that specifically deal with the rebuilding of Iraqi and the future of the country and its people after the war is finished; and (10) Metacommunication—a frame that emphasizes either the media’s self-reflexivity or the communication process between sources and the news media.

Coders then indicated if each frame that was coded as present was best characterized as being episodic or thematic. Episodic frames were ones that dealt with specific events and incidents, individuals, and more micro-level news coverage, and thematic frames were those that dealt with general, broad topic areas of information, concepts and abstract ideas, and more macro-level news coverage. Additionally, coders indicated which of the sources from the above list discussed the content associated with
these frames by writing the identification number of the source(s) in the space provided on the codesheet.

Additionally, coders were asked to determine the association of the metacommunication frame to the other above-listed frames. If the metacommunication frame was coded as being present, coders were instructed to indicate which of the above source and subject frames areas the metacommunication directly related to by filling in the identification number of the frame(s) in the spaces provided. However, coders were also instructed that the metacommunication frame may, at given times, be treated as a stand-alone frame. These cases would be when the frame was not clearly associated with any of the other established frames, and the story this was about a non-issue or topic but was, instead purely media-narcissistic babble and self-talk.

Metacommunication Frames
The study was designed primarily to determine the extent, or level, of metacommunication by the media during the reporting of a military campaign. For purposes of this study, metacommunication was defined as the news media’s self-reflexive coverage of itself, in a general sense and as the interplay between the Bush administration’s or the Iraqi government’s public information efforts about Operation Iraqi Freedom and the news media’s assessments thereof in resulting televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of the war.

The concept of metacommunication was further broken down into two distinct areas: self-reflexive reporting and strategy/process news. While, it is acknowledged that, “The two dimensions of meta-coverage—press and publicity—can at times overlap within news stories” (Esser & D’Angelo, 2003, p. 620), for purposes of this study the two differing types of metacommunication were treated as mutually exclusive categories, and
coders characterized each instance of metacommunication frame presence as being characterized as either one or the other type of metacommunication, not both. Coders based these decisions on the following definitions and examples of self-reflexive and strategy/process metacommunication frames.

The self-reflexive metacommunication frame was defined as any coverage that referred directly or indirectly to the media’s role in bringing news about the U.S. military effort against Iraq to the public. Incidents of self-reflexive reporting include: information about the impact the coverage of the military campaign was having on the public; references to the work of the television news network or Web sites’ own reporters (such as embedded journalists); referrals to the electronic media’s other news products for more information; members of the media used as news sources; and mentions of the work of other news media outlets.

If the self reflexive metacommunication frame was coded as being present, the coders identified which of the following types of coverage best characterized this frame: (1) Role of Technology in Attaining Coverage; (2) Anchors or Media Personalities Discussing their Opinions; (3) Reporters Discussing Personal Experience of Covering the War; (4) Reporters Interviewing/Reporting about other Journalists from their News Organization, Network, or Publication; (5) Reporters Interviewing/Reporting about other Journalists from another News, Organization, Network, or Publications; (6) The News Media Emphasizing their Role as a Participant in the Event; (7) Cross Promotion and Cross Referencing of Media; or (8) Insider Views of the War or War Strategizing.

The strategy/process metacommunication frame referred to any coverage that refers directly or indirectly to the relationship between the media and the leaders of the
Operation Iraqi Freedom. Strategy/process news is defined as information about how government, official agencies, and other groups rely on the media to relay important information during the U.S. military campaign against Iraq. Examples of strategy/process news include: officials using the media to make public announcements; obvious staged events; live coverage of press conferences; visuals of reporters attending press conferences; and direct interviews with public officials.

This study additionally evaluated strategy/process metacommunication frames on another sub-level distinction. Coders determined if the strategy/process metacommunication was characterized as being adversarial, educational, or neutral. Adversarial types of strategy/process metacommunication frames included stories that used negative labels that implied manipulation or the use of ploys in the communication process as “spin” or called source information a “sound bite.” The educational type of strategy/process metacommunication frame was one in which the viewer would actually learn something about the communication process between the source and the media but was without any negative connotations and was, instead, unbiased and clearly informative about the news gathering or dissemination process. The neutral type of strategy/process metacommunication frame was one in which there is no negative or positive slant to the communication process, but instead just states the occurrence of a communication from source to the media without providing any substantive information about the transferal of said information or the news process.

**Public Information Efforts**

Bush administration’s public information efforts were defined as follows: Coders indicated the Story’s Assessment/Overall Tone of the Bush Administration’s Public Information Efforts from the following list: (1) Positive; (2) Negative; (3) Neutral; or (4)
Not Applicable. Additionally, coders were asked to list key words, terms, or phrases that were used to describe the administration and its communication strategies as open-ended information in the space provided.

Iraqi Government’s public information efforts were also coded. Coders indicated the Story’s Assessment/Overall Tone of the Iraqi government’s Public Information Efforts from the following list: (1) Positive; (2) Negative; (3) Neutral; or (4) Not Applicable. Additionally, coders were asked to list key words, terms, or phrases that were used to describe the administration and its communication strategies as open-ended information in the space provided.

**Coding Process**

Based on prior research addressed in the literature review, and the above-listed hypotheses and research questions, codesheets and codebooks were developed. In order to make the coding process as expeditious and clear as possible for coders who were assisting in the coding of the content for this study, two codesheets and codebooks were developed: one for televised news stories and another for Web coverage. These coding instruments were identical in all ways, except for areas that dealt directly with the specific medium (such as author or anchor).

Two undergraduate and two graduate students (one of whom was this researcher) were trained in a series of separate coding sessions for both televised news broadcasts and Web coverage coding, and the coding process was implemented. Intercoder reliability across all categories for both codesheets ranged from an average of .75 to 1.00 per item and was established for the televised news broadcasts at an average of .97 and
for the Web coverage at an average of .95, using Holsti’s formula.¹ The item by item (category) reliability is reported in the sample codesheets, which are Appendices C and D.

¹ Intercoder reliability will be calculated based on Holsti’s formula: $IR = \frac{2M}{N_1+N_2}$, where $M$ is the number of agreements between the coders, $N_1$ is the total number of coding decisions made by Coder 1 and $N_2$ is the total number of coding decisions made by Coder 2.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

This study employed a quantitative content analysis of televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The overall goal was to determine the level and assessment of metacommunication in the media coverage about the 2003 war with Iraq.

Analysis of News Stories

All stories from March 20, 2003 through May 1, 2000 ($N = 1,733$) were coded and analyzed. This sample of media stories about the war consisted of taped evening televised news broadcasts ($n = 751$) and downloads of Web site coverage ($n = 982$).

Televised News Broadcast Source Reliance

Hypothesis one posited that televised news broadcasts would rely more on media sources than on independent sources in the coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The results indicate this was not the case.

Overall, 3,875 sources were coded as being present in the televised news broadcasts during this study of the war coverage. Of these sources, 2,084 (54%) sources were listed as independent sources, and only 1,791 (46%) sources were listed as media sources for the televised news broadcasts about Operation Iraqi freedom. This means that the average number of independent sources in each newscast was 2.77, and the average number of media sources was only 2.38. This difference is statistically significant, $t = 4.97$, $df = 750$, $p < .001$. Thus hypothesis one was not supported.
Web Coverage Source Reliance

Hypothesis two posited that Web coverage would rely more on media sources than on independent sources in the coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. As with hypothesis one, the results indicate that this was not so.

Overall, 7,005 sources were coded as being present in the Web coverage during this study of the war coverage. Of these sources, there were 5,100 (73%) sources listed as independent sources and only 1,905 (37%) sources listed as media sources for the Web coverage about Operation Iraqi freedom. This means that the average number of independent sources in each newscast was 5.19, and the average number of media sources was only 1.94. This difference is statistically significant, $t = 25.83$, $df = 981$, $p < .001$. Thus hypothesis two was not supported.

Episodic and Thematic Frame Prevalence

Hypothesis three posited that overall, the episodic media frame would be most prevalent during the initial stages of the war, and the thematic media frame would become more prevalent as the war progressed. In order to test this, all news stories from March 20 through May 1, were broken into three equal time periods: time one, March 20 through April 2; time two, April 3 through April 17; and time three, April 18 through May 1.

Frequencies of the stories that were coded as having the presence of episodic and thematic frames were computed for each time period. The results indicate that across each of the three times, respectively, there were considerably more episodic frames present than thematic ones. At time one 96.6% of the frames were episodic and 0.04% were thematic; at time two 94.3% of the frames were episodic and 5.7% were thematic; and at time three 91.1% were episodic and 9.09% thematic. Thus hypothesis three was
not supported. See Table 4-1 for a total of the episodic and thematic frames and a breakdown by time and frame/category relationship.

**Frame Prevalence**

Research question one asked what were the prevalent frames relied on in the media coverage of the war and if there were significant differences in the prevalence of these frames in the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In order to answer this question a crosstabulation was computed to determine frequencies of the presence of the ten frames overall and by media channel. See Table 4-2.

Overall, the most prevalent frames, from highest to lowest presence, were military conflict, metacommunication, human interest, diagnostic, prognostic, rebuilding of Iraq, protest, economic consequences, American patriotism, and responsibility. The patterns of prevalence for the two media channels compared in this study follow closely in order with slight deviations, but these differences were not significant.

For televised news broadcasts, the most prevalent frames, from highest to lowest presence, were military conflict, metacommunication, human interest, diagnostic, rebuilding of Iraq, prognostic, protest, American patriotism, economic consequences, and responsibility.

For Web coverage, the most prevalent frames, from highest to lowest presence, were military conflict, metacommunication, human interest, rebuilding of Iraq, diagnostic, economic consequences, protest, prognostic, American patriotism, and responsibility.
Table 4-1. Episodic and Thematic Frames across Three Periods of Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>All Items</th>
<th>Time One</th>
<th>Time Two</th>
<th>Time Three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 4,186)</td>
<td>(n = 1,729)</td>
<td>(n = 1,789)</td>
<td>(n = 668)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Conflict</td>
<td>1,357</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Patriotism</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Interest</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Consequences</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prognostic</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebuilding of Iraq</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacommunication</td>
<td>1,104</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,186</td>
<td>1,656</td>
<td>1,685</td>
<td>585</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(\%\) (96%) (4%) (94%) (6%) (88%) (12%)
Metacommunication Frame Prevalence

Research question two asked how prevalent was the metacommunication frame in comparison to the other frames in the media coverage of the war and if this comparison was significantly different in the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

As Table 4-2 also shows, the Metacommunication frame was a very prevalent frame in both the media channels. In fact 63% of the televised news broadcasts and 65% of the Web stories include some type of metacommunication frame. However, there was no statistically significant difference in amount of metacommunication frames relied on between the Web and television news coverage.

Table 4-2. Frame Prevalence in Stories by Media Channel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Television News Broadcasts (n = 2,290)</th>
<th>Web Coverage (n = 2,030)</th>
<th>All Items (n = 4,320)</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military Conflict</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>1,361</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Patriotism</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Interest</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>20.64**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Consequences</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>21.69**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>38.71**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prognostic</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>12.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebuilding of Iraq</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacommunication</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1,112</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**$p \leq .001$**

Frame Prevalence over Time

Research question three asked if the prevalence of certain frames changed over time in the media coverage of the war and if there were significant differences in the prevalence of these frames in the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom.
In terms of frame prevalence over time one, time two, and time three, there is a slight increase in overall frames relied on in time two, as compared with time one, and then there is a dramatic decrease in frame presence in time three. Most frames stayed consistent, in terms of their prevalence over time, as compared with their prevalence overall. There were, however, a several noteworthy differences in specific shifts in frame prevalence over time. Both the protest and economic consequences frames dropped to the least two prevalent frames in time two, as compared to their respectively higher positions during time one, but they leveled out to a moderate position during time three. The most significant pattern of change over time was the steadily increasing presence of the rebuilding of Iraq frame.

In terms of media channel comparisons of frame prevalence by time, most of the 10 frames were fairly evenly distributed among the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage across time one, time two, and time three and in keeping with the overall pattern. Overall, the most prevalent frames across the three time periods were military conflict and metacommunication, which remained at high percentages across all three times. However, two frames that were different at statistically significant levels of p < .05 among the media channels across time were the prognostic and rebuilding of Iraq frames. An interesting difference was the pattern of the presence of the prognostic frame, which was relatively low at 23% during time one, rising to 51% at time two, and then dropped to 26% at time three. Another noteworthy deviation was the rebuilding of Iraq frame which similarly was also low at 14% for time one, 50% at time two, and then also dropped to 36% at time three. See Table 4-4 for a total of the frames over three time periods and a comparison of these totals by media channel.
Metacommunication Frame Prevalence over Time

Research question four asked if the prevalence of the metacommunication frame, in comparison to the other frames, changed over time in the media coverage of the war and if this change was significantly different in the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. As table 4-4 also shows, the metacommunication frame remained the second most prevalent frame during all three time periods, and there was no statistically significant difference in its prevalence between the media channels.

Types of Metacommunication Frames

Research question five asked if there were more cases of self-reflexive or strategy/process types of metacommunication frames in the media coverage of the war and if the amount of these cases was significantly different in the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

To consider these issues a crosstabulation was calculated between the two types of metacommunication frames and the two media channels analyzed in this study of the war. The results indicate that the self-reflexive metacommunication frame was more prevalent than the strategy/process metacommunication frame for both the televised news broadcasts and the Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. See Table 4-3.

Table 4-3. Self-Reflexive and Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frames by Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Televised News Broadcasts</th>
<th>Web Coverage</th>
<th>All Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 472)</td>
<td>(n = 635)</td>
<td>(n = 1,107)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reflexive</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy/Process</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4-4. Frames Relied on in Stories Covering Operation Iraqi Freedom across Three Periods of Time and by Media Channel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Time One</th>
<th>Time Two</th>
<th>Time Three</th>
<th>( X^2 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( (N = 4,320) )</td>
<td>( (n = 1,642) )</td>
<td>( (n = 1,858) )</td>
<td>( (n = 820) )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Conflict</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>223.36**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Patriotism</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.10**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22.16**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Interest</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>66.45**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.18**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Consequences</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25.68**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26.69**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prognostic</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31.05**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7.57*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebuilding of Iraq</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>48.91**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10.38*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacommunication</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>151.28**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi square test indicate differences among time one, time two, and time three for the frame at \( p \leq .05 \).

**Chi square test indicate that the difference between television and Web coverage is different for time one, time two, and time three at \( = p \leq .05 \).
Self-Reflexive Metacommunication Frames

Research question six asked what types of self-reflexive metacommunication frames were relied on in the media coverage of the war and if reliance on these types of self-reflexive metacommunication frames was significantly different in televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In order to answer this question, a crosstabulation was calculated between the self-reflexive metacommunication frame types and the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of the war.

Table 4-5. Self-Reflexive Metacommunication Types by Media Channel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Televised News Broadcasts</th>
<th>Web Coverage</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 295)</td>
<td>(n = 383)</td>
<td>(n = 678)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Technology in Attaining Coverage</td>
<td>.3%</td>
<td>.8%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchors or Media Personalities Discussing their Opinions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporters Discussing Personal Experience of Covering the War</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporters Reporting about Journalists from their Organization or Network</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporters Reporting about Journalist from other Organizations or Networks</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Media Emphasizing their Role as Participant in Event</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross Promotion and Cross Referencing of Media</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insider Views of the War or War Strategizing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Χ² = 93.74, df = 7, p ≤ .001.
However, this chi square calculation should be interpreted with caution since some cells have values of less than 5.
Table 4-5 shows, the most frequently used self-reflexive frame involved "reporters reporting about journalists from their own organization or network," which made up 34% of the total self-reflexive frames. The frame in which the media engaged in "cross promotion and cross referencing of media" also occurred frequently (24%). An interesting outlier here is the low prevalence of the "role of technology," which showed up much more frequently in the Kaid et al. (1994) study of CNN coverage of the 1991 Gulf War.

However, the chi square test indicates that the pattern of self-reflexive frames was not the same between media (see Table 4-5). For instance, whereas the most frequently used self-reflexive frame in television news broadcasts was the "reporters reporting about journalists from their own organization or network" (46%), Web coverage used the "cross promotion and cross refereeing of media" (37%) more often.

**Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frames**

Research question seven asked what types of strategy/process metacommunication frames were relied on in the media coverage of the war and if reliance on these types of strategy/process metacommunication frames was significantly different in televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In order to answer this question, a crosstabulation was calculated between the strategy/process metacommunication frame types and the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of the war.

Chi square tests indicate the strategy/process metacommunication frames were not highly similar between the media channels, and the reliance on these frames was significantly different in televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi
Freedom. See Table 4-6 for a comparison of the prevalence of the strategy/process metacommunication frames by televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of the war.

Table 4-6. Strategy/Process Metacommunication Types by Media Channel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Televised News Broadcasts (n = 177)</th>
<th>Web Coverage (n = 252)</th>
<th>All Items (n = 429)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pentagon Information Strategy</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White House/ Bush Administration Information Strategy</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Officials/Troops Information Strategy</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan Information Source Strategy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush Administration and News Media Relationships and Interactions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists Participation in Military Events or Press Briefings</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards of the Quality of the News Coverage</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of PR/News Management Strategies on Journalists</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = 41.98, df = 7, p \leq .001$.

However, this chi square calculation should be interpreted with caution since some cells have values of less than 5.

**Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame Categories**

Research question eight asked which category of the strategy/process metacommunication frame was most prevalent—the adversarial, educational or neutral in the media coverage of the war and if the prevalence of these three categories of the strategy/process metacommunication frames was significantly different in the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom.
Overall, the educational category of the strategy/process metacommunication frame was most prevalent (46%), the neutral category of the strategy/process metacommunication frame was second-most prevalent (36%), and the adversarial category of the strategy process metacommunication frame was least prevalent (18%).

For the televised news broadcasts of the war, the neutral category of the strategy/process metacommunication frame was most prevalent, with the educational category being second-most prevalent, and the adversarial category being the least prevalent. For the Web coverage of the war, the educational category of the strategy/process metacommunication frame was most prevalent, with the neutral category being second-most prevalent, and the adversarial category being the least prevalent.

In comparing the prevalence of these three categories of the strategy/process metacommunication frame by media channel, the most striking difference is the much larger number of educational strategy/process metacommunication frames present in the Web coverage as compared to a much smaller number being present in the televised news coverage. When calculating a chi square statistical analysis, the results indicate that these three categories of the strategy/process metacommunication frames were significantly different in the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. See Table 4-7 for a comparison of this category by media.

**Episodic and Thematic Frame Media Comparisons**

Nonetheless, Table 4-9 presents the results of analysis of the difference in the episodic/thematic pattern between media over time. Table 4-9 shows that, overall, the prevalence of episodic and thematic frames across all three time spans (as broken down in the testing of Hypothesis 3) was similar for both television news and Web coverage of the war. As shown before, the pattern clearly illustrates a dominance of episodic frames
over thematic frames at the beginning, middle, and end of the war. Only one frame
shows a departure from this pattern, the "responsibility" frame. This frame was covered
by television news through all three time periods as an episodic theme, but Web
coverage, which followed television's lead in the beginning and middle time periods,
focused its responsibility frame coverage on a more thematic level in the ending (third)
time period.

Table 4-7. Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame Categories by Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Televised News Broadcasts (n = 172)</th>
<th>Web Coverage (n = 257)</th>
<th>Total (n = 429)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adversarial</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 27.77, \text{ df} = 2, p \leq .01 \]

The ninth research question concerned whether the pattern of episodic and thematic
frames over time as the war progressed was different between television news broadcasts
and Web coverage. This question was originally posed in line with the assumption that
the third hypothesis would prove true--that is, that episodic frames would be more
prevalent in the beginning of the war, progressing toward greater prevalence of thematic
coverage as the war progressed. However, this hypothesis was not substantiated, since
episodic coverage remained the overwhelmingly dominant frame type throughout all
three war coverage time periods tested.
Bush Administration Public Information Assessments

Research question 10 asked how were the Bush administration's public information efforts assessed in the media coverage of the war and if these assessments were significantly different in the televised news broadcasts and the Web coverage.

Over half (57%) of the total stories did not discuss the Bush Administration public information efforts; these stories were omitted from analysis for this question. The remaining 263 stories were rated as positive, negative, or neutral in regard to their coverage of the Bush Administration efforts. As Table 4-8 shows, the overall percentage of these stories portrayed the Bush Administration information efforts as neutral (50%), and the remainder were categorized as 45% positive and 5% negative.

However, again looking at Table 4-8, it is clear that there is a difference in how the Bush information efforts fared in the television versus Web media. While television gave the Bush efforts a positive score in 45% of such stories, the Web only registered a positive evaluation in 27%. Likewise, the Web coverage was more likely to be negative toward the Bush Administration information efforts, casting a negative view in 9% of its stories with this frame.

Table 4-8. Bush Administration Public Information Efforts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Televised News Broadcasts $(n = 351)$</th>
<th>Web Coverage $(n = 389)$</th>
<th>Total $(n = 740)$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = 30.18$, df = 2, $p \leq .001$
Table 4-9. Episodic and Thematic Frames across Three Periods of Time and by Media Channel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>All Items</th>
<th>Time One</th>
<th>Time Two</th>
<th>Time Three</th>
<th>X²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N = 4,186)</td>
<td>Episodic</td>
<td>Thematic</td>
<td>Episodic</td>
<td>Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Conflict</td>
<td>(n = 1,357)</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television News Broadcast</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Coverage</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Patriotism</td>
<td>(n = 124)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television News Broadcast</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Coverage</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>(n = 181)</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television News Broadcast</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Coverage</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Interest</td>
<td>(n = 589)</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television News Broadcast</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Coverage</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>(n = 65)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television News Broadcast</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Coverage</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Consequences</td>
<td>(n = 126)</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television News Broadcast</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Coverage</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic</td>
<td>(n = 274)</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television News Broadcast</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Coverage</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prognostic</td>
<td>(n = 206)</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television News Broadcast</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Coverage</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebuilding of Iraq</td>
<td>(n = 254)</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television News Broadcast</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Coverage</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacommunication</td>
<td>(n = 1,104)</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television News Broadcast</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Coverage</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi square = p < .05
Iraq Government Public Information Assessments

Research question 11 asked how were the Iraqi government's public information efforts assessed in the media coverage of the war and if these assessments were significantly different in the televised news broadcasts and the Web coverage.

Over half (73%) of the total stories did not discuss the Iraqi government public information efforts; these stories were omitted from analysis for this question. The remaining 442 stories were rated as positive, negative, or neutral in regard to their coverage of the Iraqi government efforts. As Table 4-10 shows, the overall percentage of these stories portrayed the Iraqi government information efforts as negative (63%), and the remainder were categorized as 33% neutral and 4% positive.

However, again looking at Table 4.11, it is clear that there is a difference in how the Iraqi government fared in the television versus Web media. While television gave the Iraqi government efforts a negative evaluation in 61% of such stories, the Web registered a negative evaluation in 66%. However, the Web coverage was more likely to be more positive toward the Iraqi government information efforts, casting a negative view in 7% of its stories with this frame, as compared to television coverage of only 2%.

Table 4-10. Iraqi Government Public Information Efforts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Televised News Broadcasts</th>
<th>Web Coverage</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 11.51, \ df = 2, p \leq .05$
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This exploratory study sought to extend the metacommunication concept that has been previously used almost exclusively for the analyses of political campaign coverage to the media coverage of a war. The current study advanced the research in the area of metacommunication not only by examining this communications practice in a different context, but also by analyzing both televised news broadcasts and Web coverage which have largely been overlooked in prior research in this area.

Findings and Implications

Chapter four’s reporting of the results directly addressed each hypothesis and research question. This chapter elaborates on these results categorically, through the use of examples to illustrate the findings and to discuss the implications thereof. Additionally, this chapter examines how these findings may be linked to the bigger picture of the theoretical underpinnings and prior research that were detailed in chapter two’s review of the literature and to see how this study’s findings build on an understanding of these perspectives. Finally, limitations of this study are acknowledged and goals for future research set.

Source Reliance

Despite the fact that overall both media relied on independent sources more than media ones, it is important to note that the percentages do point to a substantial tendency on the part of the media to rely on media sources. Whereas the numbers indicating independent sources in the lead may be looked at as a somewhat encouraging finding in
terms of the role of the journalist, especially in terms of the key concept of independence and objectivity, the extent to which the media sources are used is still a troubling finding in both media channels examined in this study.

While the finding that out of the 3,875 sources relied on in the televised news broadcasts during this study of the war coverage consisted of 2,084 (54%) independent sources and 1,791 (46%) media sources might show statistical significance, it is still not something that points to a lack of media narcissism or self-reflexivity. Reliance on such a large number of media sources in the televised news broadcasts during Operation Iraqi Freedom is a noteworthy finding that indicates that the TV news media do become participants in the stories they are covering and to a rather alarming extent.

However, the finding that out of the 7,005 sources relied on in the Web coverage during this study of the war coverage consisted of 5,100 (73%) independent sources 1,905 (37%) media sources is not only statistically significant, it is also something that does point toward a decrease in the media’s preoccupation with itself. The large amount of independent sources, which is almost double the amount of media sources being relied on in the Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom, is an important finding that indicates that the Web as a media channel is less likely to insert media practitioners into the stories they are reporting.

The difference between source reliance by media channel was not a comparison that was an explicit goal of this study, as evidenced by the fact that the study hypothesized that both televised news broadcasts and Web coverage would rely on media sources to a greater degree than on independent sources. These assumptions were not supported, and the differences in the source reliance by these two media channels is
important and deserves further analysis with the data collected for this study and in future research efforts.

**Episodic and Thematic Frames**

The results regarding the presence of episodic and thematic frames and their shifting over time from episodic frames being prevalent initially and thematic frames becoming dominant over time was an assumption this study made based on prior research. The results of this study indicate that this assumption was largely erroneous and was a surprising finding.

The results of the comparison of the episodic and thematic frame prevalence over the three time periods yielded drastically differing results than were expected. The sheer volume and amount of difference in the percentages are staggering: with time one having 96.6% episodic frames and only a negligible 0.04% thematic frames; time two having 94.3% episodic frames and a slight increase to 5.7% thematic frames; and time three having 91.1% episodic frames and another minimal increase to 9.09% thematic frames. While the episodic frame slightly decreased during each time period and the thematic frame rose minimally, these results are a paradoxical finding that bears further exploration. However, one possible explanation of this finding is the fact that Web coverage is closer to print coverage than televised news and that print sources possibly tend to be more thematic than episodic.

The finding that the prevalence of episodic and thematic frames by media channel indicated similar patterns of frame dominance across time in both the televised news broadcasts and the Web coverage indicate that these results cannot be attributed to channel variance. With the only one instance of a statistically significant difference (the responsibility frame) reported during the all three time periods analyzed, these findings of
episodic frame dominance can be seen as overwhelmingly similar across both time and media.

The implications of these findings of episodic prevalence and only a slight thematic increase bear further scrutiny. While this was a short official war, the patterns of coverage are so extremely variant that the compressed period of time overall and the context seem like overly simplistic explanations for this finding. It is possible that the reason for this outcome has to do more with changes in media coverage overall. Since the media systems are far more complex and increasingly becoming more so, it is perhaps a change in media coverage style in general that explains why the episodic to thematic dominance over time was not supported in this study.

With so many media options available to the news consumer, media outlets may be leaning to shorter, episodic coverage that focuses more on specific events and individuals (which is more evocative and perhaps easily digested) instead of broader, thematic coverage that focuses more on issues and implications (which is less sensational and requires more processing) in attempts to keep the public’s tuned in to their given station or remaining on their given Web site. With the shorter sound bite and a generation used to fast-paced MTV-style editing, and many Web users who can fairly be characterized as having short attention spans to the point of being ADD, the media outlets are well aware that keeping individuals engaged can often be accomplished by providing more simplistic, dramatic, and event-driven news stories than complex, analytical, and thoughtful ones. This finding is open to different interpretations, but it clearly deserves more analysis with the coverage of this war and in other contexts, in order to continue to test assumption that episodic frames will give way to thematic ones over time.
Frame Prevalence

In terms of establishing the prevalent frames in the media coverage of the war, and if there were significant differences in the prevalence of these frames in war coverage, the rank order of frame prevalence from highest to lowest were military conflict, metacommunication, human interest, diagnostic, prognostic, rebuilding of Iraq, protest, economic consequences, American patriotism, and responsibility. As reported earlier, the patterns of prevalence for the two media channels compared in this study follow closely in order but with slight deviations, but these differences were not significant.

While the military conflict frame was the most prevalent frame overall and in both the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage, the metacommunication frame was the second-most prevalent frame overall and in both the media channels, with 63% of the televised news broadcasts and 65% of the Web stories include some type of metacommunication frame.

The sheer volume of metacommunication frame presence in both media channels is a finding that is striking for several reasons. While military conflict was the most prevalent frame, it was a frame that included a broad number of scenarios that dealt with actual conflict and events in the war in general. The other eight frames ranged from very specific, such as American patriotism, human interest, diagnostic, and prognostic to broad, such as economic consequences, protest, responsibility, and rebuilding of Iraq.

The military conflict frame was present at 79% for televised news broadcasts and at 78% for Web coverage followed by the metacommunication frame which was present at 63% for televised news broadcasts and at 65% for Web coverage. These were the two highest types of frames that were followed by human interest which was present at 43%
for televised news broadcasts and at 30% for Web coverage. The remaining frames were present in both media channels from a high of 22% to a low of 4%.

The high level of metacommunication prevalence is a key finding of this study. It indicates that other than broad military conflict information the media are indeed relying on providing coverage that is self-reflexive and emphasizing the strategy/process nature of the media and the public information efforts much more than they are the events, issues, and people involved in the military conflict. It is also significant to note that the level of metacommunication frame prevalence was extremely close in both the TV and Web coverage, and this is not a finding that was limited to just one of the media channels.

Examples of episodic frames where abundant in stories from both media, and certainly the use of embedded reporters during Operation Iraqi Freedom is a reason that could have led to such coverage. From the Jessica Lynch rescue, to the toppling of the Statue of Saddam Hussein, to the day-to-day activities of the U.S. military personnel, to President Bush’s parachute landing and official declaration of the end of the war, embedded reporters were right there telling this unfolding story. This unprecedented access given to the media created a situation in which reporters were not only more like participants, the also became daily storytellers who would tend to focus on incidents and events, rather than broader issues.

Additionally, the finding that the metacommunication frame remained the second most prevalent frame during all three time periods, and there was not a statistically significant difference in its prevalence between the media channels during time one, time two, or time three further underscores the indication that metacommunication frames
have become a standby in media coverage, even from the onset to the resolution of a war and at every stage of the conflict.

**Metacommunication Frames**

This study additionally sought to determine which types of metacommunication frames were more prevalent: if there were more cases of self-reflexive metacommunication or strategy/process frames present in the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The results of this indicate that the self-reflexive type of metacommunication frame, in which media frequently insert themselves into the coverage and evaluate their role in the news process was largely the dominant type of metacommunication frame as compared to the strategy/process metacommunication frame, in which the media often report on the interplay between public information efforts and the resulting media coverage.

It is a significant finding that the self-reflexive metacommunication frame, which is in many ways the epitome of media narcissism, is the dominant metacommunication frame for both media channels. The self-reflexive frame is often characterized by coverage that is inane and vacuous as television news anchors, Web story authors, and other media players chatter about their opinions and roles in the news, instead of actually even conveying any substantive news at all. It is perhaps surprising that the strategy/process frame was present at a statistically significantly lower amount for both the televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of the war. The strategy/process news frame can often contain information that actually informs the news consumer about events, even though it does commonly emphasize the negative relationship between political public relations practitioners and the press in the news gathering and reporting process.
Examples of stories that were coded as having the strategy/process frame varied in content and in type of strategy/process category, but perhaps one of the most blatant of such frames was the coverage of President Bush’s landing on the USS Lincoln. All media analyzed in this study covered that specific, orchestrated public-information event. Other such coverage ranged from reporters commenting on rallies and how the administration responded to them to the White House/Bush administration indicating frustration with the UN weapons inspectors.

An interesting aspect of this finding is that prior literature in the area of political communication has often shown the strategy/process frame to be the prevalent form of metacommunication during election cycles. This exploratory study, however, found that conversely, during a time of war—even a controversial war—that strategy/process took second place to self-reflexivity. This finding helps advance understanding of metacommunication frames in contexts other than political campaigns, and while this should be explored in different contexts, this finding does indicate that the media’s own favorite subject is in fact itself and reinforces the idea of media bias towards the media as the bias that one can expect to find in times of peace or conflict.

**Self-Reflexive Metacommunication Frames**

Another goal of this study was to assess what types of self-reflexive metacommunication frames were relied on in the media coverage of the war and if reliance on these types of self-reflexive metacommunication frames was significantly different in televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Based on prior research, the eight types of self-reflexive metacommunication were coded for.
Self-reflexive metacommunication frames were not similar between the media channels and the reliance on these frames was significantly different in televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. As reported earlier, an interesting outlier in this finding was low prevalence of role of technology in attaining coverage. This is of note, as prior war coverage scholarship conducted by Kaid, et al. about the 1991 Gulf War and CNN’s frequent mentions of its technology, which was a breakthrough study in metacommunication research, though not explicitly labeled as such at the time.

There are several other results in comparison of media channels and the analysis of the self-reflexive metacommunication frame prevalence that deserve mention. For example, the most dominant self-reflexive frame for the Web coverage was cross promotion and cross referencing of the media, but this was a very low ranked item in the televised news broadcasts. However, reporters reporting about journalists from their organization or network came in first place for televised news broadcasts and second place for Web coverage. The other items differed widely in rank order, but were not largely different in the amounts of coverage per item.

Examples of reporters interviewing embedded reporters in the field were frequently occurring types of self-reflexive coverage and a mainstay of the electronic war coverage analyzed in this study. Additionally, the televised broadcasts frequently included anchors and/or media personalities discussing their own opinions about the war, which ranged from commenting on protests to foreign policy to the future of Iraq. In addition to interviewing media celebrities and personalities within their own news organizations, the media also frequently interviewed media sources from other news
organizations about both specific incidents and implications of the war. Again, this is not largely surprising, as certain major media outlets had access to more data and the actual troops, and the media sources offered perspectives that were not available through other independent sources that were not on the front line.

The finding that cross promotion and cross referencing of the media was much higher in the Web coverage than TV news could be attributed to the structural differences between these media channels. Since the televised news broadcasts are highly structured in format and time constraints, as compared to the Web coverage that offer a practically infinite news hole and more coverage possibilities. Another items however, that is difficult to find explanations for its differences by media channel is the frame of reporters discussing their personal experiences of covering the war is more prevalent in TV than Web coverage, but it is unclear why this would be so.

**Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frames**

Another goal of this study was to assess what types of strategy/process metacommunication frames were relied on in the media coverage of the war and if reliance on these types of strategy/process metacommunication frames was significantly different in televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Based on prior research, the eight types of strategy/process metacommunication were coded for.

Overall, the strategy/process metacommunication frames were not highly correlated between the media channels and the reliance on these frames was significantly different in televised news broadcasts and Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. However there are two exceptions: both the White House/Bush administration information strategy and Military officials/troops information strategy were ranked as the
top two most prevalent frames for the televised news broadcasts and the Web coverage of the war. These were the only two strategy/process metacommunication frames that were correlated.

There are several other results in comparison of media channels and the analysis of the strategy/process metacommunication frame prevalence that deserve mention. For example, the presence of the Bush administration and news media relationships and interactions frame was present twice as much in the Web coverage as compared to the TV news. While the results of this can be attributed to reasons discussed earlier about the channel differences, which could be one possible explanation for this and other differences, that is an almost counter intuitive finding and one that seems at odds with the results from prior research in the context of political campaigns. Once could actually have predicted the opposite would have been the case, that the Bush administration and news media relationships and interactions would have played out to a greater degree in the televised news broadcasts than in the stories about the war in the Web coverage.

Another perplexing finding is that of the standards of the quality of the news coverage frame, which was present six times more in the televised news broadcasts than in the Web coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Given the time and structural constraints of the TV coverage as compared with the Web’s, this finding is difficult to explain, as it is the exact opposite of what would have been expected. However, a possible explanation for this finding is that this one strategy/process frame is very closely associated with some of the self-reflexive types of coverage, and while this frame does assess the quality and standards of the news coverage, the substantive nature of such assessments is not evaluated in this study, and these frames can include incidents when
anchors or reporters are discussing live and on the air the issues they are facing when trying to bring the viewer accurate and up-to-date information.

For example, it was common in the televised news broadcasts for anchors or reporters to allude to domestic and international coverage while reporting the day’s events. Such media-assessment coverage included commenting on coverage from the controversial *Al Jazeera* to the traditional news sources, such as the BBC. Often televised media was self-referential, its anchors and reporters filled the news hole with chatter about themselves and their own network’s quality of news gathering and dissemination during a time of war.

**Strategy/Process Metacommunication Categories**

Another layer to the analysis of the strategy/process metacommunication frames for this study was to categorize the presence of each type as being adversarial, educational, or neutral and to compare these findings by media channel. The results of this specific inquiry are central to the implications of this study of metacommunication prevalence in the media coverage of the war.

Overall, the educational category was most prevalent, the neutral second, and the adversarial the least. This is a somewhat promising finding, and one that differs from a number of the prior studies in political campaigns when these categories were evaluated.

For the televised broadcasts, the neutral category was most prevalent, the educational second, and the adversarial the least. In terms of Web coverage, the educational category was most prevalent, the neutral second, and the adversarial the least.

The most typical example of such neutral coverage, for both media, was straightforward and informative reporting of U.S. public information efforts, such as the release of reports, interviews, and press conferences. The negative coverage, which was the least
offered of the these assessment categories tended to be humorous and critical of the Iraqi information officer referred to as “Baghdad Bob” and his denial of the serious nature of the U.S. assault on Iraq. The educational coverage tended to focus on U.S. public information efforts and to be objective and very direct in explaining how the government agencies and/or the White House gathered and released its data to both the media and the public.

It is encouraging that the educational category of the strategy/process metacommunication frame emerged as a prevalent frame and the adversarial category was the least, both overall and by media channel. This implies that the strategy/process metacommunication frame can potentially be beneficial and enhance the news consumer and possible contribute to the public sphere (Habermas 1962/1989).

In terms of channel comparisons, it is also worth noting that while the adversarial category of the strategy/process metacommunication frame was least present in both media, it was only four percent less prevalent than the educational category in the TV news, as compared to the Web coverage in which the adversarial category was 28 percent less prevalent than the educational category. Also, in comparing the amount of educational strategy/process metacommunication category presence between these two media channels it is significant that this category was much more prevalent in the Web coverage (56%) as compared with the (30%) prevalence in the televised news broadcasts. These findings are congruent with prior scholarship that indicates the Web may be a medium that is able to enhance the public sphere than other media; in terms of the range of voices and variety of sources it offers (Strommer-Galley, 2002; Williams & Martin, 2004).
Public Information Assessment

The study also sought to evaluate directly how the media were assessing the public information efforts of both the Bush administration and the Iraqi government. Not surprisingly, the findings indicate that the Bush administration’s efforts were rated far more favorably than the Iraqi government’s. It is interesting however that the Bush administration’s communication efforts were mostly rated as neutral, as were a limited number of the Iraqi government’s efforts.

These findings, perhaps more than any of the others, can be attributed to the context of the media coverage. Unlike a political campaign, when one would expect more negative assessments, the context of this particular military campaign and its associations with the larger War on Terror that President Bush declared after the September 11 terrorist attacks would create an environment when being overly critical could be viewed as unpatriotic. In fact, prior research on this war has indicated that media personalities had to walk a fine line in critiquing the president or the military efforts, and that those who spoke out faced harsh censure (Williams, Martin, Trammell, Landreville, & Ellis, 2004).

Limitations

As with any study there are limitations, and the current study has several. By its very nature, this exploratory analysis that attempts to explicate the metacommunication concept and examine media narcissism and self-reflexivity in a war instead of a political campaign meant that prior assumptions and findings could only be considered benchmarks for assessments and not strict guidelines as the contextual issues were so great.
This study is also limited in that it only analyzes two media: the Web and TV news. Additionally, visuals for both of these media were not coded and analyzed, and only the textual, verbal content was addressed.

**Future Research**

There are multiple directions in which this current study can lead, and as an exploratory analysis of metacommunication in a context other than a political campaign, this study will prove to be a springboard for a number of other studies. These studies will begin with the existing data that have been collected.

Future work with these data will include conducting comparative analyses within the media channels compared here. For example, it may be a worthwhile to further break out the data and see if there are statistically significant differences between the traditional and cable televised news broadcasts and similarly if there are differences between their coverage on their respective Web sites.

Additional work with the existing data collected during Operation Iraqi Freedom include examining which sources were most frequently associated with given frames to see what patterns emerge, and to examine if and how these patterns are related to the media channels, the time periods, and the episodic and/or thematic frame characterizations, as well as other categories and subcategories of metacommunication frames.

Beyond the work with the existing data, research on metacommunication should be extended to other types of media coverage. Such coverage can include the terror alerts that have been put in place over the past few years in the United States, coverage of religious/political issues, coverage of international crisis events such as the recent bombings in Spain, and coverage of political scandals.
The opportunities to address metacommunication, media narcissism, and self-reflexive reporting are seemingly myriad, not only in terms of differing contexts but also in differing media outlets and areas of the world. Also, after considerably more work has been done with content analysis, experimental studies to measure the effects of metacommunication on respondents will provide further chances to advance understanding of this media practice.

The findings of this study are, overall, troublesome and especially so in regard to journalistic objectivity. As the public does indeed rely on the media for factual information on a regular basis, the need for facts from the media during a time of crisis, such as war or terrorist attacks is paramount. The media have rights and responsibilities to the public are more vital than narcissistic and self-reflexive. The issues and events are much more important to the public than being educated about the news gathering process, and the relationship, and assessments thereof, between the media and political public relations consultants and/or public information officers is not one that serves the public interest. The media have been given a great deal of latitude and protection, and it is the media’s duty to live up to these.
APPENDIX A
CODEBOOK FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TELEVISED NEWS BROADCASTS

Coder ID: Coders will input their three initials for identification purposes.

Story Number: Each story will be given a unique four-digit number.

Story Date: The date on which the story ran.

Story Headline or Title: For TV News Stories, coders will indicate if there is a stated headline or title for the news segment or will give the story a title for the purpose of further referencing and locating the story.

Type of Story:
(1) TV News Broadcast

TV News Story Origin:
(1) ABC
(2) CBS
(3) CNN
(4) FOX

TV News Story Source(s): Coders are asked to identify the presence or absence of a number of sources from a predetermined listed based on prior research: (1) Story’s Author; (2) Reporter; (3) Anonymous; (4) Special Interest/Lobbying Group; (5) Military Expert; (6) Republican Political Pundit; (7) Democratic Political Pundit; (8) Non-Partisan Political Pundit; (7) Media Personality from Same Network; (8) Media Personality from Other Organization; (9) Scholar/Media Critic; (10) Embedded Journalist; (11) Associated Press or other Wire Service; (12) Citizens; (13) Bush Administration, Aides, or Advisors;
(14) Iraqi Government Official Spokesperson; (15) Report/Document/Poling Data; (16) U.S. Military Officials—including any branch of the armed services; (17) Iraqi Dissidents; and (18) Other. If “other” and identifying this source in an open-ended area on the codesheet.

**TV News Story Length (Minutes and Seconds):** For TV coverage a story is marked by a distinct beginning and ending of a central topic area (i.e., public information, White House communications strategy, Removal of Saddam/Regime change, etc.). A story may contain numerous sources and information related to the central topic, and until there is a distinct shift in topic area, the coders will consider a unit of time devoted to one central topic a single story. In order to determine this, coders will watch videotaped TV news coverage, identify the beginning and ending of a story, watch it again and time it using a stop watch to determine the length of the story. The coders will then watch the story for a third time in order to focus on the manifest verbal content of the story before coding it.

**Total Speakers/Sources Relied on for the Story:** Coders will write in the total number of sources relied on for the story based on a total the above coded categories. This number should equal the totaled speakers/sources noted in the previous question.

**Number of Independent and Media Sources:** Coders are then asked to determine the number of Independent and Media Sources relied on in the story. An independent source is an individual or group that is not clearly identified as being a part of the media. A media source is identified as an individual or group that is clearly a member of the media.

**Anchor Direction of Content:** For TV News Stories with an Anchor present, who does the Anchor Direct the Viewer To?
Media Cross Promotion: Do the TV News Stores direct viewers to their Web sites or other media coverage? If yes, coders will indicate where viewers are being directed.

Frames: Coders are asked to determine the presence or absence of the following list of frames, based on prior research, and to indicate if this frame is best characterized as being episodic or thematic. Additionally, coders are asked to indicate which of the sources from the above list discussed the content associated with these frames by writing the identification number of the source(s) in the space provided. The list of frames coded for are: The list of frames coded for are: (1) Military Conflict—frames that emphasize the military battle itself on macro or micro levels; (2) American Patriotism—frames that emphasize citizens rallying around the flag and a resurgence of American patriotism in various manifestations; (3) Protest—frames that show individuals or groups, in the U.S. or abroad protesting or the discussion of protest of the war; (4) Human Interest—frames that emphasize the human element of the war, including soldiers and any citizens; (5) Responsibility—frames that assign responsibility for the military conflict to a given individual, government, or regime; (6) Economic Consequences—frames that focus on the either short or long-term economic consequences that the war will have domestically, in the Middle East, or internationally; (7) Diagnostic—frames that emphasize an assessment of how and why this military conflict developed; (8) Prognostic—frames that emphasize what outcome of the military conflict will be, including the removal of Saddam/regime change, regional stability, loss of U.S. soldiers, etc.; (9) Rebuilding of Iraq—frames that specifically deal with the rebuilding of Iraqi and the future of the country and its people after the war is finished; and (10) Metacommunication—a frame that emphasizes either the media’s self-reflexivity or the communication process between
sources and the news media. (In addition to listing the source of the metacommunication, coders are also asked to indicate the subject of the metacommunication, e.g., the Bush Administration.)

**Metacommunication Frame Presence:** If the metacommunication frame is present, coders are instructed to indicate which of the above frames areas the metacommunication directly relate to by filling in the identification number of the frame(s) in the space provided.

**Metacommunication Frames:** The dissertation is designed to determine the extent to which metacommunication frames were relied upon by the media during the reporting of a military campaign. For purposes of this dissertation, metacommunication is defined as the news media’s self-reflexive coverage of itself in a general sense and of the interplay between the Bush administration’s or Iraqi government’s public information about Operation Iraqi Freedom and the TV News and Web sites’ resulting coverage.

**Metacommunication Frame Type:** The concept of metacommunication is further broken down into two distinct areas: self-reflexive reporting and strategy/process news. For purposes of this dissertation the two differing types of metacommunication will be treated as mutually exclusive categories stories will be coded as being characterized either one or the other type of metacommunication, **not both.** If the metacommunication frame is coded as being present, indicate which **one** of the following best characterizes the type of metacommunication present: (1) Self Reflexive or (2) Strategy/Process.

**Self Reflexive Metacommunication Frame Characteristics:** If the Self Reflexive Metacommunication Frame is present, indicate which **one** of the following best characterizes it: (1) Role of Technology in Attaining Coverage; (2) Anchors or Media
Personalities Discussing their Opinions; (3) Reporters Discussing Personal Experience of Covering the War; (4) Reporters Interviewing/Reporting about other Journalists from their News Organization, Network, or Publication; (5) Reporters Interviewing/Reporting about other Journalists from another News Organization, Network, or Publications; (6) The News Media Emphasizing their Role as a Participant in the Event; (7) Cross Promotion and Cross Referencing of Media; or (8) Insider Views of the War or War Strategizing.

**Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame Characteristics:** If Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame is present, indicate which one of the following best characterizes it: (1) Pentagon Information Strategy; (2) White House/Bush Administration Information Strategy; (3) Military Official/Troops Information Strategy; (4) Partisan Information Source Strategy; (5) Bush Administration-News Media Relationship and/or Interactions; (6) Journalists Participation in Military Events or Press Briefings; (7) Standards of the Quality of the News Coverage; and (8) Influence of PR/News Management Strategies on Journalists

**Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame Classification:** If Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame is present, indicate which one of the following best characterizes it: (1) Adversarial; (2) Educational; or (3) Neutral. Adversarial types of strategy/process frames would include stories that negative label that implies manipulation or the use of ploys in the communication process as spin or call source information a sound bite. The neutral type of strategy/process frame is one in which there is no negative or positive slant to the communication process but instead just states the occurrence of a transferal of information from source to the media. The educational type
of strategy/process frame is one in which the viewer would actually learn something about the communication process between the source and the media but is without any negative connotations and is, instead, unbiased and is clearly informative about the process.

**Assessment of the Bush Administration’s Public Information Efforts:** Coders will indicate the Story’s Assessment/Overall Tone of the Bush Administration’s Public Information Efforts from the following list: (1) Positive; (2) Negative; (3) Neutral; or (4) Not Applicable. Additionally, coders are asked to list key words, terms, or phrases that are used to describe the administration and its communication strategies as open-ended information in the space provided.

**Assessment of the Iraqi government’s Administration’s Public Information Efforts:** Coders will indicate the Story’s Assessment/Overall Tone of the Iraqi government’s Public Information Efforts from the following list: (1) Positive; (2) Negative; (3) Neutral; or (4) Not Applicable. Additionally, coders are asked to list key words, terms, or phrases that are used to describe the administration and its communication strategies as open-ended information in the space provided.
APPENDIX B
CODEBOOK FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS OF WEB COVERAGE

Coder ID: Coders will input their three initials for identification purposes.

Story Number: Coders will give each story will be a unique four-digit number.

Story Date: Coders will indicate the original date on which the story ran using a six-digit number (e.g., 040203 for April, 2, 2003)

Story Headline: Coders will either write the exact headline that was associated with each story.

Type of Story:
(2) Web Coverage

Web site News Story Origin:
(1) ABC
(2) CBS
(3) CNN
(4) FOX

Web News Story Length: Coders will list the length of the story based on a word count, including the headline and sub-head.

Web site Story Source Attribution: Coders are asked to identify the presence or absence of a number of sources from a predetermined listed based on prior research: (1) Story’s Author; (2) Reporter; (3) Anonymous; (4) Special Interest/Lobbying Group; (5) Military Expert—not current personnel; (6) Republican Political Pundit; (7) Democratic Political Pundit; (8) Non-Partisan Political Pundit; (7) Media Personality from Same
Network; (8) Media Personality from Other Organization; (9) Scholar/Media Critic; (10) Embedded Journalist; (11) Associated Press or other Wire Service; (12) Citizens; (13) Bush Administration, Aides, or Advisors; (14) Iraqi Government Official Spokesperson; (15) Report/Document/Poling Data; (16) U.S. Military Officials—including any branch of the armed services; (17) Iraqi Dissidents; and (18) Other. If “other” and identifying this source in an open-ended area on the codesheet.

**Total Sources Relied on for the Story:** Coders will write in the total number of sources relied on for the story based on a total the above coded categories. This number should equal the totaled sources noted in the previous question.

**Hyperlinks:** Coders will indicate how many subject hyperlinks that relate to Operation Iraqi Freedom are present.

**Internal Hyperlinks:** Coders will indicate how many of these are subject hyperlinks are internal hyperlinks that keep the user within the site.

**External Hyperlinks:** Coders will indicate how many of these are subject hyperlinks are external hyperlinks that send the user outside the site.

**External Hyperlink Destinations:** The URLs for the external subject hyperlinks will be noted in order to determine where the site sending the user.

**Frames:** Coders are asked to determine the presence or absence of the following list of frames, based on prior research, and to indicate if this frame is best characterized as being episodic or thematic. Additionally, coders are asked to indicate which of the sources from the above list discussed the content associated with these frames by writing the identification number of the source(s) in the space provided. The list of frames coded for are: (1) Military Conflict—frames that emphasize the military battle itself on macro
or micro levels; (2) American Patriotism—frames that emphasize citizens rallying around the flag and a resurgence of American patriotism in various manifestations; (3) Protest—frames that show individuals or groups, in the U.S. or abroad protesting or the discussion of protest of the war; (4) Human Interest—frames that emphasize the human element of the war, including soldiers and any citizens; (5) Responsibility—frames that assign responsibility for the military conflict to a given individual, government, or regime; (6) Economic Consequences—frames that focus on the either short or long-term economic consequences that the war will have domestically, in the Middle East, or internationally; (7) Diagnostic—frames that emphasize an assessment of how and why this military conflict developed; (8) Prognostic—frames that emphasize what outcome of the military conflict will be, including the removal of Saddam/regime change, regional stability, loss of U.S. soldiers, etc.; (9) Rebuilding of Iraq—frames that specifically deal with the rebuilding of Iraqi and the future of the country and its people after the war is finished; and (10) Metacommunication—a frame that emphasizes either the media’s self-reflexivity or the communication process between sources and the news media (In addition to listing the source of the metacommunication, coders are also asked to indicate the subject of the metacommunication, e.g., the Bush Administration.)

**Metacommunication Frame Presence:** If the metacommunication frame is present, coders are instructed to indicate which of the above frames areas the metacommunication directly relate to by filling in the identification number of the frame(s) in the space provided.

**Metacommunication Frames:** The dissertation is designed to determine the extent to which metacommunication frames were relied upon by the media during the reporting
of a military campaign. For purposes of this dissertation, metacommunication is defined as the news media’s self-reflexive coverage of itself in a general sense and of the interplay between the Bush administration’s or Iraqi government’s public information about Operation Iraqi Freedom and the TV News and Web sites’ resulting coverage.

**Metacommunication Frame Type:** The concept of metacommunication is further broken down into two distinct areas: self-reflexive reporting and strategy/process news. For purposes of this dissertation the two differing types of metacommunication will be treated as mutually exclusive categories stories will be coded as being characterized either one or the other type of metacommunication, **not both.** If the metacommunication frame is coded as being present, indicate which **one** of the following best characterizes the type of metacommunication present: (1) Self Reflexive or (2) Strategy/Process.

**Self Reflexive Metacommunication Frame Characteristics:** If the Self Reflexive Metacommunication Frame is present, indicate which **one** of the following best characterizes it: (1) Role of Technology in Attaining Coverage; (2) Anchors or Media Personalities Discussing their Opinions; (3) Reporters Discussing Personal Experience of Covering the War; (4) Reporters Interviewing/Reporting about other Journalists from their News Organization, Network, or Publication; (5) Reporters Interviewing/Reporting about other Journalists from another News Organization, Network, or Publications; (6) The News Media Emphasizing their Role as a Participant in the Event; (7) Cross Promotion and Cross Referencing of Media; or (8) Insider Views of the War or War Strategizing.

**Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame Characteristics:** If, Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame is present, indicate which **one** of the
following best characterizes it: (1) Pentagon Information Strategy; (2) White House/Bush Administration Information Strategy; (3) Military Official/ Troops Information Strategy; (4) Partisan Information Source Strategy; (5) Bush Administration-News Media Relationship and/or Interactions; (6) Journalists Participation in Military Events or Press Briefings; (7) Standards of the Quality of the News Coverage; and (8) Influence of PR/News Management Strategies on Journalists.

**Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame Classification:** If, Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame is present, indicate which one of the following best characterizes it: (1) Adversarial; (2) Educational; or (3) Neutral. Types of strategy/process metacommunication news frames: This dissertation will additionally evaluate strategy/process news on another sub-level distinction—this characterization is either adversarial or educational strategy/process news. Adversarial types of strategy/process frames would include stories that negative label that implies manipulation or the use of ploys in the communication process as spin or call source information a sound bite. The neutral type of strategy/process frame is one in which there is no negative or positive slant to the communication process but instead just states the occurrence of a transferal of information from source to the media. The educational type of strategy/process frame is one in which the viewer would actually learn something about the communication process between the source and the media but is without any negative connotations and is, instead, unbiased and is clearly informative about the process.

**Assessment of the Bush Administration’s Public Information Efforts:** Coders will indicate the Story’s Assessment/Overall Tone of the Bush Administration’s Public
Information Efforts from the following list: (1) Positive; (2) Negative; (3) Neutral; or (4) Not Applicable. Additionally, coders are asked to list key words, terms, or phrases that are used to describe the administration and its communication strategies as open-ended information in the space provided.

**Assessment of the Iraqi government’s Administration’s Public Information Efforts:** Coders will indicate the Story’s Assessment/Overall Tone of the Iraqi government’s Public Information Efforts from the following list: (1) Positive; (2) Negative; (3) Neutral; or (4) Not Applicable. Additionally, coders are asked to list key words, terms, or phrases that are used to describe the administration and its communication strategies as open-ended information in the space provided.
APPENDIX C
CODESHEET OF CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TELEVISED NEWS BROADCASTS

Coder: __ __ __

Story Number __ __ __ __

Story Date: __ __ __ __ __ __     (Reliability 1.00)

Story Headline or Title:     (Reliability 1.00)

Type of Story:
(1) TV News Broadcast

TV News Story/Segment Origin:    (Reliability 1.00)
(1) ABC
(2) CBS
(3) CNN
(4) FOX

TV News Story Length (Minutes and Seconds)    (Reliability .75)

TV News Story Speaker(s)/Source(s):
(1) Anchor     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(2) Reporter     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(3) Anonymous     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(4) Special Interest/Lobbying Group     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(5) Military Expert (Not Current Personnel)     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(6) Republican Political Pundit     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(7) Democratic Political Pundit     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(8) Non-Partisan Political Pundit     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(9) Media Personality from Same Network     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(10) Media Personality from Other Organization     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(11) Scholar/Media Critic     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(12) Embedded Journalist     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(13) Associated Press or other Wire Service     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(14) Citizens     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(15) Bush Administration, Aides, or Advisors     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(16) Iraqi Government Official Spokesperson     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability .75)
(17) Report/Document/Polling Data     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(18) U.S. Military Official(s)     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(19) Iraqi Dissidents     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)
(20) Other     Present (1) Absent (0)     (Reliability 1.00)

If other, what individual(s) or group(s) were relied on as a source?     (Reliability 1.00)
How Many Total Speakers/Sources Were Relied on for the Story?  (Reliability 1.00)

How many of these are Independent Sources?  

How many of these are Media Sources? 

For TV News Stories with an Anchor present, who does the Anchor Direct the Viewer To?  

Do the TV News Stores direct viewers to their Web sites or other media coverage?  

If yes, where? 

Frames: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Absent</th>
<th>Episodic or Thematic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Military Conflict</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00) Source(s):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability .75)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) American Patriotism</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00) Source(s):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Protest</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00) Source(s):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Human Interest</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00) Source(s):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability .75)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Responsibility Frame</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00) Source(s):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Economic Consequences</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00) Source(s):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Diagnostic</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00) Source(s):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) Prognostic</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00) Source(s):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) Rebuilding of Iraq</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00) Source(s):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) Metacommunication</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>(Reliability 1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability 1.00) Source(s):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reliability .75)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If Metacommunication frame is present, which of the above frames areas does the metacommunication directly relate to?  

(Reliability 1.00)
If the Metacommunication Frame is Present, which one of the following best characterizes it?
(1) Self Reflexive
(2) Strategy/Process

If Self Reflexive Metacommunication Frame is present, which one of the following best characterizes it?
(1) Role of Technology in Attaining Coverage
(2) Anchors or Media Personalities Discussing their Opinions
(3) Reporters Discussing Personal Experience of Covering the War
(4) Reporters Interviewing/Reporting about other Journalists from their News Organization, Network, or Publication
(5) Reporters Interviewing/Reporting about other Journalists from another News Organization, Network, or Publications
(6) The News Media Emphasizing their Role as a Participant in the Event
(7) Cross Promotion and Cross Referencing of Media
(8) Insider Views of the War or War Strategizing

If, Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame is present, which one of the following best characterizes it?
(1) Pentagon Information Strategy
(2) White House/Bush Administration Information Strategy
(3) Military Official/Troops Information Strategy
(4) Partisan Information Source Strategy
(5) Bush Administration-News Media Relationship and/or Interactions
(6) Journalists Participation in Military Events or Press Briefings
(7) Standards of the Quality of the News Coverage
(8) Influence of PR/News Management Strategies on Journalists

If, Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame is present, which one of the following best characterizes it?
(1) Adversarial
(2) Educational
(3) Neutral

Story’s Assessment/Overall Tone of the Bush Administration’s Public Information Efforts:
(1) Positive
(2) Negative
(3) Neutral
(4) Not Applicable

Key words, terms, or phrases used to describe these public information efforts: (Reliability 1.00)

Story’s Assessment/Overall Tone of the Iraqi government’s Public Information Efforts:
(1) Positive
(2) Negative
(3) Neutral
(4) Not Applicable

Key words, terms, or phrases used to describe these public information efforts: (Reliability 1.00)
APPENDIX D
CODESHEET FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS OF WEB COVERAGE

Coder: __ __ __

Story Number __ __ __ __

Story Date: __ __ __ __ __ (Reliability 1.00)

Story Headline or Title: (Reliability 1.00)

Type of Story:
(2) Web Coverage (Reliability 1.00)

Web News Story Origin:
(1) ABC
(2) CBS
(3) CNN
(4) FOX (Reliability 1.00)

Web News Story Length: (Word Count) (Reliability 1.00)

Source Attribution:
(1) Story Author Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability .75)
(2) Reporter Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(3) Anonymous Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(4) Special Interest/Lobbying Group Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(5) Military Expert (Not Current Personnel) Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(6) Republican Political Pundit Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(7) Democratic Political Pundit Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(8) Non-Partisan Political Pundit Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(9) Media Personality from Same Network Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(10) Media Personality from Other Organization Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(11) Scholar/Media Critic Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(12) Embedded Journalist Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(13) Associated Press or other Wire Service Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(14) Citizens Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(15) Bush Administration, Aides, or Advisors Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(16) Iraqi Government Official Spokesperson Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(17) Report/Document/Polling Data Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(18) U.S. Military Official(s) Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(19) Iraqi Dissidents Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
(20) Other Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)

If other, what individual(s) or group(s) were relied on as a source? (Reliability 1.00)
How Many Total Sources Were Relied on for the Story? (Reliability .75)

How many of these are Independent Sources? (Reliability 1.00)

How many of these are Media Sources? (Reliability 1.00)

How many subject hyperlinks are present? (Reliability 1.00)

How many of these are internal hyperlinks? (Reliability 1.00)

How many of these are external? (Reliability 1.00)

If external, where are they sending the user? (Reliability 1.00)

Frames:

(1) Military Conflict Present (1) Absent (0) Episodic or Thematic (Reliability 1.00)
Source(s): (Reliability 1.00)

(2) American Patriotism Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
Source(s): (Reliability 1.00)

(3) Protest Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
Source(s): (Reliability 1.00)

(4) Human Interest Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
Source(s): (Reliability 1.00)

(5) Responsibility Frame Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
Source(s): (Reliability 1.00)

(6) Economic Consequences Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
Source(s): (Reliability 1.00)

(7) Diagnostic Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
Source(s): (Reliability 1.00)

(8) Prognostic Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
Source(s): (Reliability 1.00)

(9) Rebuilding of Iraq Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
Source(s): (Reliability 1.00)

(10) Metacommunication Present (1) Absent (0) (Reliability 1.00)
Source(s): (Reliability 1.00)
Subject(s): (Reliability 1.00)

If Metacommunication frame is present, which of the above frames areas does the metacommunication directly relate to? (Reliability 1.00)

If Metacommunication Frame is Present, which one of the following best characterizes it?
(1) Self Reflexive
(2) Strategy/Process

If Self Reflexive Metacommunication Frame is present, which one of the following best characterizes it?
(1) Role of Technology in Attaining Coverage
(2) Anchors or Media Personalities Discussing their Opinions
(3) Reporters Discussing Personal Experience of Covering the War
(4) Reporters Interviewing/Reporting about other Journalists from their News
   Organization, Network, or Publication
(5) Reporters Interviewing/Reporting about other Journalists from another News
   Organization, Network, or Publications
(6) The News Media Emphasizing their Role as a Participant in the Event
(7) Cross Promotion and Cross Referencing of Media
(8) Insider Views of the War or War Strategizing

If, Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame is present, which one of the following best characterizes it?
(1) Pentagon Information Strategy
(2) White House/Bush Administration Information Strategy
(3) Military Official/ Troops Information Strategy
(4) Partisan Information Source Strategy
(5) Bush Administration-News Media Relationship and/or Interactions
(6) Journalists Participation in Military Events or Press Briefings
(7) Standards of the Quality of the News Coverage
(8) Influence of PR/News Management Strategies on Journalists

If, Strategy/Process Metacommunication Frame is present, which one of the following best characterizes it?
(1) Adversarial
(2) Educational
(3) Neutral

Story’s Assessment/Overall Tone of the Bush Administration’s Public Information Efforts:
(1) Positive
(2) Negative
(3) Neutral
(4) Not Applicable

Key words, terms, or phrases used to describe these public information efforts:

Story’s Assessment/Overall Tone of the Iraqi government’s Public Information Efforts:
(1) Positive
(2) Negative
(3) Neutral
(4) Not Applicable

Key words, terms, or phrases used to describe these public information efforts:
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Andrew Paul Williams was born and raised in the once small and charming town of Orange Park, Florida. Williams has extensive professional communications experience as a consultant, writer, public relations practitioner, and photographer. He joins the faculty of the Department of Communication at Virginia Tech University in fall 2004. His research interests are political communication and media studies. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree with a double major in communications and English and a minor in political science from the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. Williams earned his Master of Arts degree in English at University of North Florida as well.