

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: STRATEGIES IN INTERNATIONAL
BROADCASTING: A GROUNDED ANALYSIS OF
COMMUNICATION VALUES ACROSS CULTURES

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This dissertation is a cross-cultural examination of strategic communication values that drive journalistic decision-making. Several issues are addressed:

- 1) developing tools to engage in systematic producer-centered qualitative media research across cultures ,
- 2) testing a comprehensive grounded category scheme to characterize media producers' strategic presentational values,
- 3) broadening discussion of the influence of culture on media decision-making by moving beyond national culture and looking also at age, gender, organization, and level of training,
- 4) working methodologically with a three-tiered inductive approach to structure analysis of interview data, and
- 5) examining the utility of these qualitative tools cross-culturally by testing the framework with both Western and Chinese international broadcasters.

Fifty American, British, and Chinese international feature reporters were interviewed at the Voice of America, the BBC World Service, and state-run Chinese international broadcast agencies (China Central Television, China Radio International, and the Xinhua News Agency) to identify patterns in their journalistic decision-making. Journalists completed semi-structured interviews along with a freelisting task and a selection task to further characterize their strategic presentational values within simulated free and constrained contexts.

This study moves beyond classical gatekeeping research to propose a set of ten strategic communication categories (*aesthetics, breadth, convenience, depth, emotionality, freshness, germaneness, helpfulness, incisiveness, and justice*) that facilitate discussion of content and presentational style beyond the yes/no of story selection based on newsworthiness criteria. The gatekeeping paradigm is extended by comparing the complex decisions driving the production of mediated messages to the multi-faceted process of preparing food for the consumption of others, as both are strategic endeavors that profoundly affect the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

This research provides a new direction to debates on cross-cultural differences in mass communication. Data in this study reveal a notable pattern for Chinese journalists (both in China and in the West) to emphasize the value of *justice* in their responses, although data suggest that Chinese journalists tend to equate this value with complete objectivity and neutrality in contrast with Western journalists' tendency to consider issues of broader social justice. Developments in modern international propaganda broadcasting are also explored.

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by

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DEDICATION

To my family

who surround me with all the love and support I could ever need.

And to the international journalists

who weave their silken threads of communication around our planet.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Reaching Outside of Ourselves

At this moment, circling around our planet flies an invisible multitude of words. Broken into tiny digital bits sent through computers and satellite transmitters, the words carry ideas across mountains, forests, deserts, and seas into the eyes and ears of unseen others, a vast web of infinite complexity connecting minds and hearts across the world. We are transcending space, using air as a medium to convey ourselves.

Seeking to be understood is an enduring characteristic of the human race. From the first time we smile and see the delighted reaction of our parents, humans become enamored with this ability to reach out to others and connect. Without communication, we are confined to living solely within ourselves, but insofar as we are capable of inducing others to see things as we see them and understand the world as we understand it, we are capable of potentially motivating others to action. In this way, we band together and create the circumstances of our lives. Thus, not only how we go about constructing, conveying, and interpreting messages, but also what effects we attempt to achieve and why we set out to communicate comprise the most basic

building blocks of communication. If we can understand better what we truly hope to achieve, perhaps we can figure out better ways to accomplish it.

The purpose of this dissertation is to develop tools for conducting systematic producer-centered qualitative media research across cultures. A new grounded category scheme is proposed and tested through interviews with fifty Chinese and Western international broadcasters to examine the effect of culture on strategic considerations that underlie journalistic decision-making. A three-tiered inductive framework based on interviews, freelisting, and a selection task is used to elicit journalists' strategic communication values and to structure data analysis in such a way that illuminates patterns across various demographic factors: national origin, gender, age, training, and organization. Finally, a cross-cultural food metaphor is explored with participants to provide terms of conceptual clarity of how journalists communicate strategically for the consumption of others.

There are three main research questions driving this study. First, how well does the new grounded category scheme work to characterize strategies in broadcasting, particularly across cultures? Second, when the category scheme is applied, what patterns emerge in the data by national origin, gender, age, training, and organization? Third, is the food metaphor a useful heuristic for facilitating discussion about strategic communication values in broadcasting across cultures? Because this dissertation is designed to lay the groundwork for a new direction in characterizing producer intent for comparative purposes, emphasis in this study is placed on discovering the extent to which the proposed three-tiered analytical framework reveals patterns in the data by various demographic factors.

Media Nontransparency

Fundamental to the study of mass communication is the assumption that media do not merely reflect reality, but *represent* it—that they are symbolic systems that turn tangible elements from the world around us into signs that carry meaning to those who watch and interpret them. If the media were clear “windows on the world,” simply transmitting “reality” from one point to another, studying them would be as meaningless as studying clear panes of glass. “Media study is based on an assumption of media nontransparency, on an assumption that the media shape the subjects they present in characteristic forms. From the assumption that the media represent, rather than reflect reality, all else flows” (Masterman, 1997, p. 41).

Media messages, because they are constructed, carry a subtext of who and what is important—at least to the person or persons creating them (Thoman, 1995). Why is it that media producers choose certain topics over others? How do they select the various elements that make up their programs? What effects are they hoping to achieve, and why? Do cultural factors bear strongly on such decisions? If so, what exactly is meant by “cultural?” As world media systems continue to globalize, will cultural factors produce differences in the “flavor” of media products and mediated communication patterns in different societies? Such questions must be addressed by meaningful analysis of the motivations of media producers themselves, with our understanding of their choices grounded squarely in their own world.

As humans have developed technology to aid us in communicating with others, particularly across space and time, possibilities for contact become increasingly mind-boggling. Not only can we convey written words to each other,

but we can also send sound, visual images, music—the tangible artifacts of emotion itself. And we can do it in real-time. With the aid of cameras, microphones, and digital systems, we communicate directly with vast numbers of people all at once. When we hold such a public microphone and engage in “mass communication,” especially with unknown recipients in another part of the world, what do we choose to say and why? What role do we imagine we play, and what strategies do we use to make sure our messages meet our own standards of effectiveness?

For better or worse, the majority of people on our planet are tuned into mass media in some way—radio, television, the Internet. And just as we humans receive our physical nourishment from the foods we eat, our minds are fed and developed by the messages we consume—our “food for thought,” so to speak. It is widely known that media systems are engaged in a process of rapid globalization as we make our way into the 21st century, a dramatic development in our world’s history that will undoubtedly carry untold implications for all the residents of this planet we live on. As these strategic “battles for the hearts and minds” rage, both publicly and privately, it is time to seriously consider what we are doing to each other, and what this will mean for the ways we live together, both now and in the future.

Some Relevant Background

One of my life’s formative experiences (and one that has directly led to the undertaking of this dissertation) was being hired as a cameraperson for the Tokyo Broadcasting System’s Washington Bureau several years ago. At the time, I had virtually no experience with professional videorecording, and certainly no experience in a newsroom setting, so hiring me seemed to be an odd choice for TBS. However,

the company had hired seasoned professional American cameramen to work with them in the past, but they found cultural differences to be too difficult to overcome in forming a cohesive team. Thus, they decided to hire someone like me who spoke Japanese and had lived in Japan, but who had no camera experience, expecting to train me in the ways of the organization from a relatively clean slate.

After being taught the technical aspects of shooting and editing at TBS, I was sent to shoot footage of press conferences and other major Washington news events, sometimes in the company of my Japanese trainer, and sometimes on my own. Along with the standard shots of dignitaries giving speeches and shaking hands, we were asked to also shoot some “b-roll,” extra footage that would later be used to supplement each story visually. The b-roll that my trainer and I wanted to film was often remarkably different. I tended to focus on “people shots” and spontaneously occurring human interaction—facial expressions, body language, and novel elements that I felt contextualized the story and made it more interesting. My trainer, however, insisted that we stick to wide shots of the room we were in, still shots of the official agency sign outside, and other formalized elements in which I could hardly imagine an audience would be interested. I could not help but feel that something cultural was going on. But “cultural” in what sense? Was it because I was American and my trainer was Japanese? Or was it our difference in gender? A difference in our age, or in our level of training? In a larger sense, was it an issue of “development,” or just a difference in taste? If it was indeed just a matter of taste, could these differences be patterned across cultures? I wanted to know if making choices about communication is somehow similar to choosing between steak or sushi. With the increasing

globalization of media in today's world, it may be important to explore what sorts of "flavors" to expect on the media menu of the future, and why. As the technologies of communication develop and the people of our planet come into closer contact, is the world's globalizing media system on an inevitable trajectory toward some sort of fusion "Mc-Kung-Pao-Chicken-Sandwich" in the end?

As an American, I grew up watching television for fun, listening to the radio for news and music, and reading the newspaper only when I had to. There was no Internet. Media, for me as a young girl, provided my window on the world outside my hometown, and I never doubted the messages I consumed. I learned in school about the fundamental importance of the Constitutionally-guaranteed freedom of the press in fostering accuracy in media and a healthy democracy, and I believed that the American press system was undoubtedly the most free and benevolent in the world.

Entering college and finally having chances to travel outside of the Western world (mostly to Asia), I became much more media literate and aware of the differences between public and commercial media, realizing that as a frequent consumer of commercial media, my eyes and mind were regularly being sold to advertisers. Through my travels, I discovered that the American view of the world I had grown up with was blatantly one-sided, and I developed a deep interest in comparative research through which to seek out alternate points of view. I came to like publicly-funded media and documentaries, since they were more prone to expand my world view through presenting perspectives of which I had been unaware. Over time, I developed a deeper interest in broadcasting as providing an educational function in society and committed myself to finding ways to enhance this function.

Ingredients in the “Daily Feed”

On a recent trip, my schedule necessitated that I eat lunch at the airport. In the limited amount of time I had, my possible choices were a generic airport deli or Burger King. Part of me wanted the predictable convenience of a cheeseburger, but something caused me to opt for a tuna sandwich on multigrain bread at the deli instead. Later at the airport newsstand, I faced a similar decision—to buy a *Readers’ Digest* for its quick stories and easy reading, or to choose something like *Scientific American*, with its in-depth coverage of cutting-edge science. Most would certainly agree that the field of an individual’s choices, both for food and for information, is tremendous, and that in different contexts, we will choose different products to fill our bellies or our minds depending on our perceived needs at the time. I may want fast food when I am rushing to work in the morning, but then choose a healthy homemade dinner in the evening. As human beings, we feed ourselves in complex, often difficult-to-model ways, and thus studying the choices we make and why is a complicated yet meaningful endeavor as we seek to understand how we communicate and engage each other as a species.

Human beings are consumers; we spend significant amounts of time, resources, and energy each day to acquire both physical food as well as mental “food for thought.” Those who feed us tend to respond to our complex tastes by supplying what we want, when and where we want it, as evidenced by the tremendous proliferation of tasty convenience foods available just about anywhere in the developed (and now the developing) world. The process of feeding and being fed is,

by nature, an iterative process, with a whole host of “cultural” factors catering to local traditions—tortillas in Mexico, bread in France, gari in Nigeria, rice in Japan, etc.

In the highly competitive world of the “daily feed,” culinary metaphors already abound. Responding to the perceived needs of our modern society, journalists and other media producers strive to suit our “tastes” to get us to “consume” their messages. They often “spice up” otherwise “bland” reporting, or make efforts to add more “meat” or more “juicy tidbits” to a piece. “Sweet” stories are nice, as long as they do not become “syrupy” or “saccharine.” Of course, “stale” news must be avoided, as well as topics that might cause “indigestion” for the audience. Some reporters clearly act as “short-order cooks,” simply assembling details from prescribed sets of story elements, whereas other journalists style themselves more as professional “chefs,” striving for the complexity and creativity that will suit the “taste” of a more elite market. Judging by our discourse, food metaphors already seem to apply readily to the process by which we produce and consume media products.

Any form of communication can be strategic in nature insofar as a communicator seeks to have his or her meaning absorbed and apprehended by others. Whether communication takes place in a dyad, a group, or among multinational masses, strategic value considerations come into play that drive the crafting of messages in accordance with communicator intent. Although the food metaphor could apply to virtually any communicative experience, in this study it will be limited to the mass communication context because of the overtly strategic nature of the enterprise. Particularly in the case of international state-sponsored broadcasting, with

its emphasis on accomplishing tangible political objectives, journalists and editors must work within time and resource limitations for maximum effect. Using the food metaphor in this communication environment is useful because it highlights the personal value considerations on the part of the journalist in such a way that the role of culture on the individual can be examined explicitly in a more value-neutral way.

Although the food metaphor can be overextended if applied recklessly to any communicative experience, using it to systematically characterize journalistic intent has a number of benefits. First, everyone on the planet eats, thus calling upon value constructs used in feeding and being fed provides a conceptual framework rooted in terms already familiar to people everywhere, regardless of cultural or professional background. This makes the paradigm accessible to communicators at all stages of the developmental process, which may be especially useful for those in the process of gaining expertise in public communication. Further, highlighting the strategic nature of both preparing food and crafting messages for the consumption of others links strategic considerations to culinary concepts in such a way that can make both scholars and practitioners more reflexive about the role they play in their communicative environment. Finally, using this framework as a training tool for journalism students or working journalists reminds them of their vital role in providing the information and commentary that feeds the mental landscape of those who consume their products. Comparing the provision of food (nourishment for the body) to the provision of media messages (food for thought) makes salient the role of the producer in supplying society with a critical product worthy of reflection and systematic examination.

Thus, as we seek to understand the dynamics of the “daily feed,” this study provides tools to look carefully into the intentions of those who produce and market the foods and messages we consume. Certainly there are those media outlets that deliberately produce mental “junk food” simply because it sells, whereas others consciously try to serve up a nourishing balance of information to promote both individual and societal health and wellbeing. The extent to which reporters are aware of their role in influencing the mental and social health of their audience is an important question, especially considering the amount of time people across the world now spend tuned into media. Although the thought of having some worldwide regulatory body overseeing the “health content” of the messages we consume is rather terrifying, if media producers were individually and collectively to view themselves as feeding their audience instead of just entertaining them—merely gaining attention for the purpose of selling it to advertisers—subtle shifts might occur in our media that could lead to significant developments over time.

“Cooks” as Vendors or Public Servants?

As researchers study cultural differences in communication, differences in “taste” are an especially rich metaphor to explore. Metaphors such as these are useful, not only as interesting rhetorical devices, but as conceptual structures that define how people experience our everyday realities. For example, when we describe the activity of arguing by using concepts such as “make indefensible claims,” “shoot down an argument,” “attack a weak point,” etc., we define arguing as an activity that we win or lose, like a war (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4). However, as Lakoff and Johnson suggest, what if there were a culture in which “an argument is viewed as a

dance, the participants seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way (p. 5)?" Wouldn't we expect social relations in such a culture to play out differently than in societies in which argument is conceived of as war? Schön (1993) goes even further by noting that metaphorically describing an activity in an alternate way from its usual conceptualization allows us to entertain implications that can be very useful to the policy-making enterprise. Words thus not only reflect reality; they can in fact create reality.

So, how should the multitude of words being broadcast around our planet right now be metaphorically conceptualized? Are they armies marching in battle; are they partners dancing in an intricate international dance? There is no doubt that deep political and economic motivations underlie the tremendous costs of producing and transmitting words and images across significant distances, thus dancing may be a naively glib metaphor. However, as we dig deeply into our fundamental beliefs about the nature of humanity and the trajectory we are on as a species, can we continue to be satisfied with 20th-century metaphors describing "battles for the hearts and minds?" Because the 20th century was, by most accounts, the bloodiest century in recorded history, is there work we can do to progress our understanding of how and why we communicate between nations?

Today, the dominant paradigm describing the words and images that fill our sky is as products to be bought and sold. Most literature examining the mass media from an international perspective tends to focus on the global political economy of the media-making business. As international media executives consider ways to "deliver" their "product" to foreign markets, modes of delivery such as satellite,

cable, website, and even cell phones are resulting in an increasing consciousness of the demands of modern life around the world. Messages must be shorter, more colorful, more appealing, and less complex to ensure that they will be “consumed” by desired audiences. Fast food thus seems in many cases to provide an appropriate set of metaphors. As companies like McDonalds, Coca-Cola, and Starbucks dominate today’s consumer landscape and fill niches in our lives with their carefully packaged, heavily branded products, the extent of our need as consumers to regularly alter our brain and body chemistry simply to “get through the day” and fill our bellies most conveniently becomes apparent. In the same way, as we move through our day and become increasingly exposed to programs and advertising in just about every imaginable venue—from trains to elevators to doctors’ offices—we are in need of better ways to conceptually understand this processes of nearly constant communication on our minds and lives.

The media tend to operate as a supply-side business, with the main economic decisions being made in corporate offices between programmers and advertisers rather than directly between programmers and consumers. A good example of demand-side business would be buying food. In this instance, consumers “vote” with cash, and those items which sell out first need to be replenished, thus reflecting the direct impact of demand on supply. However, in the media business, because of the high costs of media production and the rather clumsy mechanisms available to determine demand (Nielsen ratings and so forth), much more work needs to be done by producers and editors to “psych out” audiences and figure out what they want to watch or hear based on “gut instincts” of indirect reads on consumer preferences.

The “supply-side” nature of the media business is evidenced by the fact that, even when we don’t want to watch something (e.g. “infotainment” on an airplane or in an elevator), the supply is still there. The money is being paid by advertisers to programmers, thus direct consumer decisions are less relevant to the business. This reality provides a compelling reason to develop tools to carefully study producer intent, and to look at the human factors that determine what goes into the mental “food for thought” people consume via mediated messages. Particularly in media arrangements in which producers are very distant from consumers, such as in the case of international broadcasting, there is much to learn from how behind-the-scenes programming decisions are made and why.

The fact that the development of media of mass communication, still less than a century old, emerged from competitive conditions of wartime and commercial gain clearly underlies our conceptual understanding of media as a “business” supplying a “product.” One implication of such a conceptualization, at least under the capitalist paradigm, is that media industries should be “free to conduct business” as they see fit under the market principles of supply and demand. Whatever is good for business must be good for society, the reasoning goes. A second implication stemming from the historical emergence of mass communication research during the Cold War is that media communication is often viewed as a “free speech” issue. Maintaining a free press has been a fundamental principle of liberal democracy, and citizens are rightly concerned about the implications of censorship. Free commerce and free speech are thus considered by most, at least in the Western world and increasingly in the East, to constitute essential elements of a healthy civil society.

As media researchers consider issues of globalization, commercialization, development, and press freedom, then, it is important to carefully consider whether these indeed operate on a single world continuum. For instance, Herbert Schiller (2000) points out a common concern among media scholars:

In the transformation of the world's capitalist system and its communication component, in recent decades, a few features stand out. There is, visibly and palpably, a gargantuan concentration of capital, best illustrated by, but by no means exclusive to, the United States.... The outcome, though we are unable to predict it with specificity, will certainly be a handful of global economic giants in the various sectors of the world economy. (Schiller, 2000, p. 116)

Within this global business paradigm, conceiving of the media business as a supplier of intellectual "food" provides a new framework as supply-side issues in media production and distribution are considered. Are we indeed on the high road to the complete "McDonaldsization" of the media world, as many expect? It is not a new idea that media "consumption" can indeed affect the health of a society (see Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorelli, 1980, and Jhally, 1990), and FDA-like government guidelines on media (restrictions, ratings, labeling, etc.) established in the U.S. by the Federal Communications Commission and other media regulatory bodies provide evidence that society expects at least some degree of informed warning on the messages people consume. Yet despite increasing interest in physical health in both developed and developing societies, the discussion of media content as an ingredient in the "health" of communities seems to be waning.

The “Public Interest” Principle in Broadcasting

Hoover (2000) points out that the “public interest” principle in broadcasting has come upon perilous times as TV is being increasingly conceived as “just another service, another commodity.” The conceptualization of media as an important vehicle for civil discourse is giving way to commercial considerations that rely solely on the bottom line. Hoover points out that,

In the American context, which came to be definitive worldwide, this shift in logic was well put by Mark Fowler, the Federal Communications Commission chairman under Ronald Reagan. Reflecting on the time-honored tradition of the “public interest” principle in broadcasting, Fowler turned the phrase around. “The public interest,” he is credited with saying, “is whatever the public is interested in.” The citizen becomes the consumer, the medium becomes commodified, and the market logic is the logic which prevails. (Hoover, 2000, p. 4.)

Further, Hoover notes, in considering whether services such as broadcasting should receive special funding and licensing considerations due to their operation on scarce public airwaves, FCC Chairman Fowler brushed such concern aside with the comment that television is nothing more than an appliance, “a toaster with pictures.” Despite his apparent intent to trivialize, Fowler’s appliance metaphor places us squarely in the kitchen, preparing food. Paying attention to Fowler’s logic, the conclusion that television content has no need of licensing may not be so apparent. Indeed, people rely strongly on their governments’ ability to carefully monitor and control the health and safety of the food supply. If people demand standards about

the things we eat, then why not look more seriously at the process by which our “mental food” is produced, as well?

Taking Fowler’s toaster metaphor one step further, it is notable that in other cultures of the world, people don’t eat toast or even bread, but rice, or tortillas, or some other staple food. This may seem an obvious point, yet it can carry important implications. It is true that people eat to satisfy nutritional needs, which may be broken down analytically by grams of fiber, protein, carbohydrates, etc.—quantifiable elements of food that must be noted in fostering dietary health. However, as the global food market stretches increasingly around the world, it is also necessary to understand more about the ritual patterns and functions of foods in different societies. Both wheat and rice are staple foods with nutrients that sustain life—yet which we *choose* to eat has more to do with our culture than purported nutritional value. Mr. Fowler’s use of the “toaster” metaphor reveals that his logic, most likely inadvertently, is very centered on Western norms. He may speak to the life experience of the television consumer in Burbank or Boston, but not necessarily in Burundi or Bangladesh. And as the global reach of media networks lengthens and brings cultures into increasing contact, it is more important than ever to seriously consider the ways in which media products make their way among the people of the world.

Gaining Traction on the “Asian Values” Debate

As the debate rages about whether or not there exist distinct cultural norms, such as the oft-debated “Asian values,” underlying the conduct of mass communication (see Bublue & Sitarama, 1998; Chandran & Atkins, 1998; Chang,

Wang, & Chen, 1998; Elliott, 1998; Ha, 1994; Kitagawa, Salwen, & Driscoll, 1994; Lee & Yang, 1995; Zhu, Weaver, Lo, Chen, & Wu, 1997), it is necessary to clarify our conceptualization beyond quantifiable content to a broader understanding of qualitative strategic differences that defy traditional analysis. Recent studies examining whether or not there is an identifiable “Asian-ness” to be found within media messages (e.g., Massey & Chang, 2002; Natarajan & Hao, 2003) rely solely on observed content—counting story topics, examining their overall valence, identifying the presence or absence of “conflict,” “supportiveness,” etc. This may be likened to a *laboratory analysis* performed by a scientist removed from the context in which the news is actually prepared or consumed. Although laboratory analysis can reveal something about the quantitative composition of news—its grams of protein and carbohydrates, so to speak—little is learned about actual cultural differences. It is no wonder that these authors have found few quantifiable differences between Asian and Western journalism, despite the fact that even untrained observers find such differences obvious in terms of quality. The difference between barbecued chicken and curried chicken may be obvious when we taste it, but it may be difficult to describe the difference in analytical terms. In order to undertake an analysis at the *taste* level, it is important to step out of the laboratory into the actual “kitchens” where mass communication is produced, and talk to the “chefs” themselves.

Using the metaphor of cooks or chefs to describe those who work as journalists implies that they are purposeful creators, combining ingredients in such a way as to make their stories palatable to consumers. At what cost do they avoid making a story “dry?” How spicy is *too* spicy? The best place to begin to answer

such questions is in the kitchen, among the chefs who go “shopping” for stories in search of the perfect dish, or the editors who attempt to combine dishes into the perfect “menu.” What do journalists from very different cultural and societal backgrounds consider to be a palatable and healthful presentation of mental “food?” Does their national origin growing up in a more libertarian or a more authoritarian society impact their way of conceiving their role as mass communicators? If so, what might these differences mean for the future of our increasingly globalizing and commercializing media?

Chapter 2: Theoretical Overview

Assumptions

This research begins with the observation that all media producers work under constraints. Not all aspects of the surrounding world can go into a program; choices must always be made. The first constraint that governs production decisions is *time*, both time required to produce a program and the number of minutes available in the program itself. The second constraint facing producers is access to *resources*, including staff resources, funding, and places and people available for filming and providing sound. Both of these constraints are faced by producers everywhere, and as such they are expected to appear universally in various forms across cultures.

However, some constraints may vary across settings or cultures, such as *institutional context*, which involves the values, norms, and circumstances that govern operations within a media organization, and *market context*, which involves the values, norms, and circumstances that govern life among media consumers. The value environment of media producers is situated at the juncture between the organizations that fund and support their activities and the market(s) to which they are striving to communicate. How do these role conceptions differ across cultures? How does culture inform how

institutional and market contexts are perceived, and in turn, how does this influence the choices made to conform to these expectations?

To understand how producers go about making their media messages palatable to their target audiences, the unstated subtext that guides various levels of production decisions needs to be made explicit. The goal-directed perception of the world required to produce media “is the product of mental activity in which humans construe form, select what is salient or significant, and confer meaning on it” (Eisner, 1981, p. 275). Because the busy grind of day-to-day media work rarely affords opportunities to articulate underlying values that drive production choices, a major goal of this project is to help journalists reach a level of introspection and self-awareness about their work that can help them make their cultural communication values explicit.

Conceiving of the organizational context surrounding the message production process as a “kitchen” in which ingredients are selected and arranged into pleasing packages for audiences to consume, it is possible to examine how traditional and modern values converge to meet the political, economic, and personal demands of a given market context. Rather than just assuming media producers’ intent through analysis of the media products they produce, it is helpful to step through the doors of media organizations and connect with producers as key participants in the process of making media messages that play their own living roles in society.

“Control Analysis”

Looking back on the first half of the 20th century, it is notable that mass media research made its main entry onto the world stage largely during wartime. Political

ambitions on all sides, from Hitler to Roosevelt to Stalin, were on alert with regard to the high-stakes issues of propaganda, national security, and ideological control.

Hitler's early propaganda images of Nazi rallies chilled audiences worldwide and set the stage for concentrated attention on the powerful and potentially dangerous effects of mass media. Thus, early motivations to study the effects of the mass media charged this research with a sense of urgency and a distinct moral imperative. Throughout the Cold War, with its attending spirit of suspicion and animosity, the intents of media producers "on the other side" simply had to be assumed.

Lasswell's (1948) classic media model was well-suited to the times: Who → Says what → To whom → In which channel → With what effect? In the post-WWII climate with mass communication research developing under funding from the U.S. government in response to concern over Hitler's uses of mass media, this linear framework served as a simple but powerful model for studying media effects. It pointed to variables that could be studied empirically in a laboratory setting in pursuit of answers about how the "black box" of the human mind works when presented with mediated messages. Lasswell's model later provided a useful groundwork for Shannon and Weaver's (1964) slightly more elaborated approach: Information source → Message → Transmitter → Signal → Channel → Receiver. This time period in which Shannon and Weaver's model emerged was driven by major innovations in broadcasting: television and radio were becoming household realities; computers were being conceived; learning how to transmit information effectively with minimal noise was a major priority. Thinking analytically about how to break down communication into discrete, analyzable parts was useful. Government and business

leaders needed answers to pressing questions about what media *did* to people, and what *effects* it had on their attitudes and behaviors. Studying media products rather than media producers was more direct and useful, at least on the surface.

The constant march of technological advances makes the need increasingly pressing, however, to understand how the values of those who produce the media affect what they produce. Developing tools to clarify this process will produce results with practical applications such as discovering how markets may become structured demographically and what effect this patterning may have on social organization between and within regions. Even more significantly, what is learned may fuel larger philosophical debates such as those centering around distinct cultural values and, more generally, the balance between the public interest principle in broadcasting and profit-oriented market economies.

Recent mass communication research has produced a great deal of work on purported social and psychological effects of the mass media, but to date insufficient empirical work has been done to examine producer-side elements of the media process, taking into account the value-laden cultural process by which production decisions are made. A review of how mass media literature has developed over the past decades reveals that research questions have moved backward through Lasswell's media model—from effects analysis, to audience analysis, to channel analysis, to the more current vogue, content or discourse analysis. Examining the trajectory of mass media research over the past century in terms of Lasswell's (1948) framework, "Who says what to whom in what channel with what effect?," a general shift in emphasis has moved backwards from effects research (1930s-1950s),

followed by channel research (1940s-1960s), followed by audience research (1960s-1980s), into the message dimension of content or discourse analysis (1980s-present).

There is still insufficient research that carefully addresses the beginning of the process—what Lasswell (1964) termed “control analysis.” The fact that he should term it thus perhaps reveals the Cold War habit of viewing mediated messages as being produced under controlled conditions, or even controlling conditions.

However, with more communicative technologies available than ever before, such as email, the World Wide Web, and increasingly accessible travel, researchers are in an enhanced position to address the “who” part of the media model by exploring the values and real-life work contexts of media producers through contact and substantive dialogue.

From a Transmission to a Cultural View of Media Production

Studying media-making as a culturally-situated process requires a careful consideration of the very fundamentals of how communication is conceived. Especially in exploring the producer side of the media, the way in which the communication process itself is modeled metaphorically has significant implications for how “control analysis” is conducted.

Dominant in the traditional American view of communication is the concept of communication as *transportation*, as in the locomotion of goods or ideas from one place to another. This view underpins classic American media theories such as the linear models suggested by Lasswell (1948) and Shannon and Weaver (1964), with their focus on reducing “noise” and maximizing communicated information, and it is still popular in mainstream American communication textbooks today (Gamble &

Gamble, 2005). The foundation of this model rests upon notions of moral order in which ideas and authority transcend space to spread the boundaries of political units and ideologies through space and time, as in today's concept of "battles for the hearts and minds" of people around the world. Carey (1989) notes that this view has deep roots in European and American colonization, in that "democratic migration in space was above all an attempt to trade an old world for a new and represented the profound belief that movement in space could be in itself a redemptive act. It is a belief that Americans have never quite escaped" (Carey, 1989, p. 15).

Ironically, however, this linear transmission view of communication also shares a similar footing with notions that are deeply rooted in Chinese civilization. The Chinese word for traffic or transportation, *jiaotong*, is frequently used to refer to communication, and Confucian notions of society usually situate communications within linear, hierarchical relationships—ruler and subject, teacher and student, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, and friend and friend. This conception of communication for the purpose of transmitting, imparting, and distributing correct views is not solely found in the West, but in fact has existed wherever a dominant society has sought to spread its world view among others.

Carey (1989) points out that

From the time upper and lower Egypt were unified under the First Dynasty down through the invention of the telegraph, transportation and communication were inseparably linked. Although messages might be centrally produced and controlled, through monopolization of writing or the rapid production of print, these messages, carried in the hands of a messenger

or between the bindings of a book, still had to be distributed, if they were to have their desired effect, by rapid transportation. The telegraph ended the identity but did not destroy the metaphor. Our basic orientation to communication remains grounded, at the deepest roots of our thinking, in the idea of transmission: communication is a process whereby messages are transmitted and distributed in space for the control of distance and people. (Carey, 1989, pp. 14-15)

Carey (1989) posits that this transmission view of communication is fundamental in Western cultures—perhaps in all industrial culture—and that the center of this idea rests on the transmission of signals or messages for the purpose of control. It is a view of communication that derives from one of the most ancient of human dreams: the desire to increase the speed and efficacy of messages as they travel in space.

Carey (1989) suggests, however, that there is an important theoretical alternative, namely, what he terms a “ritual view” of communication, wherein communication is likened less to linear transmission and rooted more in community life through notions such as “sharing,” “participation,” “association,” “fellowship,” and “the possession of a common faith.” Carey argues that communication may be conceptualized, not merely as the extension of messages in space, but as the maintenance of society in time. Thus, communicating is viewed not as the act of imparting information, but as a distillation of shared beliefs and experiences. Drawing on the symbolic interactionist paradigm, Carey suggests that to study

communication is to examine the actual social processes wherein significant symbolic forms are created, apprehended, and used.

Taking research in this direction commits us to the constructivist human action perspective on communication theory, in which humans are viewed as purposeful actors in a world of constructed symbols. People are both creators and apprehenders of meaning who “construct reality by interpreting the symbols they encounter; they create meaning with their constructions to make sense of the world” (Infante, Rancer, & Womack, 1997, p. 81). Because exchanges take place through symbols, it is necessary to study the rules or context learned within a society or culture and the way that these are then encoded into messages. It is important, therefore, to start with individuals, carefully examining the perceptual categories or *constructs* (Kelly, 1955) they create in search of meaning—“meaning” which, under Carey’s ritual view of communication, can then be processed and shared with a society through the media of mass communication.

To study media from a cultural perspective, it is important to bring out the human voice of the source as a key player in the creation and application of symbols in the shared process of meaning. Studying media under the classic transmission view is incomplete without a full understanding of the effect of both culture and context. Media scholars working cross-culturally thus need tools to identify and consider the values of mass communicators in a systematic, grounded, meaningful way. Stepping into the metaphorical “kitchens” wherein the “daily feed” is both consumed and created in a perpetually iterative process, it is possible to not only learn about how elements are selected and assembled, but to gain a seat at the “table”

where people gather, sustain themselves, and engage in culture-building at a fundamental level.

Gatekeeping Theory

Media research that addresses the process by which events and people in the world become “news” is called *gatekeeping*. Gatekeeping is the process “by which the vast array of potential news messages are winnowed, shaped, and prodded into those few that are actually transmitted in the news media” (Shoemaker, Eicholz, Kim, & Wrigley, 2001, p. 233). Most commonly, gatekeeping research examines the winnowing process by carefully observing the main decision points (or “gates”) at which potential news items are either admitted or halted as they pass along news channels from the source to a reporter to a series of editors to the general public. Gaye Tuchman (1978) calls this the “news net”—the gathering device, admittedly filled with holes, by which people troll the world of meaning for items to publish for others.

The father of gatekeeping theory, Kurt Lewin, died before his unfinished manuscript was published in 1947, in which he paired the terms gatekeeping and communication for the first time (Shoemaker, 1991). As a part of his larger work in field theory defining individual life spaces as causally connected to human social action (Hample, 1997), Lewin’s theory of channels and gatekeepers, as it came to be called, was developed as a means of understanding social changes in a community through the metaphor of food choices. Lewin pointed out that food reaches a family’s table through channels such as the garden, the grocery store, and the refrigerator. At each stage of the production process, decisions are made about harvesting, storage,

preparation, etc., and at any juncture an individual item may be accepted or rejected and never make it to the dinner table. The key to Lewin's analysis was the examination of forces acting upon the selection decisions made by the gatekeepers along the way, which Lewin felt could be measured and modeled psychologically in the same way that models of physical forces are used in physics. Although a physicist by training, Lewin (1951) made the connection of this application of field theory to communication when he wrote in another posthumously published manuscript that the gatekeeping process "holds not only for food channels but also for the traveling of a news item through certain communication channels in a group, for movement of goods, and the social locomotion of individuals in many organizations" (p. 187).

Lewin's gatekeeping theory was first notably applied in the classic "Mr. Gates" study by David Manning White (1950), who spent time with a small-city newspaper editor whom he dubbed "Mr. Gates," examining the rationale behind the decisions he made about individual news items. White had also been a journalist, a general assignment reporter at *The Times* in Davenport, Iowa in 1938, for the domestic news bureau of the Office of War Information during World War II, and as copy editor for the *Peoria Journal* in 1947. White received his doctorate in English from the University of Iowa, where he had been a close student of Wilbur Schramm, whom he described as "my mentor, my ego ideal, my friend" and whose conception of the sender/receiver model of communication White thoroughly internalized. (Reese and Ballinger, 2001). While at Iowa, White also became acquainted with Kurt Lewin and was influenced by his scientific approach to social-psychological "forces"

that he felt could be modeled mathematically in the same way that gravity could be. White's methodological orientation was shaped in an academic environment that conceived of the mediated communication process in linear terms, thus White undertook his famous Mr. Gates study as an early test of Lewin's theory. White recalled,

One day I happened to run across a paper by Kurt Lewin in which he coined the term "gatekeeper." I thought that the complex series of "gates" a newspaper report went through from the actual event to the finished story in a newspaper would make an interesting study, and thus pursued it. During the summer of 1947 I worked on the copy desk of the *Peoria Journal*, with primary responsibility for the editorial page... The next semester I began to "study" the way the same AP or UPI story appeared in a number of newspapers throughout the country. The genesis of what became my Gatekeeper study had begun, for I soon discerned quantitative (and qualitative) differences in the very same story. This meant that "gatekeepers" were operative, or so it seemed to me. (Reese & Ballinger, 2001, p. 646).

For this pioneering gatekeeper study, White enlisted the help of a wire editor for the *Peoria Star* to keep a record of his rationale for choosing stories from the wire services to print in his newspaper. The editor, dubbed "Mr. Gates," received approximately 12,000 inches of text from three news services per week, but selected only about one-tenth of that information, thus the basis of White's study centered on the editor's rationale for selecting certain stories over others. The reasons given by "Mr. Gates" for his preferences included such rejection criteria as "b.s." and

“propaganda,” and his tendency to accept stories was based on their “clarity,” “conciseness,” and “angle,” particularly those which were “slanted to conform to our editorial policies” (White, 1950, p. 390). White concluded that the editor’s choices showed “how highly subjective, how reliant upon value-judgments based on the gatekeeper’s own set of experiences, attitudes, and expectations the communication of ‘news’ really is” (White, 1950, p. 386).

Although White was clearly aware of the wide qualitative range of values that underpin a news worker’s decision-making process, he chose to focus his study on which stories and lines made it through the “gates” into the newspaper. This concern was likely due to influences he had received from Wilbur Schramm and Kurt Lewin at Iowa toward being able to model these forces mathematically. This dichotomous “yes/no” orientation is understandable in the context of early mass media research, when the dominant American models of the mediated communication process were largely linear and digital, along the lines of the engineering models proposed by early communication scholars such as Claude Shannon, Warren Weaver, and Norbert Wiener. These early theories “treated information as a general concept, which could be expressed mathematically and, thus, could unify questions in human communication, computers, biology, spanning across mass and interpersonal communication, regardless of the ‘channel’” (Reese & Ballinger, 2001, p. 643). This early tendency to conduct media research in nearly mathematical terms had to leave out much information about the dynamic context-bound personal forces at work in gatekeeping in order to simplify the process of understanding whether certain stories or facts made it through to publication or not.

Gatekeeping studies after White, such as those by Gieber (1956), McNelly (1959), Snider (1967), Bass (1969), and McQuail and Windahl (1981), kept with White's tradition of examining the news item selection process, focusing on the simple yes or no of whether an item was accepted or not. Although Chibnall's (1977) work did make the important theoretical leap of conceiving of news personnel as *creators* rather than mere *gatherers* of the news, gatekeeping theory still has not lived up to its potential of helping us understand the complexities of communicators' dynamic "life spaces," as proposed by Lewin.

Examining Producer Intent

Gans (1979) and Gitlin (1980) suggest that research addressing factors that influence journalistic decision-making can be organized into five basic approaches:

- 1) Mirror approach: Media content reflects a basically accurate depiction of social reality with little influence on the part of the journalist.
- 2) Communicator-centered approach: Media content is influenced by journalists' socialization and attitudes as formed by psychological, personal, political, and professional attitudes intrinsic to the individual journalist.
- 3) Organizational routine approach: Media content is influenced by the way workers are organized and trained within their organizations.
- 4) Social forces approach: Media content is driven by factors external to both the communicator and the organization, namely social, economic, and cultural forces inherent in the media market.

5) Ideological approach: Media content is influenced by the ideology of those in power in society, who directly or indirectly drive mass media content through hegemonic pressures that ensure status quo interests will be upheld.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) provide seminal work comprehensively exploring these various sources of influence on media content, yet in characterizing intrinsic forces acting on the individual journalist, they focus mainly on gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity (i.e., minority groups within the United States), to the exclusion of issues of culture related to national origin. For Shoemaker and Reese (1996), the nation as a variable is linked more to market context insofar as media markets are controlled and regulated by government strictures, and although some other nations are mentioned in passing, the bulk of focus goes to characterizing the media landscape of the United States.

Because internal, organizational, external, and ideological factors do not act as discrete, unconnected factors on decision-making, but rather interact in complex ways that may be difficult for a journalist to articulate, this study temporarily suspends these labels for the purpose of focusing on taking the journalist's perspective. Although the approach in this study is largely communicator-centered in that the analysis takes place at the level of the individual communicator, it does seek to inductively link journalistic decision-making to broader issues involving organizations, nations, and ultimately ideologies. However, rather than being a study of mass media *content*, this project is a qualitative examination of producer *intent*, seeking to ground terms in concepts that journalists themselves choose to articulate.

Extending Gatekeeping

The recent work of Shoemaker et al. (2001) typifies traditional gatekeeping research by describing news items as having “forces” that “either facilitate or constrain their passage through the gatekeeping process” (p. 233). They characterize these forces as varying in intensity as well as in polarity, i.e., having varying degrees of positive or negative valence. For a story to pass through a news gate, it must have a sufficiently positive valence and intensity to project it through whatever limitations on capital or resources may be required to produce or air it. These forces can be examined at many different levels of analysis, such as individuals, routines of communication work, organizational characteristics, social institutions, and the overall social system, but the theoretical conception of forces at work in the gatekeeping process has placed the force within the news item itself. A news item is deemed *newsworthy* if the positive force behind it is high enough to make it through various gates in the news channel. This places the theoretical emphasis on the message instead of the meaning, and on the product instead of the producer and his or her “life space.”

Although significant work has been done on the decisions made by message producers within media organizations (Allan, 1999; Chan, 2002; Dayan & Katz, 1992; Epstein, 1973; Fishman, 1980; Franklin & Murphy, 1998; Galtung & Ruge, 1981; Gans, 1979; Hartley & Montgomery, 1985; Hofstetter, 1976; Jacobs, 1996; Pozner, 1991; Reese, 1991; Roshco, 1975; Scott, 1994; Tuchman, 1978; Turow, 1983; Xu., 2000), few studies on producer intentions appear to have been conducted cross-culturally, especially with cultures that have been distant as a result of the Cold

War. Instead, assumptions about what others intend are based on interpretations of their programming, as in content and framing analysis. Because the underpinnings of gatekeeping research characterize newsworthiness as existing within pieces of news themselves, few tools exist to examine cultural or contextual factors that affect how news is created and shaped into “food for thought” by different media producers around the world.

Recent studies are beginning to critically examine the intercultural validity of the newsworthiness concept, because, as Schwarz (2005) pointed out, “Comprehensive and comparative empirical studies within the context of news factors and newsworthiness that examine this problem are rare” (p. 2). In his examination of German and Mexican newspapers, Schwarz found weak support for hypotheses about the correlation between empirically-designated newsworthiness factors, news selection, and the space and prominence assigned for stories, both textually and visually, although qualitative differences between Mexican and German orientations to potential and actual problem-solving were apparent. Tai (2000) found cultural and contextual differences in news selection rankings among mainland Chinese, Taiwanese, and Japanese editors, and Hanitzsch (2004) found cultural differences in self-perception and role behavior among journalists within the culturally heterogeneous country of Indonesia. However, because studies such as these are conducted from an external gatekeeping perspective, still few tools are available with which to understand journalists’ values as contextually situated. Without terms grounded solidly within the reasoning processes of the journalists themselves,

contextual understanding of the effect of culture on the communication process is limited.

From Newsworthiness to Strategic Decision-Making

Although the gatekeeping paradigm has been successfully applied to describe the process of news selection, it still is lacking in sufficient richness to fully characterize the complex, multilayered process of media production. In his explication of the gatekeeping paradigm, Lewin (1951) describes gatekeeping in food terms as the process by which *each individual item* of food makes it to a family's table. "Do I keep this item or throw it away? Do I keep that item or throw it away?" However, anyone who has ever prepared a meal knows that cooking is much more artful and complex; humans do not operate digitally via yes or no. Thus, a fuller vocabulary is needed to describe the multi-faceted strategic decisions made in not only *selecting*, but also in *preparing* a message for the consumption of others.

Previous studies delineating factors or forces that influence journalistic decision-making, consistent with White's (1950) early Mr. Gates study, have focused mainly on newsworthiness, the basic yes/no of story selection. One classic example is the pioneering work in the study of newsworthiness factors conducted by Galtung and Ruge (1965), who explored the news values of editors at four newspapers in Norway. Their now oft-cited model was published around the same time as Shannon and Weaver's (1964) classic linear noise-reduction framework: Information source → Message → Transmitter → Signal → Channel → Receiver. In their conceptualization, Galtung and Ruge (1965) used a telecommunications metaphor that identified the actual message source as a signal (as in a radio signal) that either

would or would not be recorded by a media agency and delivered to the news-consuming public based on factors inherent within the message itself.

Galtung and Ruge's (1970) framework suggests the following:

Imagine the world can be likened to an enormous set of broadcasting stations, each one emitting its signal or its programme at its proper wavelength.... The set of world events, then, is like a cacophony of sound one gets by scanning the dial of one's radio receiver, and ... becomes meaningful only if one station is tuned in and listened to for some time before one switches to the next one.

(Galtung & Ruge, 1970, p. 261)

Based on this metaphorical framework, the pioneering propositions set forth by Galtung and Ruge (1965) imply that the forces propelling messages to be consumed are inherent within the messages themselves, as in physical forces that operate according to an objective set of standards. Their propositions focus on the signal or message rather than the news producer.

- 1) Frequency: If the frequency of the signal is outside the dial it will not be recorded.
- 2) Threshold: The stronger the signal, the greater the amplitude, the more probable that it will be recorded as worth listening to.
- 3) Unambiguity: The more clear and unambiguous the signal (the less noise there is), the more probable it will be recorded as worth listening to.
- 4) Meaningfulness: The more meaningful the signal, the more probable that it will be recorded as worth listening to.

- 5) Consonance: The more consonant the signal is with the mental image of what one expects to find, the more probable that it will be recorded as worth listening to.
- 6) Unexpectedness: The more unexpected the signal, the more probable that will be recorded as worth listening to.
- 7) Continuity: If one signal has been tuned in to the more likely it will continue to be tuned into as worth listening to.
- 8) Composition: The more a signal has been tuned into, the more probable that a different kind of signal will be recorded as worth listening to.
- 9) Reference to elite nations: The more an event concerns elite nations, the more probable that it will become a news item.
- 10) Reference to elite people: The more the event concerns elite people, the more probable that it will become a news item.
- 11) Reference to persons: The more the event can be seen in personal terms, as due to the action of specific individuals, the more probable that it will become a news item.
- 12) Reference to something negative: The more negative the event in its consequences, the more probable that it will become a news item.

(Galtung & Ruge, 1965)

In providing these propositions, no information is provided about the method Galtung and Ruge used to devise these newsworthiness factors. They state that to test the validity of their propositions, “the proper thing to do would be to observe journalists at work or radio listeners operating with the dial—and we have no such

data. For want of this the factors should be anchored in general reasoning and social science findings,” although the latter they provide only in endnotes “since they are not essential to our reasoning” (Galtung & Ruge, 1970, p. 262). In other words, the newsworthiness factors on which much of the extant gatekeeping literature is based are not derived from the perspectives of journalists.

By 1974, almost ten years after the publication of Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) study, Chaudhary (1974) reviewed the gatekeeping literature to date and discovered that there had not been “any comprehensive, systematic studies on comparative news judgment on any two countries” (p. 236). She set out to examine the influence of culture on perceptions of newsworthiness factors by comparing a sample of thirty English-speaking journalists from the U.S. and India according to their ranking of news headlines. Chaudhary performed her analysis of nine newsworthiness factors: *timeliness, proximity, human interest, impact, conflict, prominence, novelty, sensationalism, and unusualness*, although she provided no reasoning or justification for selecting these nine factors other than that they had appeared in (unspecified) textbooks. As a result of the research, Chaudhary (1974) found that American and Indian gatekeepers used similar criteria for selecting news based on headlines, and concluded that, at least in the case of the U.S. and India, “English language newspapers in democratic countries, even though they may be culturally quite dissimilar, use the same news values, and their newsmen use similar criteria in their judgment” (p. 246). Despite this general similarity of criteria, however, Chaudhary did find that American and Indian reporters differed in their rating of stories for *human interest, impact, prominence, novelty, and sensationalism*, and that they

interpreted *conflict* differently. She also noted that education and experience appeared to exert an effect across cultures on different rankings on the factors of *timeliness, proximity, sensationalism, novelty, and conflict*. Thus, Chaudhary's work forms the basis for an expectation that there may be cultural differences in news judgment, and that educational and experiential factors should be given consideration for their effect on news judgment. However, in terms of specific findings, the lack of grounding within this small sample size and the fact that the journalists were operating in English-speaking cultures in which democratic ideals are emphasized sheds limited light on the issue of how and why culture may influence news selection.

Five years later, Peterson (1979) applied Galtung and Ruge's newsworthiness factors to examine the news selection behavior of journalists working both at home and abroad for *The Times* (London) using a set of ten "properties of events" as news values: *frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness (cultural proximity and relevance), domestic news, consonance, unexpectedness, elitism, personalization, and negativity*. A survey was administered to 73 home office staff, staff correspondents, and stringers (part-time or freelance correspondents), asking them to rank the newsworthiness of potential news items. Peterson hypothesized that home office staff would select events with higher objective newsworthiness scores than stringers without a European or North American background. Although the findings revealed slight differences by the values of *consonance, meaningfulness, domestic news, and personalization*, a majority of the respondents selected events with higher newsworthiness as suggested by Galtung and Ruge (1965). A more detailed analysis of the respondents' origin showed that cultural differences between sub-groups did

explain disagreement more than did their organizational positions, but because of the nature of the survey method, no culturally grounded theory was developed.

Nonetheless, these results were sufficient for Peterson (1979) to conclude that “Newsmen socialized to the news norms of Europe and North America, but born and educated in other parts of the world, diverge somewhat in their news norms” (p. 125), giving support to the notion that *culture* has an effect on communication criteria.

Lange (1984) took this line of research a step further, by examining the effect of national development on perceptions of newsworthiness by comparing headlines from domestic newspapers in the U.S., England, South Africa, Rhodesia, Kenya, Zambia, Ghana, and Uganda. The eight newsworthiness factors he used for the study were *direct exhortation, orientation toward the future, cooperation, positive evaluation, involvement of elites, positive news of government officials, positive evaluation of news subjects, and personalization*. Lange discovered that the less developed countries published significantly more domestic news stories with *direct exhortation, orientation toward the future, positive evaluation, involvement of elites, and personalization* than more developed countries. Lange concluded that a nation’s level of development does strongly affect perceptions of what constitutes proper news, although because the study was conducted through content analysis of headlines without the involvement of actual journalists, no theory was drawn to explain the findings. Lange (1984) noted that his study “does not assume conscious intent on the part of journalists or their bosses,” because “indeed, most people are only dimly aware of the connections that their cultural values make between environment and behavior” (p. 83). Thus, although this study provided reason to

correlate news judgment with national development, this research was not positioned to offer grounded answers as to why.

More recently, Allan (1999) reviewed the extant media literature and gleaned a comprehensive list of 12 newsworthiness factors that were most consistently cited between studies: *conflict, relevance, timeliness, simplification, personalization, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite persons, cultural specificity, and negativity*. Newsworthiness factors such as these have endured since the 1960s because they have a degree of predictive power and have proven useful in accounting for newsroom decision-making behavior. However, they are limited in that they imply a lesser degree of agency on the part of the journalist, conveying the assumption that there is something obvious and inherent *in the piece of news itself* that makes it worthy of being broadcast. However, as sociologists Molotch and Lester (1974) point out, there are no free-standing newsworthy events “out there,” only occurrences that are promoted to the status of “events” through how they are presented to the public, often via the media.

The newsworthiness approach leaves little room for characterizing creative, constructive engagement on the part of the journalist. The received newsworthiness factors that media scholars continue to work with are limited in that they cannot account for the full range of prosocial engagement on the part of the reporter, such as individual aesthetic sense or a desire for one’s work to positively affect the lives of the audience. In other words, the current approach leaves insufficient room for the human judgment or values of the communicator. Thus, attention should be removed from the message for a moment, for the sake of looking back to the beginning of

Lasswell's media model, from the "Says what" of the message to the "Who" that is communicating, to more fully account for the subtle human forces at work in media decision-making.

Little agreement is evident in the media literature on a definitive set of newsworthiness factors that can be tested across cultures. Because most of the research conducted to date has been performed quantitatively using the traditional "yes/no" gatekeeping formula, and because the newsworthiness factors were determined in a relative vacuum by each researcher, few tools are available with which to systematize research on producer intent in various cultures and settings. Thus, to address the entire repertoire of taste that media producers may draw from to make their stories appealing to their audiences, the lists of newsworthiness factors utilized so far should be reworked to account for the *strategic presentational style* of those who produce them.

To understand what makes newsworthiness worthy, media workers should be consulted on why things like *simplification* and *personalization* count as strategic factors. What is it about *conflict* that makes a piece interesting to readers? Speaking of *relevance* means relevance to what, or to whom? To the agency's agenda, to someone's conception of the current flow of news events, to the everyday lives of media consumers? Why is *reference to elite nations* important? Listening to the discourse of journalists provides meaningful insight into culturally influenced processes at work.

The Journalist within the Value Environment

Because journalists usually execute their work within organizations, and because communication patterns exist within organizations that form expectations for role relations, human interaction, and stated or unstated organizational values and goals, it is important that a journalist's organizational environment be taken as a level of culture. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) define an organization a formally-structured entity that is "goal-directed, composed of interdependent parts, and bureaucratically structured—members perform specialized functions, in standardized roles" (p. 144). Although the primacy of economic goals is often considered to provide the most salient directive for media organizations (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Turow, 1984; Bagdikian, 1992; Epstein, 1973; Auletta, 1994), larger ideological concerns also influence expectations at the societal level, governing "the way we perceive our world and ourselves," controlling "what we see as 'natural' or 'obvious'" (Becker, 1984, p. 69).

Stuart Hall (1989) points out that it is the media's ability to "define" situations that gives them their ideological power. Yet what paradigms "define" situations in the minds of media workers themselves? Political economists such as Murdock and Golding (1977) argue that analysis of underlying values in news production must give attention to the economic context as well as the class base of control mechanisms governing organizational funding, mandates, and policy. As Altheide (1976) notes, "the organizational, practical, and other mundane features of newswork promote a way of looking at events which fundamentally distorts them" (p. 24).

For the purposes of this study, journalists are studied at a level that, at least in immediate terms, seems to dissociate them from their organizations for the purposes of examining a fuller range of possible influences on the intent that underlies their strategic presentational decision-making. However, as patterns emerge that illuminate the role conceptions and constraints that drive the ways journalists craft stories for the consumption of others, organizational and ideological patterns can be observed inductively that link this work to studies that take the organization or nation as the level of analysis.

Research Rationale

The traditional focus in gatekeeping research is to conceive of psychological forces and role relationships in quantifiable, analytical terms, a tendency heavily influenced by the prevailing methodologies of the early days in which this theoretical orientation emerged. However, this study suggests that this research may be enhanced by a more thorough exploration of context and values guiding not only yes/no gatekeeping choices, but also strategic decisions about *how* messages are crafted and why.

Speaking metaphorically using Tuchman's (1978) "news net" metaphor, this study moves beyond examining what comes home in gatherers' nets. Examining the gatekeeping process from the perspective of newsworthiness values implies that the food jumps into the net itself based on the "forces" inherent in its own makeup. However, to better understand the cultural and contextual factors that bear on news decisions from day to day in newsrooms around the world, it is important to also

consider the needs of those who make the nets and plan the trajectory of the gathering expeditions to better understand what public communicators seek to catch and why.

With the present-day ability to communicate directly with media producers worldwide, better tools are needed to explore the process by which meaning is made and coded into media messages across cultures. Knowing *whether* a message is to be broadcast is helpful, but understanding *how* and *why* it is to be presented is another issue altogether. The creative environment in which newsmakers produce meaning is dynamic, so the tools used to understand the process must be similarly open and dynamic, as well.

Chapter 3: The Development of International Broadcasting

The Origins of Propaganda

Communication that functions to disseminate knowledge or promote particular ideas may be known by a variety of names—education, persuasion, advertising, propaganda, indoctrination, even brainwashing. The term applied to describe disseminative communication inherently implies a degree of political commentary. What is perceived to be the intent of the communicator? Do we or do we not agree with that perceived intention? Among the various types of disseminative communication, this study looks closely at the concept of propaganda because of its frequent linkage with popular conceptions of international broadcasting throughout the history of mass media. The world's earliest transnational broadcasting infrastructures were constructed and funded to meet wartime political ends, thus the very act of speaking into an official microphone to be heard across the planet was largely considered throughout the 20th century to be an act of propaganda. Yet is this the intention of those who go to work each day to do just that? In order to demarcate a cross-culturally agreeable set of parameters that may be fruitfully applied across contexts, it is necessary to investigate how the concept of propaganda has evolved over time in Western and Eastern cultures.

The term *propaganda*, as it is used today in modern American society, carries a sinister connotation of mindful deception for the purpose of political exploitation. However, it was not always so. The concept of propaganda, in fact, evolved in the decidedly mainstream religious climate of early 17th Century Rome, when the reigning Pope, Gregory XV, convened a conference of cardinals charged with leading a counter-offensive to the Protestant Reformation. The mission of this “Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide” (Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith) was “to re-conquer by spiritual arms, by prayer and good works, by preaching and catechising, the countries... lost to the Church in the debacle of the 16th century and to organize into an efficient corps the numerous missionary enterprises for the diffusion of the gospel in pagan lands” (Guilday, 1921, p. 480).

The “Propaganda,” to which this congregation came to be referred colloquially, quickly became one of the most powerful arms of the Catholic Church. The young “propagandists,” as alumni of the Propaganda college were called, developed great affection for the congregation and called it their “great mother.” Thus, the concept of propaganda “found its birth in a wave of tremendous emotion and devoted energy” (Jackall, 1995, p. 1).

Connotations of Propaganda

The literal Latin definition of propaganda is “to propagate” or “to sow,” but the early association of such propagation with the spread of the Catholic faith and overt opposition to Protestantism caused the concept to lose its neutrality and carry a pejorative meaning, at least for those in largely Protestant cultures. (It is interesting to note that propaganda simply means “advertising” in modern Spanish.) Over time,

the American notion of propaganda came to carry an unmistakably negative connotation, as defined for instance in Brande's 1842 *Dictionary of Science, Literature, and Arts* as "a term of reproach to secret associations for the spread of opinions and principles which are viewed by most governments with horror and aversion." By the 20th century, "propaganda" was known in the English language as a communicative tactic of dictators such as Hitler and Lenin, characters indeed viewed by citizens of the Allied nations with "horror and aversion," thus establishing the modern American notion of propaganda as a dangerous vehicle of mass manipulation.

However, this usage of the term is far from universal. The People's Republic of China, for instance, openly boasts as a major part of its government a powerful Department of Propaganda (宣传部, *XuanChuanBu*) with influential branches at all levels of society. This department is officially described by the Chinese government as "a movement of the liberated people to educate and reform themselves by democratic methods of learning, serving as the political foundation for our general cultural and educational work" (Kuo, 1950, p. 2). For Chinese, propaganda (*xuanchuan*) is usually described as a neutral term, and the phenomenon of propaganda is considered to be a natural part of life, "an absolute necessity and a powerful tool for governing" (Yang, 1994, p. 18). Although modern Chinese, coming into greater contact with Western communication theory, are more often translating *xuanchuan* as "publicity" rather than "propaganda," it is widely agreed that this shift in terminology is more an act of communication accommodation than a substantive change in ideological sensibilities.

Definitions of propaganda around the world tend to center on the purpose, technique, or outcome of the communication in question. Definitions can range from the very brief and general, such as “organized persuasion” (DeVito, 1986, p. 239), to long and specific, such as “the world of large organizations or groups to win over the public for special interests through a massive orchestration of attractive conclusions packaged to conceal both their persuasive purpose and lack of sound supporting reasons” (Sproule, 1994, p. 8). Jowett and O’Donnell (1999) provide a fruitful definition of propaganda as “the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist” (p. 6).

To begin, then, to be called propaganda, communication must by definition be deliberate, intentional, crafted willfully to convey a message. (Whether or not that message is received as intended is a different matter.) This considered mindfulness implies systematic care with regard to the creation of the message(s), whether on the individual, organizational, or even national level. In terms of purpose, propaganda is often “associated with control and is regarded as a deliberate attempt to alter or maintain a balance of power that is advantageous to the propagandist” (Jowett & O’Donnell, 1999, p. 3).

The Development of Western Broadcasting

Although it would be convenient to lump the East and the West into neat categories, of course the political, social, and cultural realities defy such a generalization. Yet for the purposes of this study, it is necessary to at least draw some basic parameters that allow us to engage in cross-cultural analysis. Thus, this

study will focus on two general groupings: *Chinese* (comprising the PRC, Taiwan, and Hong Kong), and *Western* (meaning, for the sake of this study, the U.S. and Britain). Although significant differences are recognized between the U.S. and the U.K., for the purposes of this research they are taken together for their shared general history of liberal democracy, individual rights, market capitalism, and a free sphere of public discourse. In later studies, more fine-tuned differences should be examined between media produced in Washington or London, for instance, or between politico-social differences in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, but for the purposes of this research, some generalizations across West and East are made to investigate whether there are distinct differences in Eastern and Western approaches to media.

Western media systems are often regarded as being the world's leading exemplars of the liberal values of free expression, personal freedom, individual rights, and open debate (Sopiee, 1997). Not only has this freedom—be it personal, political, religious, economic, or philosophical—been forged at the core of post-Enlightenment Western thought, but this trend was intensified with the formation of the United States, as freedoms yearned for in Europe were codified into American legal and social practice (Hiebert & Gibbons, 2000).

Evidence abounds, however, that the ancient Greeks, particularly Alexander the Great, were experts at using the means of public discourse to achieve official purposes, not to mention that the communication strategies of imperial Rome, the Crusades, the British and Soviet Empires, Napoleonic France, and of course Hitler's Third Reich further testify that Westerners are no strangers to making and maintaining power and fortune by careful use of public communication (Jowett &

O'Donnell, 1999). America, as a classic modern society founded on post-Enlightenment Protestant values, has been more tolerant of propaganda as a commercial than a governmental force. Most modern American work on the subject (such as Black, 2001; Cunningham, 2001; Baker & Martinson, 2001) casts propaganda in negative terms, fueled by a postmodern, almost despairing Ellulian belief in the dark inevitability of propaganda as a symptom of our fragmenting global society.

British International Broadcasting

Although early technological advances in the use of broadcast technology took off mostly quickly in the United States, it was leading figures in Great Britain who first realized the potential of using the airwaves as a means of consciously purveying culture and information. Throughout World War I, the British government had resisted the plea of wireless manufacturers to promote the sales of their receivers by allowing for the transmission of regular programming, but by the end of the war in 1918, it was impossible to resist the tide of popular interest in the medium. In 1922, the British Broadcasting Company was granted a license by the British Post Office and began broadcasting in the U.K. with funding from three sources: the original stock, the royalties on wireless sets sold by manufacturers, and a share of revenue from broadcast receiving licenses which the Post Office collected from the listening public (Crisell, 1997).

The first person to be appointed general manager of the new network was a 34-year-old engineer named John C. Reith, an austere Scot of Calvinist upbringing with no prior experience in broadcasting. He had previously served as an army

officer and a manager of an engineering works in Glasgow, and it was said, “He ruled with a rod of iron from the first day of his appointment as general manager” (Wood, 1992, p. 32).

Reith believed passionately that it was God’s will that he was in charge of British broadcasting, and that it was his destiny. He also believed that monopoly in the case of broadcasting was a virtue, and it gave him the duty to choose and broadcast the kind of programme he thought was good for the British public—rather than the kind of programmes the general public might have chosen for themselves. ... The wearing of evening dress by the station announcers, although it had always been general practice, now became compulsory; this was one of Reith’s first changes as director general. (Wood, 1992, p. 35)

Along with Reith, the BBC was placed under the control of a board of governors, “persons of judgment and independence,” and the terms of the Royal Charter under which the BBC was created made it clear that “broadcasting was seen from the outset as an instrument for serving the interests of the government” (Wood, 1992, p. 33).

Although part of the BBC’s establishment was to help stimulate the sales of wireless receivers, the network was not founded solely to make a commercial profit—indeed, the governmental licensing fee arrangement had been crafted to cushion the company against such a need. Rather, Reith and his contemporaries envisioned the use of broadcasting as a public service to “teach and train” the listening audience in

music, literature, film, drama, and the arts. Initially, no news was permitted to be broadcast on the airwaves, but remained within the purview of British press barons.

In 1927, the British Broadcasting Company became the British Broadcasting Corporation under Royal Charter to “inform, educate, and entertain; to report the proceedings of parliament; to provide a political balance; and in a national emergency to broadcast government messages” (Crisell, 1997, p. 22). The BBC was neither to editorialize nor to carry any advertising, and it was specifically mandated from the outset to strive to maintain a position of editorial independence. By the same year, Reith had convinced parliament of the great potential of the BBC to communicate with Britain’s far-flung empire, and shortwave transmitters were erected to broadcast the BBC’s signal around the world. Regular service throughout the British Empire was established by 1932 with the sound of Big Ben and “London calling” as the signature trademark that identified all broadcasts of the empire service—which went out in English, of course.

By 1935, under pressure from the radio propaganda of Hitler’s Germany and Mussolini’s Italy, the BBC began to realize that an Empire Service was no longer enough, and in 1937 the House of Commons voted to begin countering totalitarian propaganda by “the widespread dissemination of news and information,” (Wood, 1992, p. 40). Overseas broadcasts in languages other than English were assembled and commenced under threat of war in 1938. At this time, the Empire Service was restructured to be cut off from funding by the domestic license fee and instead funded by a parliamentary grant paid through the Foreign Office, an arrangement that continues today.

During this sensitive early period in international broadcasting, the British took pains to separate notions of information and propaganda. Although most other countries in the world called their information departments “ministries of propaganda,” in Britain it was called the Ministry of Information. Throughout World War II, the BBC had complete monopoly over news broadcasting, and because by 1939 Britain was well involved in the war, the Ministry of Information was responsible for funneling all news through a variety of censors at the Foreign Office and within the MOI itself. Thus, before any piece of news reached the BBC’s studios, it had been subject to much screening and vetting. It was said at the time that BBC news “was intended to act like a bromide instead of a thought stimulator—some described it as chloroforming the people” (Wood, 1992, p. 54). However, “the British public were educated to associate Britain with truth and the enemy with propaganda, concealing the origins of the word with faith and truth” (Wood, 1992, p. 61).

However, during World War II, the British government under Churchill stepped fully into the mainstream of propaganda warfare. One of the best-kept secrets of the time was the secret subsidy agreement between the British government and Reuters press, signed in 1938, under which Reuters agreed to transmit fabricated news from the British government in exchange for payments. The first sum of £64,000 was received by Reuters in 1940 for “propaganda services” (Wood, 1992, p. 55). Despite its early active (and lucrative) role in the peddling of government propaganda, Reuters has been able throughout the years to project and maintain an image of honesty and neutrality.

During the Cold War, international broadcasting by the Allied powers expanded as a result of two main developments—the Soviet attainment of nuclear weaponry, and the successful launching of broadcast satellites that significantly enhanced the reach of broadcasts around the world. In 1965, Britain’s external broadcasting efforts came to be known as the BBC World Service, which expanded through the 1960s, suffered cuts after the 1973 oil crisis, and then expanded over 60% from a listening audience of 75 million in 1980 to over 120 million in 1990 (Wood, 1992, p. 4).

Today, the BBC World Service goes out twenty-four hours a day in English plus 40 other languages to a confirmed weekly audience of over 130 million in over 90 countries, providing approximately half of its time in news and half in music, drama, and sports. In terms of content, “until recently the government determined the languages in which the BBC broadcast and the length of its transmissions, but the Corporation has always kept editorial control” (Criswell, 1997, p. 23). Studies show the BBC to be the most well-known and respected international broadcaster in the world, and most believe “the key to its success lies in its image as an independent voice in the world, not the voice of the British government” (Wood, 1992, p. 4).

U.S. International Broadcasting

The term *propaganda* entered modern American usage in 1918 (Jowett & O’Donnell, 1989), soon after World War I, and some of the earliest studies of this modern mass phenomenon were carried out on the communications of Adolf Hitler. It is no wonder that, given the dominant transmission view of communication predominant in U.S. academic circles at the time (Carey, 1989), early propaganda

research would take on a decidedly linear “effects” approach (Lasswell, 1948), in a climate of general apprehension over the manipulative uses toward which mass communication could be employed. Funding for propaganda research throughout the 20th century was provided mostly by official governmental organizations, and despite early public education efforts (such as the 1937 “How to Detect Propaganda” campaign), the U.S. government clearly jumped into the propaganda parade itself with such early efforts as the WWI Committee on Public Information (CPI). This committee, under the leadership of politician George Creel, worked to convey the message of WWI as an idealistic war fought to ensure the worldwide triumph of democracy through all the classic modes of propaganda: press releases, interviews with CPI spokesmen, cartoons based on the Creel Committee’s ‘Bulletin for Cartoonists,’ advertisements, war posters, CPI flyers stuffed in workers’ pay envelopes, the academic “National School Service” curricula, war films, public ‘Four-minute-men’ talks, war expositions, and “Americanization” committees aimed at new immigrants, particularly those from non-British backgrounds (Sproule, 1989).

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s as commercial radio flourished in the U.S., other Western powers were discovering the uses of short-wave technology for sending information over long distances to people in other countries. Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and Germany all began in 1927 to erect short-wave towers for the specific purpose of broadcasting information (as opposed to entertainment), and by 1929 the Soviet Union’s Radio Moscow had commenced broadcasting external programs in French, English, and German. After Hitler’s rise to power in the 1930s, shortwave towers began broadcasting the voice of Nazi Germany to all parts of the

world, and in the mid 1930s, Italy became the first nation to begin broadcasting in Arabic. Although short-wave technology had been pioneered and developed in America for commercial purposes, by 1938 it had become established throughout Europe as essential in the conduct of foreign affairs.

The U.S. was thus a relative latecomer to the world of external broadcasting. Covering the early days of World War II in Europe as an American observer was CBS' Edward R. Murrow in London, with William Shirer in Berlin. Noting the development of radio broadcasting in Europe as an instrument of political propaganda, Murrow commented:

Everyone broadcasts in any language save their own... New and more powerful transmitters are being constructed in order that nation may hurl invective to nation... Radio crosses boundaries and there is no one to inspect its baggage. Propaganda is a legacy of war, and since lying is an attribute of war it is quite natural that the word should play an important part in this war that is going on in the air today. There does not exist, in my opinion, such a thing as a broadcasting station without propaganda on the rights of monarchy or the status quo. We can make propaganda of more tangible things such as cigarettes or automobiles. Individuals may suffer from smoking too many cigarettes or from buying too many automobiles, but these troubles are hardly to be classed with the suffering from the acceptance of an ideal, or a political objective. (Wood, 1992, p. 51)

Under this view, throughout the golden age of American broadcasting in the 1930s, political propaganda was consciously kept at arm's length. With the

December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, however, the U.S. State Department decided that a strong American voice was needed on the international airwaves, and the Voice of America began broadcasting seventy-nine days later. In the midst of such a decidedly charged international environment, the United States made its entry onto the world stage with a classic opening statement by broadcaster William Harlan Hale that continues to echo in the halls at VOA today: “We bring you Voices from America. Today, and daily from now on, we shall speak to you about America and about the war. The news may be good for us. The news may be bad. But we shall tell you the truth” (Heil, 2003, p. 32).

The Office of War Information (OWI) was propelled into action by the tide of wartime fervor, and by 1942 had begun broadcasting to Europe, the Middle East, South America, and East Asia. Entering a high-stakes propaganda war with both Japan and Germany, the American side enlisted the aid of public relations firms and of Hollywood, signing up celebrities by the dozen.

Extraordinarily talented journalists, war refugees, dramatists, poets, philosophers, theater producers, radio announcers, musicians, artists, linguists, and bureaucrats suddenly were thrust together overnight in crowded makeshift offices and studios in New York. They and their early successors had before them a fundamental goal: to win the war. (Heil, 2003, p. 33).

The main question at VOA, both then and now, was how to best serve the interests of the United States—through purveying policy or by serving up straight news? Because America was the last major power to broadcast internationally and because of deeply mixed American sentiments about the role of international

broadcasting, an ambivalent sense of restlessness was formed at the core of America's voice on the global airwaves. American propaganda had emerged, for sure, but for the sake of the ideological safety of the American people, it was decided that VOA and other government-funded external broadcasters could only be heard overseas.

Post-WWII, the Truman administration authorized the U.S.'s first non-wartime propaganda effort with the 1950 "Campaign of Truth," which led into Eisenhower's 1953 Jackson Commission, charged with overseeing the U.S.'s communication efforts abroad. Significantly, operating under the liberal American notion that the U.S. government should be restricted from directly utilizing mass media to propagandize its own people, but still needing to use mass communication to further foreign policy goals abroad (especially with the gradual intensification of the Cold War), the Jackson Commission was faced with a difficult tension. There was conflict between the mandate to simply convey objective "truth" to an overseas audience, and the more pragmatic view supported by the work of communication scholars about how to make communications "effective." This dialectical tension was resolved, for all intents and purposes, by the creation of separate venues within the U.S.'s International Broadcasting Bureau, the Voice of America (which was mandated to be more "dignified" in presenting straight news) and the more aggressive services of Radio Liberty, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Free Asia (Parry-Giles, 1993). Thus, surprising to many Americans, communication research throughout the Cold War was utilized to further a great number of pragmatic political ends by the U.S. government.

Within a media context, although there are indeed some governmentally imposed strictures on what may or may not be broadcast to a mass audience, particularly within government-funded outlets like VOA, Western values nevertheless manifest themselves in a variety of ways throughout the entire media system, sometimes overtly and often quite subtly. Gans (1979) has suggested that U.S. journalists share a set of enduring social values, hard to categorize as either “liberal” or “conservative,” which guide their production of news. He names the following: *altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, ethnocentrism, individualism, moderatism, social order, and national leadership*. These values are encoded time and again into narratives that simply “make sense” in the West, stories that portray in myriad ways how not only individualism leads to achievement, but how the emphasis on individual rights above collective rights is simply “the American way.” Collectives and their institutions are often portrayed as the enemies of individuals, thus they need to be fought and overcome (Larson & Bailey, 1998).

The Development of Chinese Broadcasting

Classic Western conceptions of propaganda, based in a Western liberal democratic (Protestant-based) approach to the public sphere, are decidedly negative. However, in China, with its ancient Confucian roots and modern political system based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism, no such negative implications exist, except where imported from the West.

Pre-revolutionary Chinese Media

The annals of Chinese media date as far back as recorded history itself, with early evidence of Chinese writing on shells and pottery having been dated back to

about 5000 BC. Although Chinese are considered the first to have pioneered the communication technologies of paper and woodblock printing, it seems that the printed word as a form of mass communication was slow to develop in China, perhaps because of low literacy rates resulting from the complexity of learning Chinese characters within China's largely agrarian feudal society.

Early Chinese publications catered to the intellectual and merchant elite, and beginning in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), competing publishers printed court-related news gazettes from hand-carved blocks for sale to members of the literate aristocracy who might concern themselves with the business of the imperial city (Bishop, 1989). From earliest recorded Chinese history, an emperor's scrutiny of the printed word and his control of ideas and authors was considered an inalienable part of the imperial mandate.

In the latter half of the 1770's, while the newly freed United States was experiencing the dawn of political liberalism under the leadership of George Washington, in China the Qianlong Emperor was overseeing the examination of Chinese books, selecting which to imperially mandate for inclusion in master collections while slating others for destruction. After making an unspecified error in judgment, an unfortunate author of this period was executed and 21 members of his family enslaved, followed by the execution of the provincial governor who had supported the publication (Fairbank, 1990). Having developed over 3,500 years since the early Shang dynasty, the potentialities of authoritarian state control over the printed word became strict and absolute in China.

As the sovereignty of the emperor eroded under influence from foreign traders and colonialists during the 19th century, Western liberalism found its way into China along the eastern coast. Far from inciting calls for westernization and modernization, however, colonial influence in China such as the Opium War and China's compulsion by western powers to sign unequal treaties ultimately stirred public winds among literate segments of the population calling for Chinese resistance against foreign interference. Reform was advocated during the 19th century by bourgeois intellectuals who had witnessed the intensity of foreign aggression and were dismayed by the inability of China's corrupt government to cope with it. By the 1890s, China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese war awakened many Chinese to the plight of their nation and catalyzed calls for reform into a political movement with the support of the masses (Chang, 1989). This movement spawned numerous publications around the turn of the century that spread revolutionary ideas and galvanized young intellectuals into action.

In 1911, fifteen Chinese provinces declared independence from Qing dynasty rule, beginning the end of imperial governance in China. Around the same time, Sun Yat-sen, pioneer of the Chinese democratic revolution, returned to China from abroad and was soon sworn in as president of the new provisional central government of the Republic of China. The brief Nationalist period thus ushered in was marked by serious domestic political turmoil that continued to leave China vulnerable to foreign aggression.

On May 4, 1919, students provoked by the unfavorable treaty signed by China at the Paris Peace Conference demonstrated in the streets for their government to

build a stronger nation able to stand up to foreign power. This groundswell among students, dubbed the May Fourth Movement, led to the publication of more and more progressive publications that integrated principles of Marxism-Leninism with the labor movement in China to promote a new grassroots revolution nationwide. The year 1919 also found young Communist Mao Zedong in Beijing, where he established the Civilians' News Agency, issuing 150 news bulletins every day to major cities around China to expose the crimes of local warlords (Chang, 1989).

The ruling Nationalist government under the leadership of the Kuomintang suffered tremendously from the death of Sun Yat-sen and Japan's launching of all-out aggression against China. Plagued by internal strife and continual losses to the Japanese on the battlefield, Nationalist authority continued to erode while the Communists were able to consolidate their power and draw strength from people of all strata of Chinese society to participate in the War of Resistance (Chang, 1989). Sun Yat-sen's successor Chiang Kai-shek found his government overextended between fighting a double war with Japan abroad and with the Communists domestically. Meanwhile, Communist leadership made swift use of all available means of mass communication to disseminate the Marxist viewpoint and organize masses of peasants and workers into open struggle.

Revolutionary newsletters and magazines flourished during the late 1910s and 1920s, advocating the cause of socialism among labor, peasant, women, and youth readerships. In 1931, the Communist Party, engaged in rural-based guerrilla warfare with the ruling Nationalist government, established the Red China News Agency, the predecessor of today's Xinhua News Agency. This agency not only sent reports to

the outside world but also used the army radio to collect outside news, to be edited and distributed to Party leaders. This practice of news organizations providing intelligence for high-level Party leaders continues today (Zhao, 1998). By 1939, the Xinhua News Agency had become a wire service, providing translation, editing, news releases, and reception of news stories from major news agencies at home and abroad. The agency disseminated the Party's policies on the united front and provided significant support for anti-Japanese forces, playing the role of a national newspaper and eventually moving into broadcasting (Chang, 1989). Xinhua also launched an English service, the beginning of its overseas programming. BBC officials of the time even claimed that they could receive Xinhua signals from the Communist base at Yan'an more clearly than Nationalist broadcasts from the capital city Nanjing, a condition surely foreboding of the ultimate victory of the Communists over the Nationalists for the voice of mainland China.

Communist Revolution

With the flight of the Nationalist Party to Taiwan and the founding of the Communist People's Republic of China in 1949, a major task of the new regime was to take stock of national conditions, chart a course toward socialist construction, and propagate its agenda nationwide among China's millions of poor, illiterate peasants and workers. One of Chairman Mao Zedong's earliest directives toward this end was that, "We should go to the masses and learn from them, synthesize their experience into better, articulated principles of methods, then do propaganda among the masses, and call upon them to put these principles and methods into practice so as to solve their problems and help them achieve liberation and happiness" (Mao, 1943, p. 16).

The Chinese media system was thus devised as a “two-way red lens”—a dual surveillance system through which the government could keep tabs on nationwide conditions and prevailing public opinion, as well as allow the masses to receive its own actions and directives.

Toward this aim, oral media such as radio and film were brought into wider use than ever before with the public issuance of state-manufactured radios and eventually television sets, which were well suited to the needs of rural populations who were largely illiterate, cut off from urban areas, and lacking in the analytical skills of more educated audiences. These “media of agitation” were used to impart vivid images of national symbols, disseminating facts, and focusing public attention on the tasks of construction at hand. Also brought into play were the print media of newspapers, journals, and books, which were more adapted to literate urban populations, complementing the work of audio-visual media by providing events with an ideological or cultural context (Liu, 1971). Although Communist resources for the development of the vast communications network needed nationwide were limited, the government did develop a great many techniques to increase the effectiveness of the network by reaching more people with each particular message, devices such as collective newspaper reading, wired radio speaker systems, radio monitoring teams, and mobile film projection units (Houn, 1961). Thus, as people congregated to hear and discuss messages sent down from Beijing, popular sentiment could be monitored and crystallized by local Party cadres, to be sent back to Beijing via channels of leadership. The Communist regime made this dual surveillance function a major national priority, with inestimable effects on the population.

A major focus of these broad communication initiatives was to help China's masses make sense of their new roles in society. China had only newly adopted Communism after millennia of feudalism and a very brief experiment with Nationalism, and in this context the Communist Party set very ambitious goals of increasing literacy, educating the masses, collectivizing agriculture, propelling industrialization, erecting a massive defense complex, promoting women's liberation, and creating an entirely new national identity, among many other broad objectives to be achieved within the short period of a few decades. In order to accomplish these extraordinary goals quickly, the government took on a highly authoritarian position in directing people toward their appropriate roles in the new society, using the nation's growing communications complex as a primary means of dissemination.

Since its inception, the central principle underlying the Communist Party's domination over the Chinese media is its stated "Party principle" (党性原则, *dangxing yuanze*), of which there are three components: 1) the news media must accept the Party's guiding ideology as its own, 2) the media must propagate the Party's programs, policies, and directives, and 3) the media must accept the Party's leadership and stick to the Party's organizational principles and press policies (Zhao, 1998). Thus, the Party guards closely its prerogative to closely survey media content. This media monitoring is usually performed by special teams of veteran Party ideological workers. For editors as well as journalists, fear of postpublication retribution is omnipresent. Punishment may range from being forced to write self-criticisms to demotion to unemployment and social ostracism. Under constant

pressure to avoid political “mistakes,” many professionals must learn to play it safe (Zhao, 1998, p. 21).

For the past half a century, journalists in China have thus grown up in a culture that unquestioningly expects the news media to serve the interests of the government. Traditionally, Chinese reporters have seen their jobs in terms of not only reflecting government policy—they would call this “guiding public opinion” (Dai, 1999, p. 78)—but also helping to maintain social stability and promoting economic growth. “For them, getting to the scene of a flood or plane crash as fast as possible is not as important as reporting what is being done by the government to battle the flood or improve the safety of air travel” (Nolan, 1999, p. 35).

However, decades of governmental manipulation of the media under Communist rule and resulting policy disasters such as the Great Leap Forward in the 1950s and the catastrophic Cultural Revolution of the 1960s-70s left the Chinese populace tired, shell-shocked, and ready for reform. By the time of the death of Chairman Mao Zedong in 1976, political winds were blowing even from within the Party to create a new mandate that would lead to the gradual opening of Chinese society as well as its media system.

December 1978 marked a crucial turning point in Chinese history with the Party Central Committee’s decision to correct the “leftist” errors of the past. The pragmatic new central leader Deng Xiaoping made strong use of the mass media to give coverage to his regime’s policies of invigorating the domestic economy and opening China to the outside world. A nationwide discussion commenced in the press about the importance of “seeking truth from facts,” arguing that practice was the

only basis for testing truth and that “to get rich is glorious.” Freer critical reporting slowly began to appear in the press in the 1980s, along with an increasing emphasis on economic news.

Despite China’s obvious policy of opening gradually to the outside world, the Chinese leadership has taken pains to make sure that all reforms are perceived as uniquely Chinese, compelling Chinese journalists to operate within a twofold mandate: to utilize the western concept of satisfying public tastes while adhering strictly to the principles of Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong thought. Thus, a severe dialectic has been created between pragmatism and ideology within which Chinese journalists continue to perform a high-stakes balancing act to this day.

Until very recently, the development of China’s modern media system has been significantly hampered by governmental regulation and fixed revenue. Until just the last few years, the Chinese press has rejected advertising, remained completely subsidized by the state, published relatively small numbers of overall titles (only 186 as late as 1978), produced papers small in size (typically four pages), and relied heavily on subscriptions at public expense for office reading, distributed exclusively through the postal service (Zhao, 2000). This cash-strapped scenario has left the overburdened state in the difficult position of having to support growing numbers of employees and retirees with declining sources of revenue. Given no choice but to boost income, the state has thus been actively pushing its press outlets to the market by severing direct subsidies and providing financial incentives, including tax breaks, performance-based salary supplements, and operational freedoms previously unheard of in order to make media profitable (Zhao, 2000). Recently, the

Chinese government has begun systematically shutting down government and Party newspapers entirely, a move aimed at alleviating the financial burdens on farmers and grassroots units caused by compulsory subscriptions (Xinhua, 2004).

Modern Chinese Media

Today's Chinese media market rests on the principle of "regulated marketization," under which the Chinese licensing system ensures the Party's control over the fundamental structure of the press. No newspaper can be set up independently, and all are assigned an official rank and must be registered under a recognized institutional publisher or sponsor (Zhao, 2000). Papers after 1996 have thus become the products of "bureaucratic capitalism," a characteristic of today's Chinese capitalism whereby political power and official influence are used as means for commercial gain by individuals or bureaucratic units through capitalist or quasi-capitalist economic activities (Meisner, 1996, p. 301).

The state, therefore, has allowed for mass appeal papers, subsidized by advertising revenue and sold mostly on the streets below cost. These new publications emphasize breaking events, the consumer angle, story format, relevance to urban life, entertainment, sports, and other "soft" content, and are coming to be quite aggressive in marketing, packaging, distribution, and self-promotion. They satisfy consumer tastes and sell well, ushering in what some have called the Chinese equivalent of the American "penny press revolution" (Zhao, 2000, p. 11). The resulting phenomenon of consumer choice is indeed new in China, since for the past several decades, the custom was for work units or Party cells to purchase publications

and make them available to workers and their families. This practice still goes on in China, but less and less (Nolan, 1999).

The Chinese government's recent "media rationalization campaign," was launched in 1996 in an attempt to achieve optimal integration between propaganda effectiveness and economic efficiency. Under this plan, the bureaucratic press was to be consolidated, the number of professional papers reduced, and newspapers with small circulation numbers or records of breaking Party publication rules targeted for closure. Today's Chinese State Press and Publications Administration has thus been granted strong authority to rigorously implement three central controlling mechanisms for publications: licensing, annual review, and the certification of editors-in-chief (State Press & Publications Administration, 1997).

While making every effort to retain its ideological high ground, the Communist Party "no longer believes in low-budget propaganda and the self-evident nature of its truth. It wants to capitalize its press to ensure wider circulation, higher production values, faster delivery, and better packaging of content" (Zhao, 2000, p. 17). Thus, the new role model of the day is no longer Mao Zedong but Rupert Murdoch, who now serves as the Party's media business partner. Chinese authorities today have come to see Western-style media conglomeration as a means to enhance press control, strengthen Party institutions, and induce profitable outlets to cross-subsidize unprofitable venues viewed as socially and culturally important (Zhao, 2000). For many in the Party elite, "economic reform is simply an opportunity for self-enrichment and for the continuation of social privilege. Although the Party's

slogans have changed from ‘fight selfishness’ to ‘getting rich is glorious,’ it’s essentially the same elite that has remained dominant” (Liu & Link, 1998, p. 22).

What appears to be happening in the Chinese media can be seen as a microcosm of what is happening in Chinese society at large. Economic liberalization means increased freedom for people in terms of movement, entertainment, standards of living, and job opportunities; however the Communist Party leadership has determined that this should not lead to strident calls for political freedom. The government has seemed willing to indulge commercial tastes to allow for certain degrees of consumer satisfaction as long as forbidden political topics are not broached and the power of the Party remains entrenched. Thus, market liberalization on one hand accompanied by political censorship on the other does seem to make terrifyingly real the possibility of the Chinese government’s conscious effort to turn its citizenry into “a nation of tabloid-dazed couch potatoes” (Schell, 1995, p. 43).

Chinese Views of Propaganda

Confucius wrote in the *Analects* that principles of “good” rhetoric in the hands of a benevolent state are indispensable toward teaching people to live meaningful lives. From the earliest days of mass newspaper publishing in China under the Qing dynasty, a multivocal press has been considered a sign of failure of the state (Wagner, 2001). Today, the Chinese government boasts a powerful cabinet-level Department of Propaganda (宣传部, *XuanChuanBu*) which continues to operate with wide social legitimacy in fostering a unified, modern society under the principles of “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” Under the Communist-style principle of “guiding public opinion” (领导舆论, *lingdao yulun*) (Dai, 1999), the Chinese government

continues to monopolize the dominant mainstream media, such as the Xinhua News Agency and China Central Television, as “mouthpieces” of the state (Chang, 1989). Although the dynamics of the proper use of state authority continue to be hotly debated among intellectuals and media personnel (Lee, 2000), the basic mandate of the state to utilize media to engage in *thought work* (思想工作, *sixiang gongzuo*) and as the *vanguard of reform* (改革尖兵, *gaige jianbin*) continues to maintain high social legitimacy in China (Chan, 2002).

Current popular television programs, such as the news commentary *Focal Point* (焦点访谈, *Jiaodian Fangtan*) and the magazine-style feature program, *Oriental Horizon* (东方时空, *Dongfang Shikong*), stand out as excellent examples of the current dialectic tension in the Chinese media today between “the Party line and the bottom line” (Zhao, 1998, book title), or the need to produce propaganda that can foster Party-sanctioned pro-social behavior, but to make it appealing and popular. The moral education of the people has been viewed historically as a function of good government in China. Through the ages, models have played an important role in this educational process, constantly making people aware of norms of correct behavior and acceptable conduct. Correct ideas (orthodoxy) were believed to follow automatically from this proper behavior (orthopraxy) (Landsberger, 2001).

The Chinese state continues remains engaged in the form that propaganda (宣传, *xuanchuan*) takes in a sincere belief in its efficacy in raising the cultural levels of the people (Chang, 1997). Even Mao, although pronouncing the role of all media as “cogs and wheels in the revolutionary machine” (Mao, 1942, p. 86), often criticized the mass media for failing to engage the imagination of the people because

of its “vague and confused talk” (含糊其辭, *hanhu qici*) or “pages of empty verbiage” (空話連篇, *konghua lianpian*). Popular Premier Zhu Rongji further clarified the modern official Chinese conception of the proper role of media by recently presenting a piece of calligraphy to the public extolling the virtues of media’s role as “public supervision, people’s mouthpiece, government’s mirror, vanguard of reform (輿論監督, 群眾喉舌, 政府借鑒, 改革尖兵, *yulun jiandu, qunzhong houshe, zhengfu jiejian, gaige jianbin*)” (Chan, 2002).

The problem for China’s propagandists in the reform era, it seems, has been to strike a balance between discourses of collectivism and individualism, with the former being called upon to mold the moral subject, and the latter to address the economic subject, the active consumer (McLaren, 1998). This tension between such opposites results in a synthesis of the two, which itself becomes a new position. This dialectic, or ongoing tension, within the Chinese television system, between control and propaganda and arms-length cultural management, has allowed the gradual introduction of Western cultural influences into a once closed, economically deteriorating China. This change is not to suggest, however, that the Chinese government has opened the door completely to Western influences. In fact, the government has strategically promoted specific economic benefits to the television industry that complement but do not usurp the traditional cultural make-up or political direction of the Communist party leaders (Weber, 2002). For example, although *Focal Point*’s programming, in classic *60 Minutes* style, highlights instances of local corruption and selfish profiteering, it is careful to do so without directly confronting the central government or undermining the principles of market socialism (Chan,

2002). Journalists for *Oriental Horizon*, likewise, alternate in a careful dance between serving as advocates for public policy, voices of victims, and social commentators (Xu, 2000). Journalists in China constantly live in a state of chronic cognitive dissonance, says He (2000), under which they are required to meet the needs of two masters: the State and their advertisers.

Comparing East and West

As discussed, in the America of the 1920s when radio was first becoming a mass medium, and then in the 1940s and 1950s with the advent of television, the “massification” of these channels of communication was largely driven by commercial enterprises such as Westinghouse, which “discovered that an audience, a market, existed for news and entertainment broadcast over the airwaves” (Hiebert & Gibbons, 2000, p. 16). As entrepreneurs discovered the potential of mass media markets and capitalized on the technologies that could build them into large businesses, they established what is now taken as a common sense principle in the West, that media are a business rather than a public service, or a tool for revolution in the way that state-issued broadcasting devices were distributed in China. Thus, as in capitalist, free-market economies in which consumers are considered to serve as the driving force of the economy, in free-market media, as well, audiences are presumed to have a place of primary importance in choosing to consume and interact critically with media. At the core of the Western value system lies a bottom-up notion of democracy as opposed to the top-down conception of autocracy that still dominates other systems. Thus, rather than simply being passive recipients of externally created

messages, audiences are viewed in the West as powerful actors in the media marketplace (Clark, 1990).

At the heart of this focus on the audience is the fundamental power of the individual mind to construct its own meaning from a message received. Under this model, audiences are viewed as being able to maintain and develop their own real competence to interact critically with media. According to Thoman (1995), this power gives the average citizen the ability to choose and select, challenge and question, and to be conscious about what is going on in the world and even within government and media organizations. Such audience orientation certainly carries over into the agendas of Western media producers, for they must then respond to audiences by making their programs attractive, appealing, interesting, and convincing to discriminating consumers. As discussed previously, however, the Chinese government's conception of media's role as agitator, educator, and setter of official standards diminishes emphasis on audience orientation and sets collective rights above individual rights. One purpose of this project is to examine the degree to which these historical and cultural realities affect Chinese and Western media producers' conception of their roles today. Because today's turn-of-the-millennium media climate is witnessing unprecedented strides toward commercialization of the means of mass communication worldwide, it is high time to understand more about the role such historical differences play in how individuals undertake their roles as mass communicators.

Modern Directions in Propaganda

To effectively interpret the work of today's media producers, it becomes necessary to actually step into this dialectic world, putting aside Cold War notions of what propaganda means and seeing up-close the very dynamic process of satisfying the demands of traditional culture, modern market, sensitive politics, and personal professional standards. Trying to determine what counts as propaganda is not the point. Viewing propaganda from the perspective of intent rather than product opens up a new door on a world that has been deeply affected by forces ancient and modern, Western and Eastern, collective and individual.

This research is intended to provide better tools for understanding the very human hearts that produce the voices that find their way around the world via global airwaves. Today still too little is known about the international broadcast media from a professional point of view, viewing their current role in the marketplace of ideas, not only from the vantage point of consumers, but from the high-wire-balancing-act perspective of those who actually produce the messages themselves. Because old Cold War conceptions of the reasons for international broadcasting are increasingly being called into question, the funding sources and distribution channels of the global media of the future will depend entirely on what results are being sought. This study is positioned to help both scholars and practitioners understand this mission more clearly.

Chapter 4: The Study

A Hybrid Approach

The purpose of this study is to provide tools to systematically examine producer intent for cross-cultural comparative purposes, thus strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methodology are applied in order to bring together the benefits of systematically examining data for patterns as well as searching for understanding of what these patterns mean in context. Therefore, the approach to gathering and analyzing data in this study consists of the use of multiple methods to study a single problem, namely understanding the complex strategic values underpinning a journalist's decision-making.

This study is driven by an interpretive, qualitative methodology in that the goal of the research is to “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 1). The approach taken is what Denzin and Lincoln (1998) call a “bricolage,” or “a pieced-together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete situation” (p. 1). The main method used in this study is interviewing, which is supplemented by freelisting and selection tasks that provide numeric data that help to systematically illuminate patterns in strategic

emphases between journalists based on different demographic factors. The interview, freelisting, and selection task data are analyzed and interpreted together, in that themes emerging from the journalists' interviews are checked for validity with their respective degrees of emphasis in the freelisting and selection tasks, and the freelisting and selection task data is interpreted for meaning based on the journalists' discourse. The overall category scheme used in the study was built through a grounded process of working with journalists to define the widest range of strategic presentational considerations that drive journalistic decisions on choice of topic, content, and style. This dissertation represents the culmination of several projects using grounded methods to build conceptual categories from the discourse of working journalists and is the first large-scale pilot of this category scheme with a relatively large number of journalists in multiple countries.

Because of the hybrid approach adopted in this study, numeric data are contextualized constantly with text from interviews, and interview transcripts are examined repeatedly for meaning. Although some degree of generalizability is sought through applying positivist concerns for reliability, controlling for certain variables, and working with a somewhat larger sample than may be typical of deeply interpretive research, the fundamental focus in this study is to meaningfully apply and contextualize the new strategic value scheme and to explore differences in meaning that appear across cultures. It is hoped that the combination of strengths from both qualitative and quantitative research traditions can enhance the potential for this mode of research to be explored further both interpretively and statistically in future studies.

Reflecting on the Self as a Research Instrument

Physicists studying forces operating in the natural world work under the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, which asserts that the more precisely the position (of an atomic particle) is determined, the less precisely the momentum is known. In other words, the more we as researchers know about where something is, the less we know about where it may go. At least in physics, this enigma arises because one cannot observe a particle without disturbing it, because in the process of observation, one would need to 'touch' it with something, such as a photon or some other particle, which would transfer energy to the observed particle and effect its momentum (Hawking, 1988).

In social science, we are likewise limited in our study of human behavior and attitudes, because we too are “particles” floating around in the human soup along with those we are observing. Just as they are in motion, we too are in motion. Just as they are influenced by unpredictable external and internal factors, so are we. If we study humans through interacting with them, we no doubt impact them through our mere presence. If we choose not to interact but rather study their behaviors or products in isolation, we nevertheless interpret these through our own mental constructs. Either way, we, as researchers, *are* the instruments with which human research is conducted and through which meaning from it is drawn. If we are then to be useful instruments, we need to take into account our own “position” as well as our own “movement” and, like physicists, acknowledge the extent to which uncertainty is simply an inherent rule of the game.

In the process of exploring and rendering a heavily context-bound decision-making environment, a researcher must make countless judgments that boil issues down sufficiently to present them comprehensibly to an audience. Because this positions the researcher as a crucial agent of making meaning, it is wise to approach this position of power as transparently as possible. Qualitative research compels the researcher to enter the text as one more voice which, along with those of informants, plays an active (rather than a supposed “neutral”) role in the construction of meaning. Michelle Fine calls this process “working the hyphens,” or standing purposely in the vague place where Self and Other come together to define interpretations:

By working the hyphens, I mean to suggest that researchers probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants.... Working the hyphens means creating occasions for researchers and informants to discuss what is, and is not ‘happening between,’ within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequence. (Fine, 1998, p. 135)

Qualitative research thus finds the researcher very present in the discussion of observations, acknowledging that the interpretations and meaning made from the findings can be considered a study of the mind of the researcher as well as a study of the observations themselves. Thus, particularly in cross-cultural research, considerable exploration and discussion with informants in both cultures is needed of how relationships are formed and managed. Especially within a foreign setting, a researcher must carefully delve into how one’s own cultural constructs define the

readings of given situations, explicating both to the researcher as well as to readers of the study what happens at the “hyphens” between Self and Other (Fine, 1998). Only through such a process can a researcher avoid the notorious “god trick,” (Haraway, 1988), pretending to paint the Other from nowhere, and engage instead in a more substantial collaborative negotiation of making meaning. Thus, rather than feigning distant neutrality in describing this study and my own place in it, I must take the time to characterize the position from which I approached this line of research.

As a human engaging in empirical inquiry into the motives of other humans, I am necessarily “touching” my participants in the very process of observing them and presenting their views for the consideration of others. My presence in the equation is thus a given and needs to be approached with care. The critical piece necessitated by such a complex position is *verstehen*, or empathic understanding (Schweizer, 1998, p. 57). Only with this ability to empathetically connect with participants may I as a researcher hope to understand the insider’s perspective to sufficiently identify with what it is like to make decisions within a certain context and interpret this process for those outside the system. Although my decision to work as a participant at the Voice of America through the duration of this project did to some extent color my lens through seeing VOA at close range, I felt that becoming an “insider” to the world of international broadcasting was an important step in order to better understand the realities of day-to-day life as an international broadcaster.

Confessions of an Involved Researcher

A few years ago when I was in the middle of my doctoral coursework, I received a phone call from a Chinese journalist that I met in passing at a conference.

He had overheard me speaking Chinese and wanted to invite me to work as a researcher for the Mandarin Chinese Service of the Voice of America. At the time, I was inundated with graduate coursework and not very interested in what I at the time perceived to be a propagandistic government agency, so I declined the offer, but after a few more calls from VOA inviting me to work for the organization, even part time or temporarily, I finally agreed to go in for an interview and to take a Chinese-English translation test. After some careful consideration, I realized that working at VOA would provide me with an excellent vantage point from which to not only learn more about international broadcasting, but also about the working style of the many experienced foreign journalists I would encounter there.

After passing my tests and interviews and receiving a security clearance at VOA, I was assigned as a researcher to work closely with a Chinese reporter who had been employed previously at the BBC World Service. She and a few other VOA colleagues who had worked at the BBC in the past encouraged me to visit London and meet some of the Chinese journalists there, an invitation I accepted. Thus, my exposure to both the BBC and VOA began from within these organizations' Chinese Services. Through Chinese colleagues I had access to the respective agencies, and I spent much of my leisure time with them in Washington, London, and Beijing. At VOA, I was formally employed as a contractor for the Mandarin Chinese Service and made friends with many colleagues there. At the BBC World Service, I spent a month in Bush House as a visiting scholar, housed in the BBC's private hostel (at the recommendation of the Chinese Service) and was provided with a small "office" (actually an editing studio not currently in use) by the secretary of one of the British

World Service Commissioners. In China, however, I did research on my own without any organizational affiliation. Interview participants, all international broadcasters employed by China Central Television, China Radio International, or the Xinhua News Agency, were identified on my own through various academic and personal connections, and we met for interviews either in restaurants or on the campus where I was staying.

In contrast, the interactions I had with the American and British journalists at VOA and the BBC were much more formal and less personal. Participants came forward after receiving written email solicitations I had sent to the English feature editors at each agency. Within the interview context, the time I spent with the Chinese and Western journalists was virtually the same, both in terms of timing and content. However, because I am American and China is a foreign culture to me, I felt that spending more time working and learning among Chinese journalists was warranted for the purposes of this study. Having been exposed to American journalism throughout my life, both personally and professionally, I feel familiar with the values and practices that undergird American-style journalism. But to craft a framework for understanding the values and motivations of journalists around the world, I felt it was necessary to spend time among journalists raised within a very different media environment to broaden my perspective and increase the chances that my analysis would be more universal than my own Western biases might otherwise allow.

Grounded Theory

Sociologists Glaser and Strauss first articulated the grounded theory approach to research in 1967, proposing that theories should be “‘grounded’ in data from the field, especially in the “actions, interactions, and social processes of people” (Creswell, 1998, p. 56). Under the view that theory should propose a plausible relationship among concepts and sets of concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1994), grounded theory requires that the plausibility be situated in the lived experience of actors themselves. This approach can be especially valuable when doing exploratory work in an unfamiliar culture as a useful strategy to overcome tendency to overgeneralize Western (often linear, dichotomous) understandings of the world. The grounded theorist’s emphasis on discovery of theory from data (Dey, 1999) leaves the research process open to the possibilities befitting a new or not fully theorized area of study.

Because early media research tended to focus on effects and messages rather than on those producing them, particularly in other cultures, researchers today still have a sparse vocabulary to work from in specifying the factors underlying media producers’ decision-making processes for comparative purposes. Work done on newsworthiness values implies that there is something inherent in messages themselves that is worthy or not to be selected for broadcast, leaving little to work with in terms of understanding the strategic orientation of journalists within various contexts. A major purpose of the current research is to develop and test a strategic category system to study media producers’ values in ways that are grounded in their own experience of day-to-day work. To accomplish this purpose, the analysis must be rooted in terms provided by journalists themselves.

In describing the grounded theory approach, Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest developing categories of information through coding material, linking related concepts, eventually building a “story” that connects the categories, and finally building a discursive set of theoretical propositions grounded in the data itself. Strauss and Corbin (1998) characterize grounded theory as “a way of thinking about and conceptualizing data” (p. 163) and state that “grounded theory’s actual use in practice has varied with the specifics of the area under study, the purpose and focus of the research, the contingencies faced during the project, and perhaps also the temperament and particular gifts or weaknesses of the researcher” (p. 164). They recommend the grounded theory approach to researchers who are interested in *patterns* of action and interaction between and among social actors.

The grounded aspects of this particular study stretch back to 2001, when I began doing grounded research with journalism students and eventually with working journalists as a part of my graduate coursework to begin to elucidate themes in how reporters in different contexts sought to make their work “effective” in reaching media consumers in ways they desired. Rounds of iterative work were performed to develop and re-develop coding categories that most succinctly characterize the various concerns expressed by journalists. After dozens of rounds of pilot testing were completed through these pre-dissertation trials, the actual dissertation work commenced to apply these categories more systematically with journalists at VOA, the BBC, and the Chinese official media. This most recent iteration of the project has not employed grounded methods in the same way that the pre-dissertation work did in developing the category scheme, but the overall research paradigm still involves

grounding the meaning made from the data as closely as possible in the discourse of working journalists.

Coding Category Scheme

To begin to understand the many values and forces at work in journalists' minds as they engage in decision-making, I began preparing for this project several years ago with pilot studies among both American and Chinese reporters, first among student journalists at the University of Maryland, and then among professional reporters in Washington DC and Beijing (Swartz, 2001; Swartz, 2002). To begin working out the comprehensive range of values that may be present in a reporter's decision-making process, I asked these journalists to broadly brainstorm, both individually and in groups, and list as many words as possible that positively described the values underlying their decisions, words that they felt explained in detail what it is that makes a particular story idea or presentational style "good" or "effective," at least in their eyes. The journalists gave me dozens of words (such as thought-provoking, exciting, relevant, heart-warming, or even convenient for the producer). I then wrote these words on small pieces of paper and organized them into exhaustive and mutually-exclusive categories. Upon organizing the dozens of words, I found that the resulting category scheme could be worked into an alphabetical listing, which I decided to develop as a mnemonic device for scholars or practitioners who may use the coding scheme in the future.

The categories that emerged from the values listed by journalists in my early pilot studies fell into ten general categories: *aesthetics*, *breadth*, *convenience*, *depth*, *emotionality*, *freshness*, *germaneness*, *helpfulness*, *incisiveness*, and *justice*. (These

Table 4.1.

Description of Communication Value Scheme.

Category	Journalistic Description	Culinary Description
Aesthetics	What looks or sounds good; what are the elements of a “good narrative;” how words, scenes, and sounds are organized to make a coherent package.	Attractive, aesthetically pleasing.
Breadth	How to engage the broadest possible audience; appealing to universally shared values, tastes, or interests.	Something everyone likes.
Convenience	How easy it will be for the producers to gather necessary footage or sound; how to work within constraints such as time, staffing, or equipment.	Ingredients on hand or readily available.
Depth	How to make a program thought-provoking or analytical; gaining in-depth or “expert” information; avoiding sensationalism.	“Haute cuisine;” something complex for the discriminating palate.
Emotionality	How to make a program personal, heartwarming, exciting, or fun; appealing to people’s feelings to attract attention or touch them in a certain way.	Tasty or evocative: spicy, sweet, salty, etc.
Freshness	How to make a program unique or clever; innovating in such a way that material is new, different, and creative.	Fresh ingredients, something “right out of the garden.”
Germaneness	How to make a program relevant to current circumstances; addressing what is going on at a given time.	Appropriate for the occasion, such as seasonal or holiday-specific food.
Helpfulness	How to make a program educational or useful to viewers; providing a needed service; changing the world for the better.	Healthy, organic food that promotes wellness for individuals and/or the planet.
Incisiveness	How to analyze and add something needed; providing missing elements; serving a “watchdog” role.	Performing a vital function not otherwise provided, such as vitamin supplements.
Justice	How to make a program fair, balanced, or objective.	Creating a well-balanced diet without undue emphasis on one particular food.

categories are described, in both journalistic and culinary terms, in Table 4.1.)

Aesthetics refers simply to what looks or sounds good, or how to create a good narrative through fitting together words, scenes, and sounds to make a coherent piece (i.e., packaging or presentation). *Breadth* means drawing on universal values or interests to try to attract the broadest audience possible (i.e., appealing to the masses). *Convenience* refers to how readily producers can gather necessary footage or sound, working within constraints such as time, staffing, or equipment (i.e., “fast food”).

Depth is about making a piece that is thought-provoking or analytical, gaining in-depth or expert information, and avoiding sensationalism (i.e., something complex for the discriminating palate). *Emotionality* describes making a program personal, heartwarming, exciting, or fun, to appeal to people's feelings to attract attention or touch them in a certain way (i.e., "comfort food," or something spicy or sweet). *Freshness* is making a program unique or clever; innovating so that material is new, different, and creative (i.e., something "straight out of the garden"). *Germaneness* has to do with making a program relevant to current circumstances, addressing what is going on at a given time (i.e., seasonal or holiday food). *Helpfulness* means striving to make a program educational or useful to viewers, to provide a needed service, or to change the world for the better (i.e., something nutritious). *Incisiveness* provides the ability to analyze a situation and add something that is needed, serving a "watchdog" role or supplying elements that are otherwise missing (i.e., nutritional supplements). *Justice* describes making a program fair, balanced, accurate, objective, or impartial (i.e., a well-balanced diet).

Of course, these ten categories have some degree of overlap, and it would be unusual for a journalist to be motivated by one sole category, to the exclusion of others. As noted, strategic decision-making in journalism is a multi-layered process in much the same way as cooking. If I am preparing a Christmas dinner for my family, I will probably focus largely on *germane* elements that evoke the holiday spirit, seeking heartwarming ingredients and spices that are traditional and satisfying to my guests. Of course, I want to also serve a nutritious, fresh, and balanced meal, yet on an occasion such as Christmas, I might choose to splurge, erring on the side of

more emotionally evocative recipes. However, if I am preparing a summer salad for a picnic, I may choose to focus most of my efforts on *freshness* in order to use some of the vegetables currently coming out of my garden. And to make the salad palatable to everyone at the picnic, I may seek *breadth*, choosing a fairly universally-accepted salad dressing. In other words, decisions made in preparing food (physical or mental) for the consumption of others are highly influenced by contextual factors.

No one category is used exclusively by any journalist at any particular time. Media production is a highly creative, multi-faceted process that adapts dynamically to meet evolving needs. Yet, there are circumstantial and preferential patterns to be found between individuals, media organizations, and even national cultures. Just as culture shapes our diet, cultural influences also affect our communicative choices. All media producers want their work to be palatable in some way to their audience. Thus, with the range of options provided by the ten-pronged category scheme, a common conceptual vocabulary can be used to discuss and more clearly understand the choices journalists make, both as producers and consumers of mediated messages. After all, the creation and maintenance of culture is an iterative process, situated in the highly contextual world of communicative decision-making. Developing and refining categories through which to discuss our choices can provide a number of useful ingredients to the conceptual “cookbook.”

Because this value scheme is to be used in other cultures, it is necessary to provide translations of the terms that are as close in meaning to their English counterparts as possible. Thus, for this study Chinese translations of the category value terms were performed, checked, and confirmed by native Chinese-speaking

staff at the Mandarin Service at VOA who have both professional training in translation as well as journalism. The Chinese connotations of these words were then explored with the thirty Chinese participants in this study and found to hold as equivalent meanings to the English terminology as possible. The Chinese terms are: *aesthetics* (审美, *shenmei*), to “judge beauty,” valuing beautiful stylistic elements; *breadth* (广泛, *guangfan*), meaning wide-ranging and holding broad appeal; *convenience* (方便, *fangbian*), meaning convenient and readily available; *depth* (深度, *shendu*), “degree of depth,” going beyond the surface to address more complex issues; *emotionality* (情感, *qinggan*), meaning to convey human interest and evoke an emotional reaction; *freshness* (新鲜, *xinxian*), meaning literally fresh (as in food), new, and original; *germaneness* (相关, *xiangguan*), or interrelated to the interests of the consumer; *helpfulness* (有益, *youyi*), “has benefits,” providing useful tips for living; *incisiveness* (透彻, *touche*), or penetrating, thorough, and bold; and *justice* (公正, *gongzheng*), meaning fair and just, presenting all sides of a story. If this scheme were to be applied in other cultures, similar work would need to be done to translate the category scheme carefully by involving native speakers who are preferably both journalists and skilled translators. Having discussions about the meaning of the value categories between people from different backgrounds can in itself be a good exercise in exploring the cultural values that underpin strategic communication values.

Connecting Interpretive and Systematic Approaches

Although the concept of culture is most often linked with national origin, culture can be better characterized as a communication pattern than as a feature of certain geographic or political boundaries. Thompson (1990) defines culture as the pattern of meaning embodied in symbolic forms, including actions, utterances, and meaningful objects of various kinds, by virtue of which individuals communicate with one another and share their experience, conceptions, and beliefs. (p. 132)

In other words, culture is intrinsically linked with a host of factors in making us who we are, thus the dimensions of this analysis must focus on more than one source of identity. In this study, data were grouped in different ways, not just by national culture, for the purpose of considering a broad range of issues that could account for variance in the responses.

This study seeks to find patterns in the articulated strategies of international journalists from different national cultures, but also to address whether national culture is the most salient source of differences and similarities between and among these journalists. Thus, to prevent focusing too heavily on national culture and overlooking other salient sources of difference such as age, gender, organization, or level of training, a more systematic approach is used to analyze relationships within the data as objectively as possible. Discovering patterns through this systematic analysis provides for additional insights not addressed in the qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis provides necessary context for understanding the results gained from the systematic analysis. Like two lenses used together, this dual

approach provides a parallax perspective to see depth not observable with either lens alone.

To achieve this twofold goal, this study uses three methods—interview, freelist, and a selection task. Through interviewing, rapport is built, concepts and context are described, and values are made salient in the journalists' minds through the course of discussing the circumstances and values guiding their work. Through freelist, the participants have the opportunity to articulate their values in list form, brainstorming words and ideas that may provide more clarity on what they consider to be the goals they strive for in their work. Finally, through the selection task, participants are asked to rank and order their values from a list of established choices, drawing clear preferences out of a wide range of possibilities. Taken together, this triangulation of three approaches provides breadth and depth into understanding the journalists' value structure.

Samples

Participants were from the Voice of America (VOA) in Washington, DC, the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) World Service in London, and Chinese journalists with official international media outlets in Beijing (China Central Television, China Radio International, and the Xinhua News Agency). As I began to work out the parameters of the study, I knew I was interested in examining the influence of culture on media decision-making, but after spending some time within various media outlets in the U.S. and China, I realized that isolating pure cultural elements would not be possible within the variety of organizational influences affecting reporters in such differently-structured media systems as those found in the

U.S. and China. The main focus of this study is on the cultural influences of Chinese and Western values in mass communication, rather than on the structural and organizational elements of actual agencies in the different countries. To this end, it was necessary to find agencies employing both Western and Chinese journalists within the same organizational value structure. In this way, it would be possible to “control for” organization sufficiently to identify the influence of national culture on the individual. The interrelation of national culture and organizational culture is a topic for a different study.

VOA and the BBC are two of the world’s premier broadcast institutions, employing relatively large numbers of well-seasoned journalists from many different national cultures, including Chinese and Afghans, Nigerians and Koreans, Russians and Indonesians. These broadcasters live in the same cities (Washington and London), work within the same organizational mandates, and work their way up similar bureaucratic structures as their American and British counterparts. (It can be argued that the Americans and British at the VOA and the BBC are still privileged nonetheless, but at least attempts are made to treat them equally in principle in terms of job descriptions, benefits, status within the organization, etc.) Many of these international broadcasters have lived in the West for years, and their adult lifestyles and experiences have largely paralleled their American and British counterparts in terms of education, entertainment, and daily economic life. The main difference between these journalists is their native culture, which makes their discourse about their work a good place for examining the influence of cultural background while providing some control for organizational influences.

I approached the entire features teams of the Chinese and English divisions of VOA and the BBC World Service, soliciting about ten people from each unit for interviews, striving for an equal gender balance. I chose to focus on feature reporters because their latitude in story selection is much wider than that of their “hard news” colleagues, whose decisions are guided more by the availability of news stories on the international wire services. Feature producers and editors have a wide set of options before them, so I was interested in the values and strategic considerations that drive the stories they cover and how they choose to cover them.

To examine the degree to which the Chinese feature reporters at VOA and the BBC think like their American or British colleagues or like other Chinese reporters from their homeland, I also went to Beijing to interview ten more journalists employed by China’s premier international broadcast organizations: China Central Television (CCTV), China Radio International (CRI), and the Xinhua News Agency. Unlike my experiences at VOA and the BBC, where I enjoyed blanket approval to conduct research, in China I had to rely on personal contacts and snowball sampling for interviews. As a result, this sample of Chinese journalists who were willing to let me interview them may be more internationally-minded than other reporters in China, yet I was careful to reserve at least half of my sample for those who spoke no English so as to include Chinese reporters who have had less direct exposure to the West.

In total, I interviewed 50 reporters: 10 Chinese at VOA, 10 Americans at VOA, 10 Chinese at the BBC, 10 British at the BBC, and 10 Chinese working for

Table 4.2.

Demographics of Participant Samples.

Sample	Average age	Gender balance	Attended graduate school	Had formal journalism training
VOA Chinese (80% Mainland, 20% Taiwan)	40	50% male 50% female	90%	60%
VOA English (100% American)	43	60% male 40% female	60%	40%
BBC Chinese (90% Mainland, 10% Taiwan)	38	50% male 50% female	60%	30%
BBC English (100% British)	37	30% male 70% female	40%	30%
Chinese media (100% Mainland)	33	50% male 50% female	50%	70%

official Chinese international media. At VOA and the BBC, some of the Chinese reporters had American or British citizenship, or permanent residency status in the United States or United Kingdom, yet all those I interviewed had grown up and been educated in the People’s Republic of China or Taiwan. Table 2 describes the average ages, gender mix, and educational and journalistic training backgrounds of those I interviewed. Although the Chinese sample in Beijing was self-selecting (international journalists who were willing to be interviewed on their own time), the VOA and BBC samples turned out to be quite representative of the larger teams from which they were drawn in terms of age, gender mix, and educational background.

Of the 30 journalists in the Chinese sample, all but the three Taiwanese participants (two at VOA and one at the BBC) grew up in Mainland China. The ten currently employed by the Chinese official media still reside there, and all live in

Beijing. Although the Taiwanese press has grown into a much more liberal system in recent decades than its peer system in the Mainland, the decision was made to keep Taiwanese respondents in the sample because they were a representative, integral part of their teams at VOA and the BBC. Although a 27-to-3 ratio does not provide enough data to look for generalizable differences between Mainland and Taiwanese reporters, pattern differences were nonetheless considered during data analysis.

Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the native language (English or Chinese) of the 50 feature reporters who came forward for the study. Interviews averaged about 45 minutes in length (see Appendixes A and B for interview protocols), which provided enough time to cover all of the protocol questions but was also all the time that most of the journalists I interviewed could spare. The interviews focused around the reporters' story choices, their overall journalistic values, their role models and preferred media, their understanding of the composition and interests of their international audiences, their notions about propaganda, and the nature of modern international broadcasting. Toward the end of each interview, journalists were asked to consider using the food metaphor to characterize their journalistic approach by answering the question, "If your work were a food or a dish, what would it be?" This primed the journalist to think in culinary terms about the strategies underlying their reporting, although no specific concepts or terms were suggested with which to frame their answers.

For the freelisting exercise, at the end of each interview, I gave each journalist a nearly blank piece of paper, across the top of which was the instruction to "Write

Table 4.3.

Selection Task Categories with Descriptions.

Values presented in round 1	Elaborated descriptions presented in round 2
Aesthetic/Beautiful	A program with rich sound and smooth production elements.
Broad/Comprehensive	A program that could speak to the experience of almost everyone.
Convenient/Easy to produce	A program that can be produced relatively quickly and easily.
Deep/Complex	A program that will make the audience think.
Emotional/Moving	A program that will touch the audience's hearts.
Fresh/Original	A program about something that has hardly hit the press yet.
Germane/Relevant	A program related to events at this point in time.
Helpful/Beneficial	A program that will benefit the lives of those who listen.
Incisive/Probing	A program that skillfully exercises the media's "watchdog" role.
Just/Balanced	A program that fairly represents a balance of perspectives.

down as many words as you can think of that would make you happy if they were used to describe your work.” I organized notes while the journalist wrote as many words as he or she could think of to list. Most participants took about two to three minutes to complete the task, and then I collected their paper without comment.

With these values salient in their minds, I asked each journalist to complete a forced-choice selection task. I presented each person with ten envelopes, on which were written the labels: *Aesthetic/Beautiful*, *Broad/Comprehensive*, *Convenient/Easy to produce*, *Deep/Analytical*, *Emotional/Moving*, *Fresh/Original*, *Germane/Relevant*,

Helpful/Beneficial, Incisive/Probing, and Just/Balanced. Each journalist was asked to choose the top three that they personally thought were most important in their work to and rank them in order of importance. Opening the envelope that the journalist had selected as number one in importance, I then pulled out ten slips of paper on which were written out longer descriptions of each of the ten value categories; these slips of paper were identical in each of the ten envelopes. The journalist again was asked to choose his or her top three and rank them in order of importance. These ten descriptive sentences had been pilot tested previously with ten international journalists at VOA who did not take part in the project. Journalists in that pilot test were asked to match slips of paper with the two-word value categories and the elaborated descriptions, and the reliability rate between the categories and their longer explanation was 100%.

After the conclusion of each interview, I examined the journalist's selections and ranked them by a simple scoring system: three points for each first choice, two points for each second choice, and one point for each third choice. Thus, the range of possible scores between the two trials was zero to six: zero if a journalist had never selected a certain category and six if they had selected a particular category as their first choice in both rounds (thus 3+3). Summing these totals among the categories made it possible to examine patterns of emphasis across the five samples.

Follow-up Focus Groups

After all the systematic data was analyzed and plotted, I made presentations at both the BBC and VOA, inviting all the journalists who had been involved in the study to hear how their answers compared to those at other agencies and to answer

some follow-up questions about observable patterns in the data. At the BBC 15 out of the 20 journalists interviewed there came to the presentation, and at VOA 12 out of the 20 were in attendance. (I was unable to do the same kind of presentation in China because the journalists who had participated in the study worked at three different agencies and were more sensitive about keeping their involvement in the study confidential.)

At both the BBC and VOA, I described the purpose and research questions of the study and then presented charts representing the systematic data provided by of the samples, divided by national culture, gender, age, training, and organization. I discussed some of my own impressions and questions about the data, inviting the journalists to comment on why they felt that the patterns emerged as they had, and what the differences and similarities between samples mean to them. I let the conversation flow fairly freely in these meetings, with journalists sharing their opinions and engaging each other about the nature of their work. With their permission, I recorded these conversations and included them with the interview data for later qualitative analysis.

Chapter 5: Freelisting

The Inductive Sandwich

One goal of this research is to provide tools for analyzing mass communicators' production values across cultures. Few tools have yet been developed for researchers to analyze the underlying strategic considerations governing how messages are crafted, so this study fills this gap by providing a reasonably grounded way to understand the criteria by which journalists make the choices they do in preparing their work for public consumption. This study makes use of three main layers through which to understand the intent of participating journalists, an approach I call the *inductive sandwich*.

The *meat* of this study is provided by the interview data. This segment of the research provides the most valuable information: the context and strategic value considerations of international journalists. To approach the large volume of qualitative data collected in this study in an organized and meaningful way, the results of the two systematic tasks are first examined for the strategic values that mean the most to the participants in both an ideal context and a limited context of forced choices.

The goal of the freelisting task was to understand the strategic considerations most salient in journalists' minds. To this end, they were asked to describe the kinds of consumer response that give them the most satisfaction. The freelisting task explores what, at the end of the day, makes journalists feel best about their work: What do they themselves consider to be a successful outcome? What descriptors are most meaningful to them? Using this approach, journalists can imagine any outcome they like and write as many words as they want, in any way they want, in their native language. The freelisting exercise provides the bottom layer of the inductive sandwich, the base on which the rest of the data analysis can be built.

The forced-choice scenario focuses on the assumption that journalists operate under constraints by presenting them with a forced-choice scenario in which they must focus on certain values over others. In their day-to-day work, journalists must continually decide and rank-order priorities. This task reflects this reality by focusing on which values come to the fore when journalists must choose between a host of positive possibilities.

To examine journalists' value choices in a forced-choice scenario, they were presented with the ten values of the category scheme from which they were asked to choose, and then rank, their top three values in choosing how to craft work for their audience. They did this task twice, first by using words, and then by using sentences. The journalists' top three choices in both trials were then weighted by the rank assigned, summed together into a total score, and represented in a chart to illustrate the different emphases placed on each value among the five different sample groupings: gender, age, training, organization, and national origin. These data then

become the top layer of our inductive sandwich, the piece that holds the sandwich together.

The metaphor of the inductive sandwich is used to emphasize three separate yet related layers of analysis that complement each other by providing different approaches to understanding the journalists' strategic values. Although asking participants to supplement their interview material with freelisting and the selection task is not time-consuming (together the tasks took approximately five to ten minutes), a greater depth of understanding is gained into their underlying values by using this combined approach. The two levels of basic systematic analysis provide better understanding of the data's "meat" and are sufficiently portable to be used in different real-world journalistic scenarios.

Freelisting

At the conclusion of each 30-45 minute interview after journalists had just finished talking about their work and their individual values were still likely to be salient in their minds, participants were asked to perform a short freelisting task. They were each presented with an unlined blank piece of paper; across the top of the paper was written, "Please write down as many words as you can think of that would make you happy if they were used to describe your work." I instructed participants (in English or Chinese, as appropriate) to take as long as they needed to write down as many descriptive words as they could think of in whatever language was most comfortable for them. When each journalist said that he or she was finished and could think of no more words to write, I collected the paper without comment.

Table 5.1.

Sample Freelisted Responses by Category.

Aesthetics	Beautiful presentation, well-written, natural, not pretentious, to the point, well-organized, clear, flexible, rich, smooth, simple, graceful, fluent, concise, great use of sound, well-told, vivid
Breadth	Comprehensive, inclusive, global, sensitive to all perspectives
Depth	Deep, thorough, in-depth, knowledgeable, intelligent, well-thought-out, profound, authoritative, well-researched, analytical, historical, complex
Emotionality	Entertaining, stimulating, enjoyable, touching, lively, animated, friendly, moving, fun, amusing, energizing, shocking, inspiring, hilarious, warm, surprising, exciting
Freshness	Unique, quick, original, refreshing, creative, different, exclusive, up-to-date, new
Germaneness	Relevant, reflects our voices/thoughts, timely, appropriate
Helpfulness	Educational, informative, useful, life-changing, barrier-breaking, taught me a lot, helpful
Incisiveness	Incisive perspective, independent observation, higher perspective, bold, provocative, powerful, illuminating, insightful, mind-opening, revealing, unafraid, brave
Justice	Fair, accurate, reliable, just, balanced, objective, real, true, unbiased, no mistakes, correct, even-handed, impartial

The freelisted word lists ranged from as few as three words to as many as twenty, with a mean number of 8.3 words over the 49 participants who completed the exercise. (One participant out of the 50 was unable to complete the task because of time constraints.) Although almost all of the participants produced lists of words or phrases, two participants wrote sentences and one wrote a paragraph, from which I extracted the relevant descriptive words to analyze the text as a list. Each journalist was encouraged to write words in his or her native language, either Chinese or English. Chinese words were translated to English for the purpose of analysis by Chinese graduate students studying Communication at the University of Maryland.

Table 5.1 shows a representative sampling of freelisted responses within each of the ten categories.

Although Chinese journalists were all encouraged to list words in their native language, over half of them (57%, or 17 out of 30) chose to write at least some of their list in English (70% of respondents at the BBC did so, 50% at VOA, and 50% in China). When I asked them about why they used English, a few told me that it was to make my analysis easier, but over half told me that they found it easier to call certain words and concepts to mind in English, particularly related to their journalistic work. For most of those who had used some English in their responses (59%, or 10 out of 17), their use of English was likely due to the fact that they received collegiate or graduate education in the West, thus they have grown accustomed to articulating thoughts and values in English, particularly when asked to do so by a Westerner. Similarly, within interviews, Chinese participants switched almost unconsciously to speaking English from time to time, although I usually tried to bring them back to Chinese so that all participants would be encouraged to articulate themselves in their native language and thus be more prone to call on native cultural constructs when discussing their work.

Once freelisting data were translated, checked for accuracy, and prepared for examination, iterative waves of analysis were performed to look for patterns in the responses. Each set of coding and analysis was examined by dividing participants into categories across five factors: 1) national background (Chinese vs. Western), 2) gender (female vs. male), 3) age (under 39 vs. over 40), 4) journalistic training (those who had received at least one course of formal journalism training in college or

graduate school vs. those who had been trained entirely on the job), and 5) organization (VOA, BBC, or Chinese media).

Judging Value by External and Internal Standards

The first analysis categorized responses by the type of information the response provided about the journalist's own beliefs about what constitutes good journalism. This analysis showed that responses fell into two general types, externalized and internalized. Externalized responses were general descriptors indicating that others liked the journalistic product, such as "great," "interesting," and "good job," generically positive terms that do not reveal a substantive value orientation on the part of the journalist. Internalized responses provided more information about what the journalist him- or herself considers to constitute "good" journalism—value statements like "thorough," "unique," "objective," or "bold."

Of the five factors (i.e., background, gender, age, training, and organization), only journalism training resulted in a notable difference in the level to which participants listed externalized versus internalized values. Journalists who had been through formal journalism education, either in college or graduate school, tended to list a higher percentage of internalized responses. Of the 18 participants who had majored in journalism, the percentage of externalized responses was 26%, and for the five journalists who had received some journalism education but not as a major, the percentage of externalized responses was 19%. The 26 journalists who had learned journalism entirely on the job, however, had a rate of 42% of externalized responses, indicating a greater tendency to rely on external standards to evaluate their job performance. Journalists with no formal journalism education may have had fewer

chances to consider a larger set of values regarding what constitutes good journalism to use for evaluating their own work. This study provides evidence that journalists, both Eastern and Western, who have been exposed to formal journalistic training in a university setting may be better able to articulate substantive factors they feel comprise high-quality journalism.

This finding about differences in externalized versus internalized values is particularly notable when considering the influence of journalism education compared to the other four factors of gender, age, national origin, and organization. Gender produced the smallest gap in externalized versus internalized values, only one percentage point difference (34% externalized for females, 33% for males). The organizational comparison showed VOA and the BBC to be only two percentage points different (37% externalized for BBC and 35% for VOA). The Chinese media sample, which showed 21% externalized, likely represents the high level of journalism training found in that group (70%) in combination with their relatively young average age (33), which means that the time since many of them have been discussing these issues in the classroom is fairly recent. National origin accounted for only four percentage points of difference (35% externalized for Chinese across the board, 31% for Westerners). Age accounted for more variance than gender, national origin, or organization, with six percentage points of difference (36% externalized for those over 40, 30% for those under 39). These smaller variances make the rates of 26% externalized for those who had been through formal journalism education as opposed to 42% for those who had learned their trade entirely on the job especially significant.

Patterns

The second analysis of the freelisting looked more closely among the internalized responses provided by participants for patterns across national background, gender, age, organization, and journalistic training. For this analysis externalized responses (i.e., general concepts such as “good” or “interesting”) were excluded, and internalized responses were coded according to the ten value categories: *aesthetics*, *breadth*, *convenience*, *depth*, *emotionality*, *freshness*, *germaneness*, *helpfulness*, *incisiveness*, and *justice*. A representative sampling of words and phrases from the participants’ responses are listed by category in Table 5.2 to provide a sense of how the coding scheme was applied.

Note that the *convenience* category is absent from the freelisted responses. This outcome is not surprising because this task asked participants to list the *ideal* characteristics that would bring them the most satisfaction if used to describe their work. *Convenience* is certainly an aspect of day-to-day journalism that must be included as a code within the scheme for the purposes of analyzing interview and selection task data, however journalists are not likely to voluntarily list *convenience* when given the open-ended opportunity to freelist ideal characteristics to describe their work.

Freelisting by Age

Among the five demographic factors analyzed, age produced the least amount of difference between participants in terms of their freelisted values. Five points was used as a threshold for significance in this study because of the qualitative judgment that this level of difference was also reflective of a basic threshold of significance

Table 5.2.

Freelisted Responses by Age.

Age	40 and over (<i>n</i> =28)	39 and under (<i>n</i> =21)
Aesthetics	11%	14%
Breadth	2%	4%
Depth	16%	28%
Emotionality	20%	14%
Freshness	10%	8%
Germaneness	5%	4%
Helpfulness	10%	7%
Incisiveness	9%	7%
Justice	17%	24%

within the interview data. In this case, only three values have a spread of five or more percentage points: *depth*, *emotionality*, and *justice*. *Depth* and *justice* had the widest difference, which may be a result of shifts in hiring practices within these official news agencies over time: the majority of those in the younger age group who freelisted *depth* and *justice* values were Chinese. Within the Chinese language services at VOA and the BBC, a significant shift took place shortly after 1989 to employ more trained Chinese journalists instead of language translators. Prior to the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, the Chinese services of both VOA and the BBC were mainly charged with translating news reports written by the agencies' English

divisions into Chinese and airing them. However, after the push in Chinese-language international broadcasting brought about by Tiananmen, along with a resulting increased diaspora of Chinese journalists to Western countries, agencies such as VOA and the BBC made a point of attracting more trained Chinese reporters to expand their capacity to produce original Chinese reports.

These younger Chinese reporters now staffing VOA and the BBC not only brought with them a higher degree of training in journalism but also a passion and sense of idealism about what journalism is and the role it can play in society. Many of the journalists I interviewed said that the post-Tiananmen generation brought a significant cultural change to the Chinese divisions of these Western news agencies, intensifying a sense of responsibility to do reporting that is objective, well-researched, and balanced. One Chinese VOA reporter currently serving as an editor explained:

We grew up in a very bigoted cultural environment (during the Cultural Revolution), that is, at that time there was only one notion; other notions must be wrong. That is the education we received. So people would be going to extremes. However, after the Tiananmen Square incident, this extreme notion was broken. I know more than one notions can be correct in this world. There are other correct notions, and many wrong ones. So I should cherish more being objective, being truthful, and being complete. Now that I am out of that environment, at every second, I am, consciously or unconsciously, reminding myself of being objective and being complete. Because I grew up in that

environment, I know how much damage and impact partiality could bring. So I should not be that way. (VOA Chinese male editor)

The only notable difference that appeared in the freelisting task when analyzed by age was that *emotionality* was emphasized more by journalists over 40. Among the American VOA sample, especially, a majority of whom were over 40, emotional values were included often within their freelisting. One senior American VOA reporter spoke from wisdom and life experience to explain why emotional life takes precedence as one ages:

I think that the ultimate, most important link between people is our emotions and how we connect to each other. Not on the basis of facts, but how we relate to each other. ... It's important for me to lift people up, too, so that's my goal--to lift people up. So I want to encourage the emotional link. ... I think this is what it's all about. We all have these things and we all want to be loved. We all want to believe in something. We all want to have friends. We all want to have some sort of connection. (VOA American male reporter)

Freelisting by Gender

Analysis of the freelisting data by gender resulted in slightly more value differences than the analysis by age. The sample of 49 participants who completed the freelisting and selection tasks was almost evenly divided by men and women. The four most important freelisted differences, with a spread of five or more percentage points, were in the values of *aesthetics*, *emotionality*, *helpfulness*, and *justice*. Men tended to emphasize *aesthetics* and *justice* more than the women,

Table 5.3.

Freelisted Responses by Gender.

Gender	Women (n=24)	Men (n=25)
Aesthetics	9%	17%
Breadth	5%	2%
Depth	16%	18%
Emotionality	22%	12%
Freshness	9%	10%
Germaneness	3%	5%
Helpfulness	11%	6%
Incisiveness	9%	7%
Justice	16%	23%

reflecting a striving for what looks and sounds like “real journalism.” One male editor at VOA explained,

I think *aesthetics* is the most important because if something is not listenable, a pleasure to the ear (or the eye, if you’re talking about television), if the message isn’t packaged right, people aren’t going to be listening to it.... So I think there needs to be good production, good writing, an attractive package.

(VOA American male editor)

The *justice* value appeared particularly often among Chinese males, as summarized by this senior male Chinese reporter at the BBC: “The most important

value I choose should be truth. As a news organization, if you do not tell the truth, if you get biased, you know, partial, taking sides and so on, that is the end.” Thus, in emphasizing both *aesthetics* and *justice*, male journalists, both Chinese and Western, acknowledged certain standards that befit members of a professional news organization and focused their attention on being accepted within that context.

Women in the study, on the other hand, more than men, emphasized the values of *emotionality* and *helpfulness*, focusing their attention more on the effect of the news story on the listener than on their role within their organization. Whereas the male participants tended to consider success more a matter of meeting professional standards, female respondents tended to describe deriving satisfaction from knowing that their work had captivated the interest of the audience. An Englishwoman at the BBC explained, “It’s about being sort of approachable, surprising, informative, and fun. It’s that kind of package that tells you a lot of things, but also is just a really entertaining listen.” Another female reporter at the BBC personalized her listeners in this way:

We used to talk about this (proverbial) Nigerian housewife. You know, she’s packed off her kids and husband to go out and do their different things, and then she might sit down and listen to (our program) because it’s entertaining and informative. (BBC English female reporter)

Little difference was evident between the American, British, and Chinese women in the sample. Although the interviews revealed a wide range in their value orientations, one recurring theme that arose was a concern for their work to reach and benefit their audience. One senior Chinese female reporter at VOA told me:

I want my report to touch people's lives, instead of just being a story. I want my reports to be beneficial for people to understand issues, the surrounding environment, and things happening in other countries in ways that can be helpful to their lives. I want my audience to get real benefits from my reporting. (VOA Chinese female reporter)

Freelisting by Journalistic Training

Journalists' level of training produced more differences in freelisted responses than either gender or age. Journalists who had received some formal journalism education were much more likely to emphasize the values of *depth*, *helpfulness*, and *incisiveness* than those who were trained exclusively on the job. Those who received only on-the-job training were more likely emphasize the values of *emotionality* and *justice*.

As noted earlier, journalists with some formal journalism education were more likely than their peers who were trained exclusively on the job to produce *internalized* responses (i.e. value descriptors that reflect an inner sense of what constitutes good journalism) when asked to freelist words they would want to describe their work. For this reason, it is not surprising that *depth*, *helpfulness*, and *incisiveness* are values reported more often by formally-trained journalists, because these values represent the value-added aspects of the field often touted in journalism schools. People who have been through journalism courses are more likely to seek to engage multiple perspectives on issues, as explained by this reporter at the BBC:

Table 5.4.

Freelisted Responses by Level of Journalistic Training.

Training	Formal journalism education (<i>n</i> =24)	On-the-job training (<i>n</i> =25)
Aesthetics	14%	10%
Breadth	3%	4%
Depth	19%	14%
Emotionality	12%	24%
Freshness	10%	8%
Germaneness	5%	4%
Helpfulness	8%	2%
Incisiveness	11%	5%
Justice	18%	24%

Most of my programs are analytical. I've been taught not to analyze the good aspect or the bad aspect of an issue. Maybe there is a perspective you have not been aware of. Now I let you know it. Maybe we can look into the issue from this perspective. This is the first point. Second, ideally, I hope I can do a program reflecting opinions or ideas from multiple perspectives rather than the voices from a single perspective. (BBC Chinese male reporter)

Formally-trained journalists in this study conveyed a sense that their job is not something that just anyone can do—that they have a serious professional responsibility to provide a window to the world that they are uniquely positioned to

provide. The functions of providing *depth*, *helpfulness*, and *incisiveness* were often discussed as filling a needed role in society, as described by a Chinese female editor at CCTV: “I think journalism is not entertainment. One of its important roles is to make the audience think. They don’t need to agree with you. But your stories should motivate them to think.”

Those reporters who had received formal journalism training reflected more confidence than their on-the-job-trained counterparts in their own news judgment and their self-perceived ability to ascertain issues that may have been neglected but need to be brought to public attention. As one Chinese reporter at the BBC describes:

When you produce the news, you have to consider a lot. I think most people will be interested in analyzing different people’s attitudes towards the same thing, especially the sympathetic opinion, because you can see yourself, or others’ opinion. No matter whether it is big, small or disputable, maybe something neglected by others, if it is important I feel it is worthy to be reported. (BBC Chinese male reporter)

In contrast, the tendency for journalists trained exclusively on the job to emphasize *emotionality* may reflect more of an inclination to consider any feedback as positive feedback. Reporters trained on the job had to teach themselves the tricks of the trade based on the responses they received from editors, peers, and audience members. Making stories palatable enough to be consumed and remembered is, for many journalists, a sufficient mark of success. I was told by several journalists that their most satisfying moments come when an audience member tells them that a particular story “made them cry” or even “made them angry,” anything sufficiently

notable to evoke a response. A Chinese journalist at the BBC spoke in culinary terms about the kinds of work she tries to produce:

Maybe something spicy and light...It's not something completely risk-free but interesting enough to attract their attention, a bit on the spicy side, so they get a lovely shock, but then hopefully it wouldn't upset their stomach completely. You can still think, "That's interesting, I'd like to experiment a little bit more." (BBC Chinese female journalist)

Although the Chinese journalists who had received journalistic training were split almost in half in terms of having received their training in the West or in the East, all of the trained Chinese journalists I interviewed, including those who had received state-sponsored training exclusively in China, had significant exposure to Western notions of journalism. The oldest member of the Chinese sample, a senior editor at the Xinhua News Agency, described an interesting anecdote from her journalism education during the revolutionary era:

When I was a master's student in journalism, my American professor was the first to teach journalism after the founding of the People's Republic of China. His name was James Aronson. There was heated discussion regarding whether to hire him in our graduate school and the Academy of Social Sciences in China. Some people argued that we shouldn't let a capitalist professor teach our proletarian journalists. But my advisor contended that we would have to open ourselves to the outside world and make China known to the world. In that case, we need to learn their journalistic skills and style. He maintained that we can learn a lot from the capitalist journalistic skills.

Finally he won and James came. I learned no journalistic principles before he came. (*Laughs...*) I did not even know the ABCs of journalism when I took the national entrance exam to graduate school. I was ignorant of the five Ws. But we knew that we should be honest and our reporting truthful, which was similar to what Aronson taught. His four principles greatly impressed me. They were being resourceful, skeptical, fair, and accurate. He taught all our journalism classes. Nobody else taught us. So, I knew nothing about Chinese journalism theory. (Xinhua Chinese female editor)

Every one of the Chinese journalists who spoke to me about their training were uniformly critical of China's state-sponsored journalism education and expressed a preference for Western theories of reporting. One CCTV reporter described how he supplemented his training with a book from overseas: (In the process, he provided an interesting commentary on how intellectual property is often treated in China at present.)

My most valuable source of training, for me personally, was a book given by a colleague. Probably you may find it interesting as this book was written by an American on how to write news stories. *Newswriting*. It gave me a particularly deep impression. I'd say that it laid the foundation for my journalistic principles, such as justice, fairness, telling the story of each side, giving the other side their rights to speak, and so on. I got this book six months after I entered the TV station from a colleague, a fabulous reporter. He stole this book from the library. (*Laughs...*) He liked it too much. But I didn't steal it from him. I just photocopied the book.

(CCTV Chinese male reporter)

Because the trained Chinese journalists I interviewed overwhelmingly reported having been exposed to Western journalism principles and expressed admiration for them, it is possible to compare the training that they received with that of their Western counterparts. Thus, a qualitative distinction can be made between those (in both West and East) who have been trained in journalism at all, rather than making separate distinctions based on the location or nature of the training. Future studies can enrich this point by exploring differences in the practice of journalism education in different regions of the world.

From the data obtained in this study, it appears that journalism training does make journalists more sensitive to the value-added aspects of journalism such as *depth*, *helpfulness*, and *incisiveness*, that help to establish journalistic credentials and foster a sense of the professional role of journalism in society.

Freelisting by National Origin

The greatest source of strategic value differences in the freelisting data was national origin. When journalists' responses were compared based on national culture, notable differences of five percentage points or greater appeared between *all* of the value categories except for *breadth*: *aesthetics*, *depth*, *emotionality*, *freshness*, *germaneness*, *helpfulness*, *incisiveness*, and *justice*. The Chinese journalists reported more emphasis on the values of *aesthetics*, *depth*, *freshness*, *germaneness*, and *justice*, whereas Western journalists focused more on *emotionality*, *helpfulness*, and *incisiveness*. The most dramatic differences between Eastern and Western reporters

Table 5.5.

Freelisted Responses by National Origin.

National Origin	Chinese (n=30)	Western (n=19)
Aesthetics	15%	9%
Breadth	3%	3%
Depth	20%	12%
Emotionality	7%	34%
Freshness	12%	6%
Germaneness	7%	2%
Helpfulness	6%	11%
Incisiveness	4%	13%
Justice	26%	10%

centered on *emotionality* and *justice*, with Western journalists placing more emphasis on *emotionality* and Chinese journalists placing much more emphasis on *justice*.

In their interviews, the Chinese journalists in the study emphasized balance and objectivity, even at the cost of emotional impact. I was told several times in China about a Chinese idiom, which translates as, “Don’t broadcast it; don’t stir the pot.” One Chinese reporter explains the idiom as follows:

Buyao bao, buyao chao (不要报，不要炒) means don’t sensationalize it. We should be objective. It doesn’t necessarily mean that you shouldn’t cover a certain event, but it stresses the importance of objective reporting. You

should not focus on the sensational. If you cover a small thing every day, then it'll become a big issue. (CCTV Chinese female reporter)

Chao (炒) in Chinese refers to stir-frying: mixing ingredients and heating them quickly over an open fire. After China's tumultuous 20th century that brought about cataclysmic change, most of the Chinese reporters I spoke with in the early part of the 21st century placed a great emphasis on stability and sticking to the facts.

Because the China media are in a period of establishing their professional credentials in the world, I was told, the emphasis at present is on building a reputation based on accurate and respectable reporting and on the *aesthetics* of a carefully-crafted professional style. Many Chinese journalists I spoke with equated *emotionality* with editorializing, or attempting to access the audience's judgment through their feelings.

A journalist at the Xinhua News Agency explained:

You cannot teach or editorialize. Just give people information, they'll make decisions. Balance is important. I think most of your readers will make sound decisions if you give them balanced narratives. They'll make the right decision. But if you are biased, one-sided, you are leading them to conclusions. This is not good. That's my observation of objective. Also you want to make sure what you are reporting is true, not false. This is included in what I mean by objective. (Xinhua Chinese male reporter)

When asked in follow-up focus group interviews why they had not particularly emphasized justice, British and American reporters responded that it was "patently obvious" that news reports need to be accurate and objective. "It just goes without saying that news needs to be factual," a female BBC reporter commented.

“It’s like saying that there needs to be water in the ocean.” An American VOA reporter explained that talking about being factual is stating the obvious and that, “Likewise, we don’t need to talk much about good spelling. Of course we need to have good spelling.” The larger question among the Western broadcasters that I heard most frequently was how to make reports interesting in order to get them consumed. Both the BBC and VOA are organizations that have been charged for decades with the difficult task of broadcasting to vastly disparate people around the world with little or no feedback, so journalists in these organizations are likely to be constantly searching for ways to engage foreign audiences.

Describing his work in culinary terms, one BBC reporter told me about his recipe for success: to add spice and plenty of variety in order to make his pieces as emotionally evocative as possible.

My work would be like (the Spanish dish), paella. Because basically, you’ve got a rice base, which are the words, and you have all these other exotic things thrown in, and colors and flavors. I mean, paella just springs to mind because of the saffron, and the peppers, and the chicken, and prawns, and all kinds of shit. And that’s essentially what it is, a mixed dish. You have to be interesting. I mean, you can make bone dull, dead, boring, ghastly features, or they should be in some way spicy and interesting or really unique.

(BBC British male reporter)

One way that the Western reporters I spoke with said they go about making their work interesting and unique is through *incisive* investigative reporting.

Although the mandates of VOA and the BBC World Service are somewhat different

than their domestic commercial counterparts, the reporters I spoke with at both agencies expressed a genuine sense of responsibility to dig deep for special, probing stories to bring to their audiences abroad. A senior American editor at VOA described his desire to help international listeners understand the heart of important issues in the U.S.:

In order to understand something, you need to get to the heart of it, and the heart is a complex place. When you're listening to a piece that's talking about an important topic, you want something that cuts to the heart of the matter and makes it clear and understandable. And in order to do that, I think it needs to be incisive and probing to get to what the essential truths are.

(VOA American male editor)

Chinese reporters, on the other hand, despite their propensity to cite *freshness* as an important value, rarely said they strove for *incisiveness*. A clear line existed for them between permitted and unpermitted probing for information. A Chinese journalist for CCTV told me about the furthest he ever went in his investigative reporting:

I found a big company in China that did nothing about it when their enclosure wall started leaning to one side. It was like the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Many people were afraid that it would fall down and hurt people. I reported on this because I thought this company didn't care about human life and health. I asked many people for their opinions about what to do about the wall and they all suggested tearing it down. Because of this small story, I became concerned about justice for the first time. (CCTV Chinese male reporter)

Although this report probed into information that was potentially damaging for the company concerned, such a story is far from rocking the system in China and causing the kind of instability that may be troubling for the current leadership. A young male editor at CCTV spoke about how Chinese culture and politics come together to prevent *incisive* reporting from going too far:

Chinese tradition tells us to follow commands of our leaders and the senior members of the society, such as our parents. Chinese culture requires us to respect the old and love the young. Respecting the old means that you should obey your parents and not do things to make them unhappy. In terms of work, particularly media policy, our communist government states that the media belongs to the state. This is China. So, this policy portrays the government as a senior member of the society and we must be obedient to them. We must follow the rules. So, I think both our culture and communism play a role in it. As an individual member of society, I know we should obey our parents and seniors. As an employee, we should obey our leaders.

(CCTV Chinese male editor)

Despite China's economic reforms and media globalization, the communist framework still exerts a heavy degree of influence on journalistic decision-making. Yet the changes in China resulted in some surprising value interpretations. For instance, because the Chinese media system developed under a communist framework as "a movement of the liberated people to educate and reform themselves by democratic methods of learning" (Kuo, 1950, p. 2), it was surprising to find *helpfulness* rank so low among today's Chinese journalists. One explanation for this

result is that to be helpful, a journalist must have an opinion on what would be beneficial to listeners; most of the Chinese reporters I interviewed were reluctant to express their own opinions through their reporting. A Chinese journalist at VOA explained:

I am a reporter, not a judge. So I cannot judge the matter. We should remove any judgment and strive for balance, which is the basis of news from my point of view. This is what I always emphasizing, being complete and being impartial. (VOA Chinese female reporter)

Chinese journalists may view the best way to be helpful as withholding judgment and striving for neutral coverage. The message I heard repeatedly was: package stories well (*aesthetics*), do careful research (*depth*), find fresh topics (*freshness*), make them relevant to the audience (*germaneness*), but above all don't take sides (*justice*).

Freelisting by Organization

Interpreting the data by organization is easier after examining the effect of national culture on journalists' responses within the freelisting task. The Chinese tendency toward emphasizing *justice* remains apparent, as is the Western focus on *emotionality*, particularly at the BBC. *Freshness* also emerged as a relatively important value among those interviewed in China compared to their Western counterparts.

The Chinese reporters I spoke with expressed a great sense of responsibility for the effect of their reporting, and took pride presenting the facts without

Table 5.6.

Freelisted Values by Organization.

Organization	VOA (n=20)	BBC (n=19)	Chinese media (n=10)
Aesthetics	14%	8%	17%
Breadth	2%	5%	2%
Depth	20%	14%	17%
Emotionality	15%	25%	5%
Freshness	9%	2%	16%
Germaneness	4%	4%	5%
Helpfulness	7%	10%	5%
Incisiveness	10%	8%	4%
Justice	19%	19%	29%

commentary. Although this emphasis on *justice* may in part be related to the current historical moment in which Chinese journalists find themselves, an organizational component is evident, as well. For example, a young reporter at CCTV talked about overt attempts within her organization to encourage more circumspect reporting:

CCTV often holds trainings for us, to make our coverage more effective...

The biggest principle is truthful reporting. Sometimes we have meetings. For instance, I don't know if you know it, we had a very brave policewoman a while ago. Her name is Ren Changxia. CCTV held a stationwide meeting in

commemoration of her. It encouraged truthful coverage of her, instead of exaggeration. (CCTV Chinese female reporter)

Although what constitutes truth and exaggeration is unclear in the context of a stationwide meeting in commemoration of a brave policewoman, still attempts were made to discourage journalists from lionizing public personalities beyond the limits of common credibility. A Chinese radio journalist for China Radio International told me that his organization's primary stated value is that, "You must be truthful. The primary principle of journalism is factual. Put it simply, it has no exaggeration and hiding, just true reporting. People have their own judgments. It's not your job to teach them."

Along with this increased emphasis on gaining credibility as a mark of professionalism on the world stage, the Chinese reporters I interviewed also divulged an increasing sense of competition with other news agencies to find fresh news and get it out quickly. A reporter at China Radio International told me about the pressure he felt to report the news about 9/11 as quickly as possible:

The *xin* (新) in *xinwen* (新闻, news) means that nobody else knows about it.

You send out this 'fresh' information to your audience as soon as you can.

Also, we should send out the information in a fast and simple way. For example, when 9/11 took place, I was watching it on TV and couldn't believe it. But I knew it was not a movie, but a true event. So I sent out the news right away in the most simple and direct way possible.

(CRI Chinese male reporter)

Both the English and Chinese languages have “new” as the root of the word for “news.” However, the journalists interviewed for this study were mostly feature reporters, so pressures to report breaking news quickly are significantly less for them than for their hard news colleagues. Yet as Chinese news gain prominence worldwide, competitive pressures are likely raise the stakes on market share, driving *freshness* increasingly to the fore.

In Summary

An analysis of journalists’ freelisted values reveals strategic considerations of journalists in a pressure-free context. From these lists of words, this coding scheme helped to discern a notable patterns between the participants based on demographic factors. Using these tools derived from the journalists’ discourse, the voluminous interview data can be understood in a more meaningful way, grounded and contextualized in the values of journalists themselves.

Before proceeding with the interview data, the journalists’ presentational values are first examined in a forced-choice scenario that supplements the more ideal freelisting data with the important values that emerge under a context of constraints. Moving from ideal to constrained choices sheds light on the types of limitations that affect journalists’ decision-making in actual work contexts.

Chapter 6: Selection Task

Forced-Choice Scenario

Constant time pressures, rigid editorial policies, tight resource allocation, and a complex host of shifting market demands make a journalist's job a perpetual game of arranging and rank-ordering priorities to meet the demands of the hour. Because journalists work under such constraints, it is necessary in the research process to cause participants to think carefully about which presentational values mean the most to them in an environment of limitations. Although such strategic decisions are necessarily context-bound, it is helpful to our analysis to ask journalists to select and rank their top priorities in a neutral context to discover if there is patterning in their selection by the five demographic factors—gender, age, training, organization, and national origin.

Journalists' value choices were examined in a forced-choice context: journalists were presented after their interview and freelisting task with a set of ten envelopes (in random order) labeled with the words *Aesthetic/Beautiful*, *Broad/Comprehensive*, *Convenient/Easy to produce*, *Deep/Analytical*, *Emotional/Moving*, *Fresh/Original*, *Germane/Relevant*, *Helpful/Beneficial*,

Table 6.1.

Value Categories and Descriptions Used in Selection Task.

Values presented in round 1	Elaborated descriptions presented in round 2
Aesthetic/Beautiful	A program with rich sound and smooth production elements.
Broad/Comprehensive	A program that could speak to the experience of almost everyone.
Convenient/Easy to produce	A program that can be produced relatively quickly and easily.
Deep/Complex	A program that will make the audience think.
Emotional/Moving	A program that will touch the audience's hearts.
Fresh/Original	A program about something that has hardly hit the press yet.
Germane/Relevant	A program related to events at this point in time.
Helpful/Beneficial	A program that will benefit the lives of those who listen.
Incisive/Probing	A program that skillfully exercises the media's "watchdog" role.
Just/Balanced	A program that fairly represents a balance of perspectives.

Incisive/Probing, and *Just/Balanced*. Each journalist was asked to select the three envelopes that represented the presentational values that they felt were most important to their work and to rank these top three in order of importance. I then took the envelope the journalist had selected as number one and opened it to reveal ten slips of paper on which were written out longer descriptions of each of the ten value categories—these slips of paper were identical in each of the ten envelopes. The sentences read as follows: “A program with rich sound and smooth production elements” (*aesthetics*), “a program that could speak to the experience of almost

everyone” (*breadth*), “a program that can be produced relatively quickly and easily” (*convenience*), “a program that will make the audience think” (*depth*), “a program that will touch the audience’s hearts” (*emotionality*), “a program about something that has hardly hit the press yet” (*freshness*), “a program related to events at this point in time” (*germaneness*), “a program that will benefit the lives of those who listen” (*helpfulness*), “a program that skillfully exercises the media’s ‘watchdog’ role” (*incisiveness*), and “a program that fairly reflects a balance of perspectives” (*justice*).

As discussed in chapter four, these ten descriptive sentences were pilot tested previously with ten international journalists at VOA who did not take part in the project and reliability between the category words and their more elaborated descriptions was 100%.

In the present study, after the ten slips of paper from the top-ranked envelope were laid out in random order, each journalist was again asked to choose his or her top three and rank them in order of importance. This two-layer approach, asking journalists to make their selections first based on the one-word descriptions and subsequently based on the longer phrases provided a deeper level of validation for the journalists’ true values of emphasis. Each of the journalists’ set of selections were ranked by a simple scoring system: three points for each first choice, two points for each second choice, and one point for each third choice. Therefore, the range of possible scores for each value across the two trials was zero-to-six: zero if a journalist had never selected a certain category, and six if they had selected a particular category as their first choice twice (i.e., 3+3). Summing these totals among the

categories made it possible to plot the scores graphically and examine patterns of emphasis across the five samples.

Raw scores were derived by adding the total points for each of the value categories down the lines of each demographic sample (male vs. female, 40/over vs. 39/under, formal journalism education vs. on-the-job training, Chinese vs. Western national origin, and VOA vs. BBC vs. Chinese media). The scores were then normalized to 100 total selection points to account for differences in the sample sizes by calculating a basic percentage of the total score for each value selected within the sample out of 100 possible points. This way, the scores were comparable across samples, regardless of differences in the number of participants in each group. The numbers listed in the following tables reflect the normalized scores within each sample. Value categories with a greater than five-point spread between samples are discussed at length. Five points was used as a threshold for significance in this study because of the qualitative judgment that this level of difference was also reflective of a basic threshold of significance within the interview data.

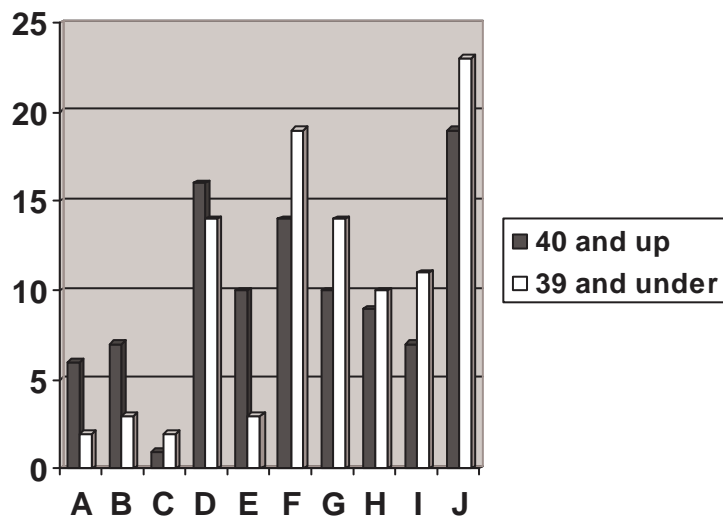
Selection Task by Age

In the selection task, age turned out to be a relatively insignificant source of differences between the samples—all of the value categories experienced less than a five-point difference between those over 40 and those under 39, except for the case of *emotionality*, which had a 7-point spread. As in the case of the freelisting, *emotionality* turned out to be more emphasized among those over 40. The data indicate that this trend may be due to the fact that, by the time journalists reach the age of 40, they have heard a lot of reporting—years of breaking news, facts, statistics,

Table 6.2.

Normalized Selection Task Scores by Age.

Category	40 and over <i>n</i> = 29	39 and under <i>n</i> = 20
Aesthetics	6	2
Breadth	7	3
Convenience	1	2
Depth	16	14
Emotionality	10	3
Freshness	14	18
Germaneness	10	14
Helpfulness	9	10
Incisiveness	7	11
Justice	19	23



quotes from famous people, and in-depth reports from around the world. From the data, it appears that senior reporters feel they have already “earned their wings” and proven themselves as serious journalists, thus their need to demonstrate their professional competence is somewhat reduced. Experienced journalists understand the value of cutting through the overwhelming cacophony of each day’s sober news

with more emotionally evocative stories that touch the heart. An older journalist at the BBC who responds to listener mail explained why emotive stories are important:

I think that it's interesting that we tend to get fewer requests for the major series on the really serious topics. For example, when we've done topics like the United Nations and analysis of that, we tend not to get requests for that, whereas we would get requests for an unusual item, an unusual interview, or a piece from a drama. It's probably because people absorb the information once they've heard it. I'm sure they liked it, but they don't want to hear it again. Whereas something that made them laugh or made them cry they do want to hear again. (BBC British female reporter)

The older reporters I spoke with, both in China, at VOA, and at the BBC, were much more likely to refer to their job as “storytelling” than the younger reporters, and to articulate a desire to make an emotional connection with listeners, as articulated by the oldest member of our sample, a senior feature reporter at VOA:

I think writing is an emotional experience. I think listening is an emotional experience. And I think that that's one of the things that makes radio different from print, in that it has life, it has emotion. I don't mean pathos, but it has flesh and blood, almost. And I think that it does make an impact. (VOA American male reporter)

Following *emotionality*, the other most significant differences were found between the older and younger samples in the categories of *aesthetics*, *breadth*, *freshness*, *germaneness*, *incisiveness*, and *justice*, which each received a spread of 4 points. A senior Chinese reporter at the BBC World Service elaborates on all of these

values at once, likening a journalist's storytelling to great artwork that sets itself apart from the crowd with its universal ability to convey originality and meaning:

There must be fresh and original elements in your programs. You cannot copy the dated stories reported in previous programs. If you did so, your programs, no matter radio or TV, would be boring and meaningless. We must make our programs fresh and original. Listening to a program shouldn't be like eating a piece of dry bread. Freshness and originality are very important for radio programs. You must make your programs beautiful artwork.

Producing a program is like writing a novel, a story, or making a piece of art. You must make relevant programs to which people say "yes." In order to produce good programs, you must be balanced and tell both sides of every story. You must provide your audiences with information for them to judge.

(BBC Chinese female reporter)

Because the proclivity of the older journalists was to concentrate on the *emotional* impact of their work in both the freelisting and selection tasks, as well as in the interviews, this is a robust finding. In the way grandparents pass along their wisdom to the next generation by telling stories and relishing the gasps and wide eyes of their audience, there seems to be a tendency as journalists age for them to conceive of their work more as storytelling and to enjoy the emotionally evocative aspects of the journalistic enterprise.

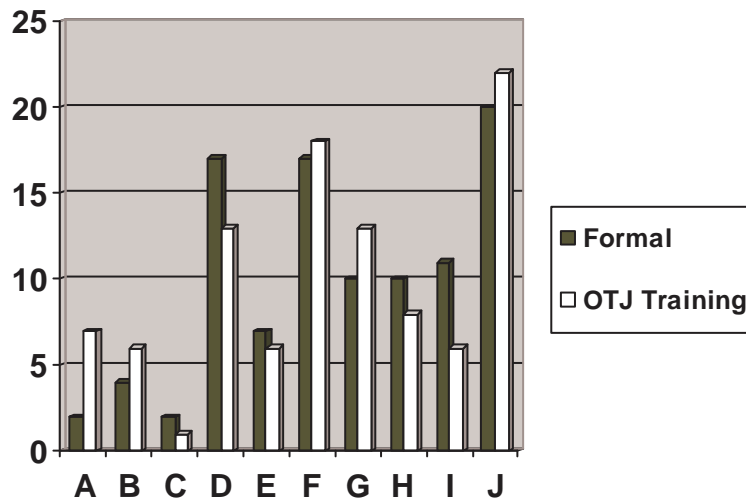
Selection Task by Training

Table 6.3 shows that the selection task data reveals that the level of journalistic training did not produce a large effect in the forced-choice scenario. The

Table 6.3.

Normalized Selection Task Scores by Level of Formal Journalistic Training.

Category	Formal education <i>n</i> =23	On-the-job training <i>n</i> =26
Aesthetics	2	7
Breadth	4	6
Convenience	2	1
Depth	17	13
Emotionality	7	6
Freshness	17	18
Germaneness	10	13
Helpfulness	10	8
Incisiveness	11	6
Justice	20	22



two value dimensions that reflect a spread of five points are *aesthetics* and *incisiveness*, with the journalists who had been trained entirely on the job favoring *aesthetics* and the journalists with some degree of formal journalism education favoring *incisiveness*. This result is not surprising, in that journalists who have had to learn their job completely within a professional broadcast organization are more likely to be caught up in trying to make their pieces look or sound professional

enough to meet the standards of their colleagues and editors. Because they did not have an opportunity to experiment with writing or editing for broadcast in college, they must catch up to their peers and focus more attention on the nuts and bolts of news production. Because the *aesthetics* dimension focuses on packaging elements such as flow, organization, concision, and tone, which often differ between journalistic and academic writing, such issues should become important for journalists who are trained exclusively on the job, thus setting a pattern into these reporters' expectations and standards for their work, even after they are fully trained and have been in the organization for years.

Most of the reporters I spoke with described their entry into their organization as a "do or die" experience with very little in the way of formal classroom instruction. A British journalist summed up her experiences, which were echoed by many others in the study, when she described her training at the BBC World Service:

They are very good about taking in people who know nothing and teaching them a whole load of stuff. So all the producers there really bent over backwards to make sure that new people like me who arrive knowing next to nothing really learn things while we're there. So the sort of on-the-job training there was very informal; it was all very much, you know, "Do you want to have a go at doing this?" "These are the things you'll need." "Go away, do it, we'll talk about it and work it out and put it together and give you feedback and that sort of thing." It was all giving you opportunities to see if you kind of flew or didn't. They don't have massive resources, and so they really try their best to make the most out of everybody who's there.

(BBC British female reporter)

In this context, time and resource pressures may lead to journalists turning out acceptable work as quickly as possible without much discussion of the roles and functions of reporting in society. Journalists with some level of formal classroom instruction in journalism prior to entering the organization, however, seem to be expected to have a much more developed sense of their responsibility and the unique role they play, which translated in this study into an emphasis on *incisiveness*.

Formal journalism education in the classroom usually carries with it exposure to journalistic codes of ethics and the examination of case studies regarding the role of journalism in society. This level of guided critique directs students' attention to the value of investigative journalism and stimulates their interest in doing their own responsible reporting. A Chinese reporter at VOA with a Master's degree in journalism from a U.S. university says that he feels his training had two purposes:

One is to teach students the skills to report news, such as teaching them how to interview people, how to write news, how to edit, and to help them build good judgment to decide what should be the news and what should not. The other purpose is to teach students good ethics. Beyond knowing how to report, we also need to know what is a reporter's responsibility. Reporters should have integrity and know how to assure their own neutrality. Generally speaking, this is the purpose of journalism school.

(VOA Chinese male reporter)

Although, in the freelisting exercise *depth*, *emotionality*, *helpfulness*, *incisiveness*, and *justice* all carried larger differences between those who had been

trained in the classroom versus on the job, in the selection task, there was little difference in these dimensions. The five-point differences in *aesthetics* and *incisiveness* do reveal, however, that journalists who have been formally trained may be more likely to dig more deeply into stories, whereas those trained on the job may have to concentrate more on stylistic elements that give their work broadcast quality. However, because these effects are slight, not too much emphasis should be placed on these potential differences.

Selection Task by Gender

A variation by gender was evident between the ideal-value freelisting task and the forced-choice selection task. Whereas females were more inclined to cite values of *emotionality* and *helpfulness* in the freelisting, these values were more often selected by males in the selection task, although not to a notably large degree. In the selection task, women tended more toward values of *germaneness* and *incisiveness*, to a degree of seven and six points over men, respectively. The value of *justice* was selected more often by males in both the freelisting and the selection task, and reported more often in the interviews, producing a robust finding.

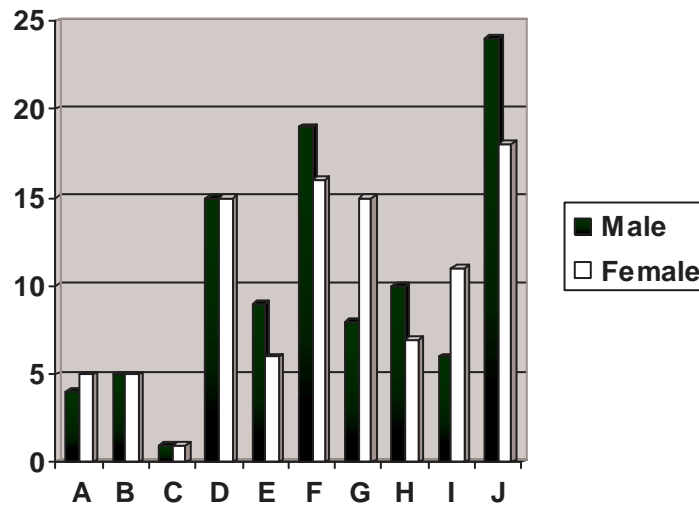
The women in the study spoke frequently about trying to stay updated on current affairs and finding ways to make events relevant in the lives of their listeners. A frequent concept that emerged from the women's discourse was *connection*, as in digging out information on interesting and important topics and interpreting them to help make a connection with audiences abroad.

A senior American reporter and program host at VOA discussed that, to her, being *germane* meant that:

Table 6.4.

Normalized Selection Task Scores by Gender.

Category	Male <i>n</i> =25	Female <i>n</i> =24
Aesthetics	4	6
Breadth	5	5
Convenience	1	>1
Depth	15	15
Emotionality	9	6
Freshness	19	16
Germaneness	8	15
Helpfulness	10	7
Incisiveness	6	11
Justice	24	18



What I try to do is to make a human connection, both in my style as the host and also in making sure that our choice of stories that we cover is what's really going on. I assume that a lot of the major stories that happen in this country are covered in English-language newspapers all over the world, so just because we don't cover them doesn't mean they don't know about it.

That's why I feel that it's important that we cover them, because I'm in a position to do it without too much bias. At least I try.

(VOA American female reporter).

In other words, because this reporter feels that her audience already has gained a sense through other channels of “what’s going on,” she needs to offer a unique and (she hopes) unbiased perspective on widely-known current events. Because *germaneness* is an intersubjective social construction—an agreement about *what’s hot now*—a reporter who strives to be *germane* will value keeping abreast of what people believe to be the most important things going on in the world around them. This approach necessitates a degree of *incisiveness*, as well, to allow a reporter to dig out deeper details on an agreed-upon “scoop” and interpret what it may mean for people’s lives in some meaningful way.

Because different political systems prohibit journalists from digging out details in various ways, *incisiveness* is necessarily bound up in context. A Chinese reporter working for the international arm of the Xinhua News Agency agrees with her American and British counterparts about *germaneness* and *incisiveness*, explaining how *germaneness* helps to connect readers to the world of events. However, she also comments on how her own goal toward *incisive* reporting is frustrated in the current political context in which she operates:

Everybody wants to know what is going on and what is related to our life.

This is the mindset of the majority of readers. Some events are quite distant from our lives, but people want to know what exactly happened and what part is connected to their lives. The second part is social responsibility, which is

vital for reporters. They are responsible to identify social problems and press the government to change them. As far as this is concerned, I don't think our reporters have done enough, because of the resistant forces involved.

(Xinhua Chinese female reporter)

A British reporter at the BBC echoed this sentiment that was repeated among female reporters about why *germaneness* is so important: "I suppose it's about finding some basic humanity which teaches you something or makes you amazed at the amazingness of people, or moves you in sharing that bit of humanity across the distance, that kind of thing" (BBC British female reporter). This finding is consistent with Deborah Tannen's (1991) analysis that women tend to more often use communication as *rapport-talk* to foster a sense of connection and intimacy, whereas men are more prone to communicate in *report-talk* for the purpose of conveying information and establishing respect. If strategies in mediated communication, even across national boundaries, can be considered an extension of our interpersonal tendencies, this would help explain the female emphasis on *germaneness* as a means toward building rapport with listeners. More work would need to be done to further explore this linkage between gendered interpersonal and broadcast style.

Although this kind of reaching across boundaries and finding common elements between people could fall under *breadth*, in the selection task, female participants were three times more likely to choose "a program related to events at this point in time" (*germaneness*) over "a program that could speak to the experience of almost everyone" (*breadth*). This result may be because, in the selection task,

journalists were faced with prioritizing based on the real-world constraints of their job. Another BBC reporter explained:

I mean, I'm a journalist, I have to make programs that are relevant. I have to write an announcement at the top of the program that says, "This program is about this because..." The audience has to know why they're listening to it. If they don't know why they're listening to it within about 90 seconds, why should they? (BBC British female journalist)

As for the tendency of males in this study to cite *justice* as a preeminent value in both the freelisting and the selection task, the significant contribution of Chinese males in the sample toward this value is noteworthy—all but one (15 out of 16) of the Chinese men who participated selected *justice* at least once in the selection task, and 13 of the 16 selected it twice—once during the first round that consisted of words, and once during the second round that consisted of sentences. A strong indication came through in the interview data that *justice* and balance meant striving for objectivity and neutrality, as described by this senior Chinese journalist at the BBC:

Right or wrong? Positive or negative? It is not you but your audiences and readers who decide what is right, what is wrong, what is positive, and what is negative. If possible, we should present different perspectives of looking at the world. Then your audiences make their own choices. It is very important for them to make the choices. (BBC Chinese male reporter)

Of the nine Western men in the study, only three of them chose *justice* in the selection task, thus this value's relationship with national origin needs to be examined more closely.

Selection Task by National Origin

In the selection task, as with the freelisting, national origin was clearly the largest source of differences between the samples. *Aesthetics, breadth, emotionality, helpfulness, and justice* all resulted in large differences between the Chinese and Western reporters. The only dimension that did not also show a difference in the freelisting task was *breadth*, which was more important in the selection task, particularly among the American and British reporters. Because the selection task related more to pragmatic values operating on a day-to-day basis, this emphasis on *breadth* among Western reporters in the selection task is likely a consequence of the broad and difficult mandate of the English services of VOA and the BBC to communicate with vastly disparate audiences in cultures around the world. A British editor at the BBC reflected the difficulty I heard expressed by English-speaking reporters at both the BBC and VOA over trying to craft programs that can appeal to audiences in extremely different circumstances. This BBC editor commented:

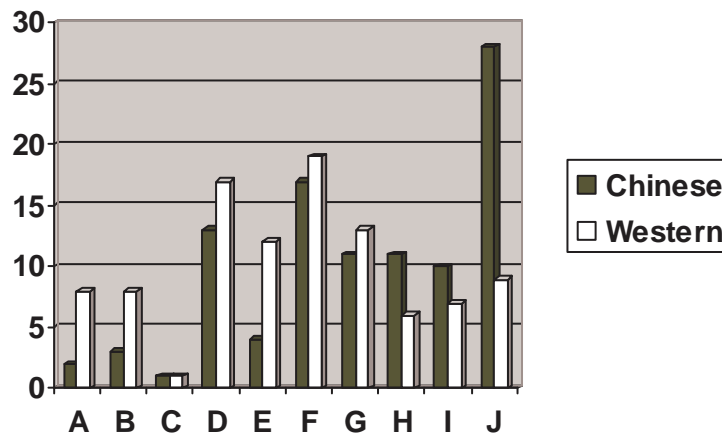
It's very, very hard, but I do know that we have sort of half our audience in Africa, and at the same time, we have a growing audience in America. And then in Australia, China, Singapore, and different places – so it's bloody hard to make it work for Africa and make it work for the U.S. I try and look at things that would work for both, as a way to simplify it in my mind, I suppose. When I look at things, I think, "What would that sound like in Africa? Or what would that sound like in the U.S.?" There's been no audience research done in my area, which drives me completely bonkers.

(BBC British female editor)

Table 6.5.

Normalized Selection Task Scores by National Origin.

Category	Chinese <i>n=30</i>	Western <i>n=19</i>
Aesthetics	2	8
Breadth	3	8
Convenience	1	>1
Depth	13	17
Emotionality	4	12
Freshness	17	19
Germaneness	11	13
Helpfulness	11	6
Incisiveness	10	7
Justice	28	9



Trying to make programs have sufficient *breadth* to appeal to widely diverse audiences in different circumstances requires international journalists to use all the tools available to them, which helps to explain the emphases on *aesthetics* and *emotionality* also reflected in the Western sample. The journalists I spoke with acknowledged that nothing succeeds in transcending national boundaries as much as the universal languages of music, art, and human experience. A reporter at the BBC

explains the degree to which the values of *breadth*, *aesthetics*, and *emotionality* are tied together:

Different sectors of the audience like different things, and we try to please them all. There is no doubt that big names are very much appreciated across the globe. We have a fair smattering of various celebrities, and particularly we cover film a lot. We do live performances on this show every week, on the grounds that our listeners don't get a chance to consume firsthand culture in the way that we do. So I try to make sure in every show that there's something, a cultural experience. So we have live music or poetry or live stand-up or whatever. And that gets tremendous response. Beyond that, it's stories and features that touch a nerve. It's often human stories. It's often personal success against the odds. And it's stories that bleed into a social or political theme that means a lot to people. (BBC British female reporter)

In the Chinese selection task data, there is an emphasis on *helpfulness* that was not found in the freelisting. Those who selected *helpfulness* were most likely to be at VOA, because 80% of Chinese journalists interviewed at VOA selected this value, as opposed to 40% of those at the BBC and 20% in China. Examining the interview data, the reporters at VOA tended toward a certain definition of *helpfulness*, namely helping Chinese listeners to have access to information that would otherwise be denied them by the Chinese government's censorship policies. One young journalist at VOA explained:

Many stories we report here cannot be obtained back in China, or very few of them could reach the audience there. For instance, we cover dissidents in

China, stories about Chinese immigrants, and things happening in China. But probably some of them cannot be allowed to be reported by the Chinese government; so we should make them news stories, say, demonstrations in HK, protests in Tibet, or relations between Mainland China and Taiwan. Chinese media will not release much information on those topics, but we will. We are very special in this way to help Chinese know what has happened. (VOA Chinese male reporter)

A Chinese journalist at the BBC echoed the same view:

My audiences benefit from my work. At least they can find out more about things otherwise kept as secrets from them. A free flow of information is very important. In China, you will be in trouble and thrown into jail if your opinions are too sensitive. As we all know, human beings have the right to know the information they want to know. Therefore, I believe our job is to provide them the information. (BBC Chinese female reporter)

Because of perceptions like these, it is not surprising that the overwhelming tendency for Chinese journalists in this study was to cite *justice* as a preeminent factor in their news decision-making. The pattern was striking: 26 of the 30 participating Chinese journalists selected *justice* at least once when presented with the selection task, making it the largest spread in any of the ten factors in the systematic data-gathering exercises.

At first consideration, it may seem that the Chinese journalists at VOA and the BBC may be somehow qualitatively different from their peers still working in China. After all, these journalists have left their home country and become employed by

media organizations overseas that are perceived as a threat by the Chinese government. Chinese who voluntarily seek work at such foreign agencies may be more likely to espouse an admiration for *justice*, objectivity, and freedom of the press. However, when compared with their counterparts at VOA and the BBC, the journalists interviewed in China who are currently employed by official Chinese media organizations turned out to be just as likely to emphasize *justice* in their responses as their peers. Among Chinese journalists at VOA, the ranked value of *justice* selections was 25% of total possible selection points, among Chinese at the BBC it was 32%, and in China the percentage was 28%, right in between VOA and the BBC. Given that this value was expressed similarly by Chinese journalists across the board in both the freelisting exercise and the interviews, combined with the significant weight it received from all three subsets of participants, the Chinese propensity to cite *justice* as a value is a robust and significant finding. However, to further explicate, the interview data show that there may be interesting differences between how “*justice*” is construed in China and the West.

Justice East and West

As discussed earlier, the Chinese journalists in the study tended to equate *justice* with completely neutral objectivity, balancing perspectives reflected in a program to the point that the journalist’s agenda is completely invisible. A Chinese reporter at the BBC explained:

Balance is the most important principle in news production. I believe every coin has two sides. Every story has different sides. I believe this idea is true because of my background. How should we report news? We should report

news in a balanced way. If you look at the world only from one perspective, you cannot present a full picture. Although you argue your viewpoint is right, many people will disagree with you. Therefore, we should try to report a story from various perspectives, in a balanced way.

(BBC Chinese male reporter)

The reporter's comment that he feels "this idea is true because of my background" raises the question of whether or not there may be a degree to which this inclination toward neutrality is inherent in Chinese thinking. A Chinese reporter at VOA interestingly rooted this tendency in traditional Chinese Confucian ethics, in the philosophy of the *zhongyong* (中庸), translated loosely as the golden mean, or the balance between opposites. He explained, "Chinese like *zhongyong*, which in its essence has some commonality with journalism because in the news we need to be just, we need to be neutral and balanced. We need to listen to both sides and combine them together" (VOA Chinese male reporter). Further research should examine whether there is indeed evidence of a classically Chinese "yin/yang" striving toward balancing of perspectives and ideologies in journalism, which could perhaps indicate a resurgence of ancient Confucian and/or Daoist ethics in China's approach to the 21st century.

One reason the Chinese data on *justice* are so interesting is because of the contrast in the definition of *justice* between the Chinese reporters and their Western counterparts. Whereas Chinese journalists had a strong tendency to equate *justice* with refraining from favoring one side of a debate or the other in their coverage, the American and British journalists had less of a problem with allowing their own

opinions of right and wrong to enter more clearly into their reporting. For the British journalists at the BBC, *justice* was a matter of social justice, of striving toward global diversity in making sure that all voices, even those of the disenfranchised, are heard and valued. The American reporters, on the other hand, while also articulating a desire to value and benefit all people, were more likely to equate these values with the core principles of America as they perceive them—freedom, democracy, and American-style governance. Although the BBC reporters invoked a sense of universal ethics removed from any one country, the VOA reporters were more likely to identify the United States, with its own diverse society, as a representation of diversity and justice.

At the BBC, I heard from British reporters a genuine striving for social justice around the world. One reporter gave a vivid illustration of the sense of responsibility he feels to use his position of power as an international broadcaster to air the voices of the otherwise voiceless:

I have this intense privilege of getting on the commuter train in the morning, coming into London, and making things that more than 40 million people around the world will hear. To me, that feels like a position of astonishing power and responsibility, so I use that power and responsibility... and this is going to sound pompous... to let ordinary people speak. There was a guy in the Madagascan rain forest who used to live in the rain forest, then along came the foreign timber companies and said, "We can make you lots of money," and they chopped down his rain forest. "You can't live there any more, so we're chopping it down." So he was moved out and he festered in

some village; it's not the way of life he normally had. So the foreign NGO's came along and said, "The logging is bad. We'll stop the logging and make your forest a national park." He says, "Great." Then the logging stops and the NGOs say, "But you can't go back and live in there; it's a national park." And they put a fence around it. So the Madagascan guy, when he actually went to America and visited Yosemite or the Grand Canyon, the thing that stunned him about it was that nobody lived there. To a Madagascan, forests only live if people live there. Without people, the forest dies, that is what their culture says. They sustainably use it for honey, for animals; they're nomadic. The point is, nobody hears that guy unless he's in my program. So that's the kind of high-faluting crusade zeal we feel.

(BBC British male reporter)

This desire to give voice to disenfranchised sectors of society was not uncommon among the BBC reporters I interviewed, such as this journalist who described what it takes to make him feel effective:

What makes me feel effective is when I've given... it sounds terribly pretentious, but when I've given the voiceless a voice. There are real people who are being squashed by circumstance. You can say half the world drinks dirty water, but go and spend time with those people and get diarrhea and see their children die and it becomes a bit more important. You cannot, in this kind of job, build a wall or a moat or look the other way if you're going to be inclusive and do your job. (BBC British male reporter)

According to this reporter, then, “doing your job” means being inclusive. This same sense of universal mission was expressed by others at the BBC as well. *Balance* was articulated as not so much about being completely neutral and having no opinion, but about making sure that all views are expressed within a larger sense of fairness and respect. Another journalist at the BBC mused:

It’s the whole argument about being on the side of the angels, isn’t it? You know, do you say that apartheid is right, or do you get somebody on to support apartheid, or do you get someone from the British National Party expressing their racist views? Do you get somebody on from the Mujahadin to say that jihad against the West is necessary? That 9/11 was the best thing? I think there are times when that point of view must be expressed. But immediately it needs to be balanced. You couldn’t get somebody on the radio saying that 9/11 was the best thing that ever happened, in isolation. I mean, that just sounds wrong. It’s not rocket science, but I mean, I have actually done an interview with somebody saying 9/11 was the best thing that ever happened, but that was in the context of a package that I had put together, so it was immediately balanced. But it’s not bad in itself to have that expression. It’s important to seek out alternative perspectives.

(BBC British female reporter)

The American reporters I spoke with at VOA also equated *justice* with certain values, such as human rights, democracy, equality, diversity, and civil involvement in the functions of governance. Yet they were much less likely to look to other

countries for anecdotes and illustrations of these principles. As one VOA journalist put it,

The average American is not a person who is well-traveled or particularly well-acquainted with the rest of the world. We are an insular culture; we are self-contented and self-sufficient. I think there is a part of us, also, that likes to explore, but we have such a big country and we tend to busy ourselves exploring our own beautiful landscape. (VOA American male reporter)

Thus, most of the VOA journalists I spoke with drew on the United States itself rather than other countries as their source of inspiration for stories that illustrate universal issues. A VOA editor told me:

We look for stories, not that are just sort of mainstream pablum, but stories that talk about American culture and the American body politic and the American ethos in all of its complexities, in ways that illuminate the reality here. And that can be a story that involves individuals grappling with... you know, a Walmart wants to come into a town, and sort of bullies its way into a place where people have protected their natural woodland or something for decades and decades, and now a developer comes in and that green space is threatened. How do people in some Midwestern town deal with that? What avenues do they take? What are the passions that are aroused? And what is the end game in this? Telling a story like that would be very interesting. We look for stories about some of the institutions, you know, public schools, state and local governments, as well as the federal government. But, you know, state and local governments are where democracy hits the ground – you know,

sort of where the rubber meets the road. We look at how they deal with problems. (VOA American male reporter)

The reason for this focus on America, I was told by reporters at VOA, is because listeners around the world genuinely want to know what life is like in the US. For example, a senior reporter noted:

My limited experience abroad indicates to me that people are actually hungry—craving—for stories about life in America. There’s an intense interest about what it’s really like here, and I think our music and our movies have fed that. Maybe it’s jingoistic to think it, but I do think that people almost dream about America as a place, maybe not so much in today’s climate, but there was a time when the world wondered whether we really were cowboys or whether we really were movie stars, or what are we really about? There are things that we take for granted—school boards, historic commissions—things like that, that are just amazing, almost jaw-dropping to some people. They think, “Wow, do you really do that?,” and “How do they allow you to do that?,” and that kind of thing. (VOA American male reporter)

Thus, the way that *justice* is defined by broadcasters in different countries and contexts is far from uniform; cultural values interact with organizational values in ways that are too complex for this one study to fully unravel. The position of a nation on its developmental trajectory is an important issue, such as China’s current historic transformation from authoritarian to modern society, Britain’s status as a long-time global imperial power, and the US’s current self-proclaimed position as a world superpower. This study provides evidence that these historical positions do affect

what *justice* means to broadcasters working for different media outlets, thus sorting the selection task data by organization produced some unexpected alliances.

Selection Task by Organization

Rather than being spread unevenly between the three organizations, the data lined up on each factor in such a way that two organizations closely paralleled each other in contrast to the third. In the case of *aesthetics*, *breadth*, *incisiveness*, and *justice*, the Chinese sample stood apart from VOA and the BBC, yet in the case of *depth*, *freshness*, *germaneness*, and *helpfulness*, the VOA and Chinese samples were similar and stood apart from the BBC.

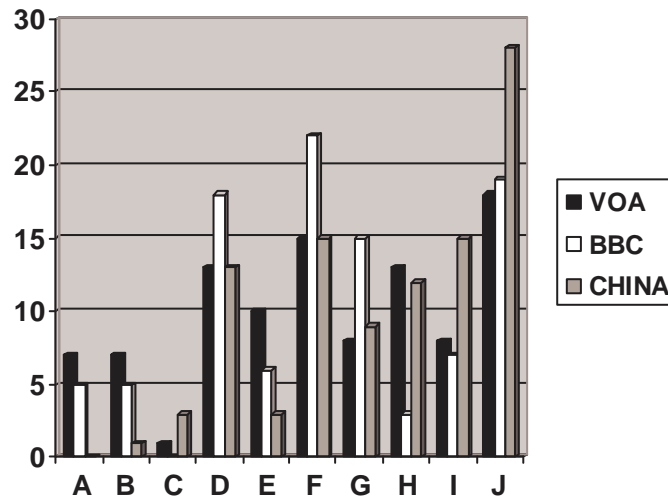
The broad mandate of VOA and the BBC to effectively communicate with the farthest reaches of the globe translates into an emphasis on the need for *breadth*, and thus story-packaging elements such as word usage, flow, concision, and the rich use of sound that fall under *aesthetics* need to receive a great deal of attention as well. A senior journalist at VOA explained the importance of using words that will be understandable around the world:

We broadcast to people of all backgrounds—the intelligentsia, poor people, educated people, people who are just learning English in our case, or if things are translated, they may not have any education at all. We had a person here who used to sarcastically say, “You’re always writing for the Bedouins.” I don’t know why the person said Bedouins, I don’t know what it is about the Bedouins, but we used to walk around here kidding each other, “Would the Bedouins understand this?” You can’t make assumptions that someone in North Africa or South Asia has any of the cultural experiences that we do, so

Table 6.6.

Normalized Selection Task Scores by Organization.

Category	VOA <i>n</i> = 20	BBC <i>n</i> = 19	CHINA <i>n</i> = 10
Aesthetics	7	5	0
Breadth	7	5	1
Convenience	1	0	3
Depth	13	18	13
Emotionality	10	6	3
Freshness	15	22	15
Germaneness	8	15	9
Helpfulness	13	3	12
Incisiveness	8	7	15
Justice	18	19	28



you have to overdo the explanation sometimes to the point that you wouldn't in an American script. You wouldn't say, for example, Seattle—a large city in the American northwest—to an American audience, but that little bit of context at least helps to place things, and we try to weave that in.

(VOA American male reporter)

In terms of *incisiveness* and *justice*, the values which Chinese emphasized more than the U.S. and British journalists overall, the high score values in China are

likely attributable to the fact that there are no Westerners in this sample to wash out the effect. At the BBC and VOA, the overall scores are comprised of a combination of both Chinese and Western journalists within those organizations. To explicate this Chinese emphasis on *justice* and *incisiveness* further, there are two possible explanations: a cultural explanation or a developmental explanation. The *cultural explanation* would posit that these values are inherent in Chinese culture, as exemplified by the Confucian concept of *zhongyong* (中庸), culturally impelling people to value a balance of perspectives on a topic rather than favoring any one side. The *developmental explanation*, on the other hand, would raise the possibility that China's current historical moment, moving from an authoritarian to a more open system, causes journalists who have previously felt constrained by political circumstances to seek to stretch their wings to bring more of a balanced view to their programs. The cultural explanation, then, would assume that the *justice* values of objectivity, balance, and neutrality are and have always been abundant in Chinese society, whereas the developmental explanation would assume that these values have been scarce in China but are now on the increase. The only way to properly address this question was to discuss the issue further with Chinese journalists.

In follow-up interviews with Chinese journalists at VOA and the BBC, the resounding answer was to favor the developmental explanation. I posed the question of whether *justice* in reporting is a common theme in Chinese journalistic circles, and was told emphatically by a Chinese reporter at the BBC (while others nodded in agreement), "No, that's why we have to value it so much." As I spoke with over 25 Chinese journalists at VOA, the BBC, and in China (many of whom I had previously

interviewed, and many I had not previously spoken with) about why *justice* emerged as such a consistently valued factor, I was told repeatedly that this emphasis is because Chinese reporters have been denied the privilege of doing their own honest, investigative reporting for so long that at this point in history, the longing to do this kind of work has reached epic proportions, “like a tiger wanting to rush out of a cage,” as a Chinese reporter at CCTV noted. As China becomes a global power, I was told, its journalists want the freedom to engage in world-class reporting. Not a single follow-up interviewee indicated otherwise on this question, although many Chinese journalists I spoke with thought that the cultural *zhongyong* explanation was also interesting and worthy of further exploration.

The three values that reporters at the BBC selected more often than their peers: *depth*, *freshness*, and *germaneness*, may be attributable to the BBC tendency to position themselves as an international organization working for the people of the world, in contrast to the tendency of journalists at VOA and in the Chinese media to describe themselves as working for their governments. Although reporters at VOA and those working for the official Chinese media referred often to their mandate to express the voice of their nations abroad, the BBC reporters I interviewed never once made mention of feeling the need to present the perspective of the British government. At VOA, I was told by both Chinese and American reporters that the airing of editorials produced by the U.S. government is a regular reminder of “who they are working for.” A senior American journalist explained:

I think there’s some stuff that VOA puts out that... Is it propaganda? The editorials – they’re our commercials. In that sense, they’re propaganda, but I

think of them more as commercials. Like, “This is a message from our sponsor, the United States government.” (VOA American female reporter)

Similarly, in China I was told repeatedly that because Xinhua, CCTV, and CRI are government-funded agencies, their ultimate responsibility is to uphold the image of their sponsor, the Chinese government. A reporter at the Xinhua News Agency said:

Our media is the mouthpiece of the Party, the government and the people, which guides most of our news media. First of all, you have to think of what benefits the Party, the government, and the people. That’s a standard. You need to rethink the unbeneficial parts. For example, if there was a murder, you should focus on the positive side and avoid damaging the government’s image. You ought to avoid too much negative reporting.

(Xinhua Chinese male reporter)

If news agencies are focused on presenting a positive image of the governments they work for, it is not surprising that values such as *depth*, *freshness*, and *germaneness* would suffer. For instance, a reporter at CRI complained about his organization in comparison with the Japanese media:

Chinese news usually starts with covering the meetings of national leaders, which I don’t like. I don’t think the audience is interested in this, either. I was greatly impressed when I went abroad. I haven’t been to foreign countries other than Japan, but I have been there many times. In Japanese news, for instance, when a typhoon is coming, they’ll report this news first, such as casualties, devastated places and people, what the government should

do, etc. Why can't we report it as the Japanese do? I think we should do it too. The most important thing is not who our leaders met today. Definitely, political issues are important too. But what the ordinary people care about is what happens in their daily life.

(CRI Chinese male reporter)

Many VOA reporters, both Chinese and American, expressed a similar sentiment and complained that they felt their agency's mandate was becoming increasingly focused on covering government leaders. An American female reporter commented that, "The big difference between VOA and CNN is that when the President of the United States sneezes, we report on it, whereas CNN might not." If reporters sense that they are constrained, both in terms of story choice and coverage, their pursuit of deep analysis of issues (*depth*), finding new topics and angles (*freshness*), and making their programs relevant to their audience (*germaneness*) may become less important than meeting editorial expectations.

Although the values of *depth*, *freshness*, and *germaneness* came out higher at the BBC than at either VOA or the Chinese media, *helpfulness* came out significantly lower at the BBC than in Washington or Beijing. This result may be explainable by the fact that many journalists I interviewed at the BBC expressed that there is a bit of a modern backlash against the strong ethos created in the organization by founding director Sir John Reith that the British Broadcasting Corporation be an educator and refiner of the common people, which often came (in the opinion of modern reporters, apparently) at the expense of high interest. Several reporters told me that no one wants their programming to sound too "worthy" (a word usually uttered by the BBC

reporters I interviewed with a slightly overblown haughty accent and a roll of the eyes), as articulated by a British journalist who told me whom she feels she is primarily working for:

We get very supportive emails from people for whom the program is a friend and they kind of find out things that amuse them or amaze them or tell them something interesting. So you hope you're doing it for the listeners. But you're also slightly looking at the bosses as well, of course. If they don't like it, that's an immediate problem. (laughs) They'd like things to be as amazing as possible nowadays. So "worthy" is a bit of a bad word. It means kind of very worthwhile, but a bit pedestrian and plodding. Not surprising or fresh enough, I suppose. Too predictable. If you can disguise it with charismatic speakers and high production elements, then it stops being worthy and becomes a great listen. (BBC British female reporter)

In other words, the BBC, as conveyed to me by some of its reporters, appears to be going out of its way in modern days to be more approachable and less preachy, which means that striving for so-called *helpfulness* is a value that few are willing to admit if it comes at the expense of being "a great listen," as several reporters at the BBC noted. With the political shrinking of the British Empire, the BBC World Service seems to be still in the process of earnest soul-searching to reinvent and preserve its role as a resounding voice across the globe, which means finding ways to stay relevant to listeners through the "amazingness" of the message rather than the ethos of the broadcaster or the nation that supports it.

In Summary

In the process of selecting presentational values in a forced-choice scenario such as this selection task, journalists reveal a great deal about the complex value environment in which they work. As they seek to get their programming consumed by audiences worldwide, there is a degree of journalistic decision-making that is rooted in a reporter's gender, age, training, organization, and national origin. The most robust findings from both the freelisting and selection task show that older reporters have a greater tendency to focus on *emotionality* and storytelling in their reporting, that journalists with formal training tend to emphasize *incisiveness*, and most of all, that Chinese (particularly Chinese males) cite the *justice* value as most integral to their work.

Because this study utilized a triangulated methodological approach between freelisting, selection task, and interview data, not only does a clearer idea of the patterning emerge between and among journalists of different backgrounds, but the findings can also be more richly contextualized with the journalists' own words. Examining the freelisting and selection task data for patterns provides a structure from which to approach the mountain of interview data.

Using the inductive sandwich approach, two solid pieces of "bread" have been provided on which to build a consolidated analysis of the journalists' discourse. After analyzing *what* differences emerge between journalists of different ages, genders, nations, organizations, and levels of training, the next section examines *why* these patterns may appear.

Chapter 7: Qualitative Analysis

Exploring Context

Because the systematic analysis of the freelist and selection task has already provided a degree of organizational structure around the approach to the interview data, a number of qualitative aspects of the material can be understood more deeply than survey methodology alone could provide. A number of patterns emerge in journalists' tendencies to emphasize certain presentation values, by gender, by age, by training, by organization, and most notably by background culture. Moreover, some sense has been gained of what these values mean in the participants' own words and why certain patterns may emerge as they do. Yet, to gain the greatest degree of benefit from the hours of interviews with these fifty journalists in the U.S., Great Britain, and China, the next section turns to the meat of the methodology—a deeper qualitative look at the contextual factors that bear on the research questions. How do role conceptions of what it means to be an international broadcaster differ across cultures? How does cultural background inform how institutional and market contexts are perceived, and in turn, how does this influence the programming choices made to conform to these expectations?

National culture has been identified thus far as having the largest effect on a journalist's conception of his or her journalistic decision-making. Although gender, age, and training appear to have some effect on journalists' notions of how to best connect with audiences and meet their needs, organization and culture produced the largest effects in terms of how broadcasters perceive their role and what impact they expect their programming to have on society. The noteworthy emphasis on *justice* by Chinese journalists, both in China and in the West, deserves further exploration, including the political and historical factors that bear on how propaganda is perceived by journalists broadcasting under the funding and institutional auspices of national governments seeking to disseminate messages around the world.

Becoming an International Broadcaster

The fifty journalists interviewed for this study have a number of things in common—the study's demographic analysis based on self-reported data from the journalists revealed all of the participants to be educated, upper-middle class, cosmopolitan individuals engaged in the full-time business of broadcasting messages in their native language overseas. They have traveled; they tune into international news. They are employed by large, state-funded broadcast media organizations that have existed since around the time of the Second World War and whose work helps constitute their nation's international voice abroad.

The group of fifty journalists interviewed for this research is comprised of ten Americans at VOA, ten Chinese at VOA, ten British at the BBC, ten Chinese at the BBC, and ten Chinese journalists working for the Chinese official media—China Central Television, China Radio International, and the Xinhua News Agency. Of this

sample, the Americans broadcasters at VOA, the British Broadcasters at the BBC, and the Chinese broadcasters in China all share the fact that they are living in their home country, residing in their nation's capital, working as government employees for their own country's foreign news organization. The Chinese journalists at VOA and the BBC, however, have relocated to a foreign country, become sufficiently proficient in a foreign language and culture to become employed in the nation's capital there, and to commence building a life and a family overseas.

Most of the journalists interviewed said that they wound up working for their news organizations through some sort of "accident" or unexpected turn of events—a referral from a friend, a job opening in the right city when they needed it. Very few of them (only two of the 50) told me that they had actually hoped to work for their organizations someday. All of the journalists I spoke with expressed that they took their job because it had what they needed: a decent salary, some level of job security, and an interesting and varied workload. For the overseas Chinese working at VOA and the BBC in particular, the main benefits the job offered that were attractive to them were the ability to work in their own language while living in the U.S. or Britain, and (for those who needed it) sponsorship for a visa.

Almost all the Chinese interviewed had opportunities to listen to their news organizations as an outsider during their younger years. To them, the Chinese official media represented the official voice of their government, and VOA and the BBC represented outside voices with news that often could not be obtained elsewhere. Almost all of the Chinese I spoke with at VOA and the BBC had listened to these

agencies' English broadcasts "to practice their English," and were either unaware of or uninterested in their Chinese-language broadcasts.

Many Chinese in both Washington and London talked about the history of Chinese broadcasting at VOA and the BBC World Service. Apparently the year that the Chinese broadcasts of VOA and the BBC both became particularly important was 1989, around the time of the Tiananmen Square incident that culminated on June 4 of that year. The Chinese government's tight control of the domestic media on the issue drove many Chinese to their shortwave radios in search of news about what was going on at Tiananmen Square and around the country, thus listenership ratings for both VOA and the BBC World Service soared. This increased demand for foreign news in China, combined with an increasing understanding in Washington and London of China's importance as a large developing power, caused both VOA and the BBC to expand Chinese-language broadcasts to the point that many new Chinese staffers were needed. Because Western journalists had had to rely to a large extent on Chinese journalists to help them keep up with the quick pace of events in 1989, professional relationships were developed that for many turned into jobs. One Chinese journalist articulated a common scenario when she described how she came to work for the BBC:

Why did I join the BBC? It was largely because of the event in 1989. I worked for the media in China before 1989, working with media and TV stations during the Students' Movement. The BBC even interviewed me. Many of my friends worked for the media, too. On the third day after the June 4th event, we left China. The BBC was recruiting new employees because it

was expanding, because a big event took place in China, and because China was more and more important to England. So I joined the BBC at the end of 1989. (BBC Chinese female reporter)

This generation of post-Tiananmen reporters are now largely middle-aged and serving in editorial positions within the Chinese branches at VOA and the BBC, with the younger generation of reporters under them not having directly experienced the dramatic events at Tiananmen Square. The entrée of so many professional Chinese journalists around 1989 did change the work environments within these divisions at VOA and the BBC to emphasize professional journalism in Chinese over merely translating English broadcasts, as they had in the past, thus raising the status of the Chinese language services within VOA and the BBC considerably.

The American and British journalists spoke about shifts in hiring and training over time as well. Many of the older journalists at both VOA and the BBC had been brought in through extensive training programs that placed them in a number of posts throughout their agencies to give them the chance to learn a range of broadcasting skills in a hands-on way and also to gain a broader perspective on their organizations. A reporter at the BBC proudly told me:

The training I received was the best on the planet. Undoubtedly. It was a 2-year traineeship. For the first six weeks, it was absolute start-from-zero, teaching you how to at least make radio technically and how to think about making original features. After that six weeks, for the next two years I had placements (to some extent of my choice) around the BBC to learn the ropes. It was fantastic having the label of trainee, because it gave you the right to

fail. You know, you failed and you could say, “I’m just a trainee, for Christ’s sake,” whatever. That was an astonishing privilege. At the end of those two years, you weren’t given a job, you had to apply for one, but if someone’s applying for a job having just spent two years within the corporation, he’s going to get one. (BBC British male reporter)

A journalist of similar age at VOA spoke in similar terms about her training, which, although not as extensive as the BBC’s traineeship, gave her comparable opportunities to try out various skills and gain perspective:

It was a year-long internship, and throughout the year you’d spend about six weeks in different parts of the operation. You’d spend six weeks in features production, and there were people on hand to tell you how to write a radio feature. You would spend six weeks in newscasting, and they taught you how to write news and how to put together a newscast and how to time your scripts. I worked in the production side where I learned how to direct in the studio, to direct programs and how to backtime a clock. I learned through most of these what it means when you try to achieve balance, and how your choice of words, even the tiniest of words, can be so loaded. I think they just wanted to teach me how to be a good radio person for VOA. That just means accurate, informative. And I also got voice lessons. To become a good (by their standards) presenter. You know, personality. That’s the way it worked then. It’s changed since then. (VOA American female reporter)

Apparently the shift at both VOA and the BBC has been to move away from providing such extensive training to incoming reporters, thus more of the younger

journalists I interviewed at both organizations had more established credentials, either in the field of journalism (such as working previously for NPR affiliates) or in academia generally (such as having earned an advanced degree). Thus, it is safe to say that both the Western and Chinese reporters I spoke with at VOA and the BBC are highly educated, with extensive experience in journalism, gained either inside or outside their organizations.

Who Benefits Most?

When participants were asked whom they feel they work for, or who benefits most from their work, I received a variety of responses. Some journalists gave more than one answer. The most common response was that the listeners benefit most, by gaining information and insights that they might not have access to otherwise.

Thirty-three of the 50 participating journalists described listeners as the most important beneficiaries, a sentiment spread evenly between reporters of all ages, genders, and levels of training at VOA, the BBC, and in the Chinese media. The strongest articulation of this ideal that I heard was from a British reporter at the BBC:

I work for the audience; I mean there's no question. Benefit is quite a loaded term, but I make the program not for myself, my presenter, or my boss. I make my program for my 45 million listeners. Without sounding too Reithian about it, I believe in the ideals of the BBC—to educate, inform, and entertain. And we have an extremely loyal and vociferous audience. We get emails and letters and texts, as well as anecdotally. I know what a difference our output makes, and that's not just the news output. (BBC British female reporter)

Reporters at VOA and in China, on the other hand, were more likely to say that their work benefits their audience by allowing them to know more about what is going on in their own countries. An American reporter at VOA told me that he hopes that his work will benefit listeners by allowing them

just to learn more about the incredible variety of culture, lifestyles, discussions, various issues, research... in this country (the U.S.). And then, I guess secondarily, just the fact that Americans can have all these amazing different lines of work and different artistic output. I think, in a sense, it's a message just saying what an open society is like, what leanings there are in this country. (VOA American male reporter)

Statements such as these reveal two key assumptions. The first is that broadcasting is from an open country to an audience in a not-so-open country. This qualitative difference in levels of openness between countries is considered to automatically generate demand. The second assumption is that if a country is well-known or powerful, people in the world will want to know more about it and tune in. Reporters with the Chinese media spoke in similar terms about seeking to benefit audiences by giving them a fuller picture of life in China. An editor at CCTV explained:

We wish to introduce China to an audience that is interested in China. I wish to serve them, at least in terms of information. Information such as their traveling, day-to-day life, and their opinions of China. We wish that they could get to know China. I've heard that Americans who have not been here

still equate China with pandas and think it's an underdeveloped country. So, we wish to present them a true image of China. (CCTV Chinese male editor)

Reporters both at VOA and with the Chinese media expressed that they felt they were doing a service to both their country and to those who tune in by supplying information about their societies to those on the outside. When I asked a Chinese reporter at VOA why he feels his audience tunes in, he told me, "Because they have an interest to know this country. We all should know America. This is a very important country." The frame of mind expressed through such a statement is that important countries have a voice by sheer virtue of their importance, and for China to be considered an important country, it likewise needs a voice on the world stage. A Chinese journalist at the Xinhua News Agency explained that the paradigm is similar to the Olympics, in which individual athletes compete on behalf of their nations, and the more "important countries" are expected to bring home a significant number of medals. This way of thinking is tremendously pervasive among Chinese during these years leading up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

Chinese reporters at VOA were the most likely to express the idea that it is the American government's prerogative to express its views (implying that a "government" can have views). The presence of the daily editorial (*shelun*, 社论, in Chinese) produced by some unknown government office, which must then be translated to other languages and aired, was described by many as a constant reminder of the underlying "sponsor" of the agency, the U.S. government. One Chinese reporter at VOA told me:

VOA is the only official media for the American government. Thus, one part of its goal is to communicate the American government's ideas and policies, which is understandable. This is a difference as compared to other news networks. They don't have a duty to work for the American government. Although there are conflicts about whether VOA should work for the government, through negotiation and compromise, VOA needs to broadcast editorials everyday. Furthermore, VOA is dramatically different from the Chinese official media. Chinese official media only follow the tone and rules from the Chinese government. VOA is different. Except for the editorials, others aspects are the same with the majority of mass media. VOA still has its editorial independence, although it is often challenged. (VOA Chinese male reporter)

This conception of the Chinese government media as having a rather short leash was confirmed by over half of the reporters I spoke with in China at CCTV, CRI, and the Xinhua News Agency. One editor at CCTV, who referred to himself as relatively friendly toward the U.S. said that to him, the goal for a news organization should be to strive for achieving true objectivity:

Objectivity means that you have both positive and negative sides. But I cannot do this when it comes to some sensitive issues. I am not allowed to do so. I have to abide by rules of CCTV and represent China. With regard to such sensitive issues as Taiwan's human rights, the Falun Gong cult, especially some resolutions passed by the United States condemning China, I can only position the United States as our antagonistic target in my stories.

That's all I can do. I will not even leave half of the space for the United States. Most likely I would present China's standing and argue against the United States. Ninety percent of the content will be devoted to China and the remaining 10% to the United States. I cannot put too many criticisms from the American side in my stories. It's not allowed. Under such circumstances, I cannot consider my audience. Whether it is effective or not is not my concern. I only speak for the government and weigh what I can say and what I cannot. Effectiveness is not my concern, because such political issues may affect my career. (CCTV Chinese male editor)

A peer at the Xinhua News Agency agreed that this goal of objectivity is tough to reach:

Because Xinhua is the biggest news agency in China, they should strive to be authoritative and factual. They seem to seldom mention objectivity, as it is hard to be objective in terms of domestic reporting. I think it's natural that foreigners consider us to be unobjective. I think news reporting in every country is biased. Is AP really objective? I don't think so. During the war in Iraq, their newspapers, their media were guiding the whole country. And their reporting was more or less like propaganda. I think it is understandable that China has propaganda. (Xinhua Chinese female reporter)

Reporters at the BBC, in contrast with their peers at VOA and the Chinese media, did not speak about representing the British government or any other aspect of British society. The BBC World Service's mandate, I was told repeatedly, was to shed light on "the amazing things going on throughout the world." Almost all of the

British reporters interviewed at the BBC told me that the stated goal of their organization was less to showcase life in the U.K. and more to “show the best of Britain by being impartial.” Reporters implied that the modern backlash against Great Britain’s imperial history has made today’s BBC reporters sensitive about coming off as too condescending or too “Reithian.” Thus, rather than casting itself as the voice of one country seeking to be understood, the BBC World Service was characterized by its reporters as seeking to capture the voice of “the world speaking to itself.”

Although three-fifths of all the journalists I interviewed reported that they feel the biggest beneficiaries of their work are the listeners, another sizable portion of the participants told me that they themselves feel that they benefit the most. A Chinese reporter at the BBC explained why:

From my point of view, I possibly get the most benefit from my own job. I cannot know whether the audience has listened to my program every time, but I know I did. So I can get a lot from the programs. If I interview one party involved in an event and asked him or her why he or she was put into jail by the Chinese government, I think it influenced me greatly, even more greatly than it did my audiences. It influenced me greatly because I got the first-hand information. Maybe the tape of the interview was 30 minutes in length. I had to edit and shorten it. Therefore, I was the only person who knew the whole picture. I think I’ve got some valuable details from the interview and it has also broadened my view. (BBC Chinese male reporter)

Interestingly, males and females, those over and under 40, and those with different training backgrounds at the various organizations were evenly divided among those who said they feel they work for themselves; the only significant source of difference was national origin. There was an 8-7 split among every demographic factor except national origin, which split 10-5, with twice the number of Chinese stating that they work for themselves than Westerners. Nine of the ten Chinese who said they benefit most were at VOA or the BBC, which could likely be due to many of these journalists being self-proclaimed independent types who are doing whatever it takes to thrive in a career abroad. Another Chinese reporter explained that his work, even without listeners tuning in, is still inherently satisfying on its own:

In fact I work for myself. I have my dreams when I work. I sometimes discuss the dreams with my colleagues. I hope I have new achievements every day or something different from yesterday. I don't want to do the same thing every day. (BBC Chinese male reporter)

Aside from those who said that they work for listeners or that they work for themselves, five journalists also told me that they work for their organization, three told me that they work for their colleagues, and another three told me that they work for their country. (Two of those who said they work for their country were at VOA and one was in China; none of the reporters at the BBC said that they were working for Britain.) Five journalists, four Americans at VOA and one British at the BBC, also told me that they work not for the masses but simply for "that one listener out there." A senior American reporter at VOA explained:

Something that I learned in journalism school and have never forgotten is that you're always speaking to or writing for one person at a time. You're not talking to the masses; you're not talking to a group; you're not talking to a country. You're talking to one person, and you try to imagine a conversation that you and he or she would have, and make it as personal, as personable as possible. (VOA American male reporter)

Although this idea of the “one listener” came up several times among the Western reporters, the Chinese I interviewed never referred to their audience in any other than mass terms. The very word most often used by my Chinese participants for the concept of audience, *tingzhong* (听众) (literally “listeners,” since I was interviewing mostly radio reporters) signifies a mass—the second character of the word is comprised of three combined characters for “person,” signifying a mass of people. The Chinese reporters I spoke with also always referred to their audience as “they” or *tamen* (他们), necessarily denoting a plurality. There was no concept for the single representative listener as discussed by the Western participants. However, there were frequent references made by Chinese reporters (especially in China) to certain segments of the audience, such as “people who are learning English,” “audiences interested in China,” or “those who are concerned about economics.” The idea of a reporter imagining herself conversing with one individual representative listener was never mentioned by Chinese reporters. Rather, they considered themselves as doing their job by reporting news to mass audiences, even if those markets are segmented into publics with varying special interests.

Propaganda or Public Service?

An interesting and significant theme that emerged in my conversations with journalists at VOA, the BBC, and the Chinese official media was whether or not they considered their agencies to be producing propaganda. This topic is a particularly important discussion in this context because of modern shifts in the Chinese notion of *xuanchuan* (宣传), traditionally translated from Chinese to English as *propaganda*, but more recently (perhaps in response to Western derogatory notions of the word) as *publicity*. To what extent does the degree of a Chinese reporter's exposure to Western definitions of propaganda affect his or her construction of the mission of a government broadcast agency? How comfortable are individuals in different cultures with thinking of themselves as "propagandists?"

It was clear from what Chinese reporters, even those who have never left China, told me that the Western negative view of the term propaganda has entered and influenced their notion of the term. Only one Chinese journalist I spoke with, a young TV reporter at CCTV with no formal training in journalism, indicated no concession to the Western definition. She told me, "*Xuanchuan* is to let the public know the true story, truly report facts, and have truthful publicity. Our work is definitely *xuanchuan*." A news editor at the same organization who says that he tries to keep up with Western theories of journalism agreed that CCTV produces *xuanchuan*, although he defined the term propaganda (which he used in English) more according to the Western definition:

Yes, CCTV is a propaganda organization. To me, the word means the information-sender intends to achieve its own goal through propaganda's

influence on the public. They want the information recipients to do as they wish. They feed the audience with one-way information, thus doing as they want. When I learned the terms propaganda and *xuanchuan*, they meant the same. I also looked it up in the Chinese thesaurus, which confirmed my understanding. In Chinese, *xuanchuan* is neutral, but negative in English. It is neutral in Chinese, for example, we still have the Department of *Xuanchuan*. But now we already realized its derogatory connotation in English. So, we don't use the word propaganda any more. Rather, we say the Department of Publicity. Because in English, propaganda is derogatory, but not the same case in Chinese. (CCTV Chinese male editor)

Likewise, a senior editor at the Xinhua News Agency echoed the sentiment that because she perceives that her audiences don't like the term, neither does she: "Because our audiences are in foreign countries and we deal with foreign media, I don't like the word propaganda at all. I don't want our articles and our stories to appear to be propaganda. I'm against propaganda."

A reporter from China Radio International went on further to explain what it is that he believes Western audiences have against propaganda, although he feels that the issue is more of form than of content:

The term propaganda was initially a positive word, but came to have negative meanings attached to it after Hitler. He maintained that false information would become true if it was repeated 10 times. If you don't accept my argument, I'll say it again. Then, perhaps you have some knowledge about it, and still don't agree with me. I'll tell you a third time and repeat it again until

you agree with me. So this term is more about how to use it properly. As an official radio station, it'd be inaccurate if I deny that CRI indeed has propaganda. But it is more a medium. If you send out propaganda information to the audience through your radio, television, the Internet, and newspapers, nobody would listen to you. You must tell the story of China as fast and accurately as possible. Propaganda won't work. So, this term has more to do with how it's used. (CRI Chinese male reporter)

The issue, I was told several times by journalists in China, is not *whether* Chinese media broadcast propaganda ("Of course they do," I was told several times), but how and for what purpose. Because the founding model of the Chinese media was as an educator and agitator of the masses, propaganda as described even in Western terms, as presenting skewed information for a political purpose, is often viewed in China as a natural and necessary evil. "Even the American media are propaganda," I was told frequently by Chinese journalists. Although there is a belief among journalists that outright deceptive bias is an unfortunate element of true propaganda, there was a sense conveyed by many reporters that China has as much right to produce propaganda as the Western powers do. The question is more one of degrees and effectiveness, as articulated by this senior reporter at Xinhua:

Xuanchuan did not have derogatory connotations to me when I started working. Because I was a non-journalism major, I equated *xuanchuan* with media and news reporting. Later on, I learned that this term has a unique meaning, that Westerners regard it as a derogatory term. Now, I think the *xuanchuan* aspect of Chinese news reporting is less apparent, but has not died

out. I think we are striving towards international standards, such as in terms of social news and international news. I don't think Rome can be built overnight. But there are changes. Besides, during my one-year study abroad, I found foreign media are not as objective, balanced and unbiased as we thought. They have their preferences, but are more skillful than we are. ... Is the AP really objective? I don't think so. During the war in Iraq, their newspapers, their media were guiding the whole country. And their reporting was more or less like propaganda. I think it is understandable that China has propaganda. (Xinhua Chinese female reporter)

One common device I heard from Chinese, both in China and abroad, was to distinguish between propaganda and public relations or public diplomacy. Whereas propaganda is thought often to involve blatant bias or deception, public relations/diplomacy is considered to be a softer and more acceptable term. An editor at CCTV explained:

Propaganda means you should not doubt our policy. But public diplomacy is to explain a policy in a reasonable way and make it sound very good and reasonable. Propaganda sometimes doesn't sound reasonable. Our programs are absolutely not propaganda. Propaganda should be done by departments like the news division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Our job is just to make the policy sound more reasonable. CCTV is positioned as, well, the Chinese government's public relations. It explains China's standing on some international issues. (CCTV Chinese female editor)

It was this point, the accepted necessity of having a broadcast agency whose job it is to explain a government's stand on certain issues, that overlapped with the perceived mandate of journalists at VOA. Although all of the reporters interviewed at VOA, both American and Chinese, told me that they feel quite free in their own individual reporting and that ninety to one hundred percent of their story ideas are their own, they feel that the presence of the five-minute editorials aired regularly as "the opinion of the United States government" falls distinctly into what they consider to be propaganda. The most common sentiment I heard was summed up by a senior Chinese reporter who said, "I don't think VOA's reports are propaganda, except the editorials. The editorials are the government's opinion. Of course they want to influence people." I was told that the fact that the government should even have an opinion that it feels it has a right to broadcast creates an environment in which, even if individual stories are produced by reporters without government oversight or involvement, there is still a specter of influence that is perceptibly pervasive. And, I was told repeatedly by both Chinese and American reporters at VOA, this specter has been exerting an increasing amount of control over the inner workings of the organization, most notably after 9/11. From journalists who had been around VOA for decades, I heard disappointment that the agency has actually taken steps backward from its landmark 1976 charter that explicitly granted the Voice of America independence from government influence over content. A senior editor who has been at VOA since the mid-1970s told me:

Within VOA, there's always been kind of warring cultures, a little bit. Some conflicting notions of what our mission, our purpose is. The charter that we

won from Congress in 1976 is very specific about our programming being accurate, objective, and comprehensive. The Charter had been kicking around for 10 years before that, but Watergate and the troubles with the Nixon over Vietnam and the whole Pentagon Papers and all of that... very difficult political stories that VOA had tried to report on during the late 60s and early 70s finally led Congress to grant this protective umbrella over the VOA to say whatever administration is in power, whatever Congress, however it's made up, the Voice of America will not be a slave, will not be a microphone for the policy people, and it will not be enslaved or intimidated by political pressures. (VOA American male editor)

However, several reporters told me, the post-9/11 VOA has been moving increasingly away from this mandate and toward a climate of government-led mission-building. A senior American reporter articulated the frustration I heard from several of her colleagues over what they call recent "micromanagement:"

I'm feeling much more constricted by circumstances lately. There are certain things we just can't... We'll be very careful about how we approach things. For example, Abu Ghraib. The leadership here thought VOA was focusing too much on it, which I think was colossally ignorant. We found out that they told, I think, the Web Desk, and Television to stop putting up pictures. It had already run by the time the VOA Director saw that we had done it, but he would have killed it. I heard from my division chief. Actually, from my boss. It came down the ladder. It's micromanagement. A leadership that is um... partisan. (VOA American female reporter)

Chinese reporters at VOA, particularly those who had been employed by the organization for a significant length of time, echoed the same sentiment, that they have been surprised by recent exhortations for the agency to fall in line with current administration policy. A Chinese reporter explained the importance of the 1976 Charter in what he feels should be the limitations of the government in exercising control over VOA's content:

I have some concerns about the general management of VOA because it seems the government wants to have more control over the Voice of America. Once the President came here and said "The Voice of America is not free; it should be part of the war on terrorism." The President has this will; that is, since VOA is a government institution, why not report things based on the President's opinion? However, we have our Charter, which is a law. It states very clearly that we don't represent any governmental institution. What we represent is the American people. So we need to report government policies, but we also need to report whether some people disagree with the policies. So if I go to the Congress and find many Democrats who are dissatisfied with Bush's policies, it is my responsibility to report it, or else Chinese might feel that the United States is a dictatorship that must follow what Bush believes. Actually the United States is not like that, and it does allow different points of view. (VOA Chinese male reporter)

American reporters at VOA expressed a similar dilemma, that although they personally feel free in their reporting, they realize that the Charter is all that stands between the U.S. government and a direct link into their coverage. They recognize

that, if the administration desires more control over content, they simply have to remove certain services from under VOA's Charter in order to have greater license to influence programming decisions. A VOA reporter (who is no longer with the organization) told me that there is a clear chain of command...

I'd say going from certainly the State Department and below the State Department, I'd suspect as far as (VOA Director) David Jackson. He considers our mission to be fighting the war on terror. I don't think that's our mission. I don't think that has anything to do with our mission. I think the way that they're trying to execute the mission is completely counter-productive to the war on terror. I mean, I think Radio Sawa (the newly-created Arabic radio service created outside of VOA) is the most glaring example of that. They took VOA's Arabic content off the air. You know, they took a service that was chartered to be comprehensive and independent and objective, and replaced it with pop music with occasional headlines, little snippets of news that is not chartered to adhere to VOA's standards, that's not required to be comprehensive, independent, objective. Which means... I don't know what they're saying, but I imagine Radio Sawa probably isn't reporting a lot on Abu Ghraib. I'd be very surprised if it were. I mean, I don't know. But I imagine that they probably don't talk about things going badly in Iraq. (VOA American male reporter)

Although my questioning did not focus particularly on political issues, many of the VOA reporters I spoke with were eager to talk about larger institutional issues such as these that I was told "are affecting morale." There was a sense of disconnect

between the ideal VOA that journalists want to be working for, of the objective, comprehensive, independent VOA that they attempt to convey through their reporting, and the decisions “higher up” that are perceived to be eroding the independent ethos that was celebrated as a result of the 1976 Charter.

The fundamental characteristic of the Charter that VOA journalists told me they look to is its casting of the agency as a public service broadcaster, in essence granting employees a position of journalistic tenure so as to maximize their freedom to cover issues that they perceive are most interesting and beneficial to their audiences. Metaphorically speaking, this tenure would allow reporters to freely search out and share the “food for thought” that they personally find valuable and would like to share with others, rather than “force feeding” American policy and lifestyle around the world. A Chinese reporter at VOA summed up his confidence in the Charter to accomplish this goal most meaningfully to everyone concerned:

The first priority is to improve listeners’ lives. I think this is the most important factor, because if we could improve their lives, it will be beneficial to Sino-American relations and their future. So even though I also want to do other things, like make a very nice product, the most important thing, and our purpose here at VOA is not just making news stories sound good, but making stories that are useful to our audience. Other radio stations could talk about other stuff, but for us, we have a very clear purpose, that is, we want to reflect our life here to a Chinese audience based on our Charter. And then our audience could improve their lives after listening to our programs, politically, economically, and culturally. (VOA Chinese male reporter)

At the BBC, in contrast, morale issues that I heard articulated had little or nothing to do with being subject to British government influence. The issues there were more centered around the “corporatization” of the agency, related to issues such as branding, marketing, and conceptions of the audience. One British reporter complained:

I mean, internally it’s becoming... the jargon is beginning to sound a bit like propaganda just because there are all these words like “ownership” (*said with an American accent*) and other corporate terms. It’s awful that one feels one has to say them in an American accent, but you know what I mean. (*laughs*) The jargon begins to feel like propaganda, but it might just be that management has carefully chosen the most appropriate terms, and they’re just such horrible jargon that you think it’s propaganda. Words like ownership, stakeholders, just pressing all the right buttons... that listeners are stakeholders, like the politicians say voters are stakeholders. Why can’t they just say voters? I think it’s this kind of desire to find words that press lots of correct buttons. Which is not in itself propaganda, but it increasingly becomes distanced from normal, everyday use of English. (BBC British female reporter)

Whereas VOA and Chinese media reporters expressed no qualms about reflecting the best aspects of their nations in their reporting, journalists at the BBC described covering “the best of Britain” in almost blameworthy terms, as if it were a violation of the larger mandate to cover the best of the world. An editor explained the view that

Propaganda means somebody is trying to use the media in some way to convince other people of an opinion and therefore not giving a whole truth. What we do is very different, it has different values, a different approach here in the World Service. Do we do propaganda? No, I don't think we do. We do cover lots of... we have sort of a slightly ambiguous mandate about our coverage of "the best of Britain." And I find that sort of a floaty, ambiguous notion. On one hand, we are told it isn't really to be done because we show the best of Britain by being impartial. But on the other hand, there is something which does come up that we do cover British culture, which we do to a far disproportionate degree than we would if we were looking really at spaceship Earth. (BBC British female editor)

The very clear response from the BBC reporters I interviewed, both British and Chinese, in discussing propaganda is that there is no need for the BBC World Service to propagandize and that, despite its funding coming from the British Foreign Office, the government takes no pains to use the agency as a mouthpiece. A Chinese reporter who had been at the BBC for many years summed up the views of her colleagues in saying,

I don't think the BBC propagandizes. It is not necessary for it to propagandize. The BBC is a news organization. It has nothing to propagandize. There is no need for it to do so. It is not affiliated with the government, any organization, any factory, or any corporation. It is not necessary for it to propagandize for anything. There is no need for it to

promote itself. It has been well established. The BBC is a public service.
(BBC Chinese female reporter)

A British reporter at the World Service expressed a very similar view:
Propaganda means a one-sided version of a story that you want to make somebody else believe is the whole truth. We don't produce it in my area at all, *at all*. No. I can't even kind of equate it to what we do, because I don't quite know what we'd be doing propaganda for, really, or who. (*laughs*) I mean, we are very aware as program makers that our reputation hangs entirely on the quality of the news that the BBC World Service provides. And you know, one can only say that the access we get to people is because of the reputation of the BBC and the World Service for trying to provide a reliable source of as-impartial-as-possible news. You know, we're so lucky that we work for an organization that has that kind of international reputation. (BBC British female reporter)

The most striking evidence I discovered of the varying morale at the different agencies came when I asked the journalists what news sources they turn to first for their own news. At the BBC World Service, 19 out of the 20 people I interviewed told me that they usually turn to the BBC each day when they want to find out what is going on in the world. Among the journalists in China, nine out of ten told me that they stay tuned to the Chinese official media, with four out of ten mentioning that they also tune in to the BBC, and four of the ten (slightly overlapping) saying that they also watch American media such as CNN. At VOA, all of the journalists I spoke with said that they tune in to various American media sources—CNN, MSNBC,

network television, National Public Radio. But not a single VOA journalist told me that they turn to VOA to get their own news.

Story Selection

Journalists were asked to talk extensively about specific stories that they had covered, because in contextualizing and explaining their story choices, they revealed a great deal about how they operationalize their presentational values in day-to-day work. The most common theme that emerged from all five sets of journalists was the mandate they feel, as public servants, to convey a sense of ordinary life in the nations they cover. Rather than focusing on the extreme or the unusual, as is often the case with commercial media, these international broadcasters seek out and celebrate the ordinary moments that define culture itself. An editor at VOA explained,

We're speaking to people who are listening to us because they're curious about the United States, chances are. And I want to respect their need for useful, realistic information. If we feed them, you know, the ten weirdest stories of the day, you know, the ten weirdest Americans, that's doing a disservice. So we look for stories, not that are just sort of mainstream pablum, but stories that talk about the American culture and the American body politic and the American ethos in all of its complexities, in ways that illuminate the reality here. (VOA American male editor)

In terms of Carey's (1989) ritual view of communication, this function is especially meaningful because it positions both the producer and receiver of a message together at a virtual table feasting together on the stuff of human life. Stories are chosen for their capacity to meaningfully comment on society, and

messages are chosen that resonate with the people who share them because of the insight they provide on the human experience. A VOA reporter commented on how the importance of this connective social function personally helps him choose the stories he covers:

I did a really great interview with the lady who mops out the men's rooms in the local subway station. Some people might say, "Who cares about that?" I mean, "Who wants to hear her?" Well, I fancy it would be interesting to audiences because many of us often do menial work ourselves, and so it's sort of nice to hear somebody else and what they're like, and it can extend a sense of a certain solidarity with others in our class. I feel that it would be great to hear like, somebody sweeping out a mosque courtyard somewhere in a minor city in Egypt. I mean, I would love to hear what he had to say.

(VOA American male reporter)

The sense I heard from reporters when they shared ordinary story ideas such as this one was, "if not me as a public broadcaster, then who?" Who will tell the stories of everyday life if media become entirely politicized or corporatized? This sentiment was particularly strong at the BBC, where the stories of ordinary people outside of Britain are just as important as those within the U.K.. I was told repeatedly that special efforts are taken to find out about what is going on that is culturally significant in widely diverse areas of the world for the sake of publicizing them internationally. An editor of an arts program at the BBC explained why she feels that it is especially important to seek out and cover, for instance, emerging African artists:

We work in arts/entertainment/culture here in this area, and I do feel a kind of onus on us to treat the things which make sense to people locally, which challenge assumptions, which aren't all about our Western eyes. It's about giving an equality to people who don't have the marketing behind them that Western culture does. It's both my own personal passion, and also it is something that is coming from the top, because half of our listeners are in Africa, and we know that in order to succeed with them, we've got to do programs in which they feel that their voices are being heard as well.

(BBC British female reporter)

Delivering news that is not otherwise available through other media was a high priority among all of the journalists I interviewed, but none so strongly as the Chinese at VOA and the BBC. They expressed a sense of mission to share information about certain aspects of life in the U.S. and the U.K. that can bear meaningfully on current aspects of China's development. A VOA reporter told me about the underlying reasons for the coverage he pursues on Capitol Hill:

Laws in this country need to be passed by their vote and then signed by the President. It is a different process than what China has. So I want to explain to my audience what the legal process in the States is like and especially what is the legal process related to China. I make my stories like this because I believe it should be the best for my audience. (VOA Chinese male reporter)

The Chinese reporters I spoke with expressed a strong sense that their Chinese peers back at home are hungry for details, even common details, about life in the U.S. or U.K. When I asked them where this idea comes from, I was told that they receive

many emails and hotline calls from listeners in China. A young Chinese reporter at VOA told me about an interesting story she did in response to a caller's request:

They use the hotline to tell us what topics they would like to hear about. I remember one time a caller told me that he wanted to know what an American school's lavatory looks like; whether it is separated between male and female; and whether people could take showers there. Yes, they want to know what an American school's lavatory looks like and what are the facilities. So they often would offer some interesting suggestions for topics. (VOA Chinese female reporter)

However, I also heard that not every detail of life in America is necessarily interesting to a Chinese audience, so it takes Chinese reporters to know what will and what will not arouse attention back in China. A Chinese VOA editor explained:

The mission is to introduce American culture, American political institutions, and American reality. This is one mission of VOA. So I think I should introduce some meaningful and interesting things here to our Chinese audience, letting them be aware of these. However, not all the things in the United States could arouse their interest. For example, football here is a very popular sport. If you talk with Chinese about this, they would not have any interest because they do not have such a sport at all. Therefore, even though it is something about America, the audience will not necessarily be interested. If your listeners do not like the topic, no matter how well you write the story, it is still not meaningful. (VOA Chinese male editor)

Similarly, I was told at the BBC that the topics chosen are those that are expected to interest audiences in China, particularly unheard angles on issues currently unfolding in China, such as political developments in Beijing, revaluation of the Chinese exchange rate, elections in Taiwan, or anti-corruption protests in the Chinese countryside. Fewer Chinese at the BBC told me about doing stories on life in Britain, but those who did were just as likely to talk about the dark side of British life as the bright side. For example, one seasoned Chinese reporter told me:

I myself have interviewed a lot of British people with different jobs—farmers, homeless people, etc. My interviews were to stay with them and record their lives. Why did I do this? I just wanted to let Chinese people know more about Britain and British people. The U.K. is really not what they imagine, a perfect, developed, and industrial country. When I was still in China, I thought so too, and now, I want to tell the Chinese people they are wrong. Later, one of my British friends asked me why I did a program on homeless people. She felt like I wanted to present Chinese audiences with the dark sides of British life. I told her that's exactly why I did the program. I said I wanted to let Chinese people have an idea of the freedom in BBC's news production. That is to say, it is safe for us to report the dark sides of British society. BBC broadcasting is full of all kinds of news, sometimes all of which are negative. The BBC does not worry about it at all. (BBC Chinese female reporter)

This sort of example provides one more instance of the BBC's prime directive being "to show the best of Britain by being impartial," which sometimes entails

covering dark issues just to demonstrate that they can be covered. One BBC journalist working on a pop culture program told me about several instances that she felt demonstrated the agency's attempt to truly engage all audiences by brushing up against the limits of free expression. She told me with a bit of a blush that

We also did something about... I can't remember what the reason for doing this story was, but it was... oh what do you call those? Prostitutes who are into bondage and whipping. Perhaps it's not prostitution that's involved, it's just a good whip hand and dressing up in the appropriate uniform. And we had one of these women included in the discussion, and she was so good. I must say she was so good. In the old days, we'd have had someone who'd written a book about it or met someone who did that, and now we want the person who does it. So there's a fine line between us toppling over into poor taste, which we tread uneasily. I think it's just the general push that we should push at the boundaries and be a bit more daring in all directions, including that direction. (BBC British female reporter)

Among the Chinese official media, perhaps needless to say, no one talked about bondage and whipping. But they did talk about other relatively controversial and edgy issues such as AIDS, sexual orientation, corruption, and prostitution. I was told numerous times that China is rapidly becoming a more open society, and that the authorities are waking up to the need to respond to audiences by addressing issues of genuine and direct concern to all segments of the population. A senior editor at the Xinhua News Agency told me about some of the recent stories she has been proud of, along with her criteria for deciding what issues to pursue:

We had stories about AIDS. For instance, we wrote about discrimination against AIDS patients. Also, we wrote about employees of foreign enterprises, and labor insurance. There are also environmental and development issues which are also of concern to the international community. We are concerned about common problems encountering the general public, which therefore could raise attention. I'm very realistic. It has to be of interest for other media. Meanwhile, it should comply to our style. For instance, we may not be able to work on topics like fashion or lifestyles. Because the audience is limited. Only a group of people or a particular class is concerned about it. But issues like environment, ecology, AIDS, and health are common concerns. (Xinhua Chinese female editor)

Although I was told that there are still many issues that cannot be covered in China, particularly stories that might be considered destabilizing for the central government, most of the journalists I spoke with told me about how they can be edgy with their reporting in other ways. I was told about the Chinese proverb, "*Liu de qing shan zai, bu pa mei chai shao* (留得青山在不怕沒柴燒)," which loosely translates to, "As long as we're on the green mountain, don't worry about having no firewood to burn." In other words, as long as you can stay in the right position, even though conditions are not ideal, you can use the position to find what you need. The idea I heard from several reporters in China is that they do what they must to stay in their jobs, because as long as they have a platform from which to publish, they can work in quiet and gradual ways to create more space for societal reform. If they get kicked off the "green mountain," there's no way to engage in the work at all. Thus, even a

shortage of “firewood” (i.e., lack of completely open expression) is to be tolerated in the short term, for the sake of long term engagement. This is a classic pattern in Chinese society.

For example, one CCTV reporter told me that the reason he is willing to put up with some level of censorship in his job is because he values the position from which his reporting can make a difference in people’s lives, such as in the area of public health:

In China, there are many things that cannot be reported. Yes, it is true. Many of my colleagues complain that, okay, we report nothing, then we’re finished. So they would complain. Our audiences and people outside the journalism industry accuse us of lying. But, I believe it is we that fail to report some stories that can be reported. It will be a better society if we do well in every small thing. If you say that we should topple the Communist government, surely the government will kill you first. Why don’t you devote your efforts to many other things that you are able to change? In other words, a journalist should not abandon his or her responsibilities simply because of pressure from the environment. I had a very well-known program in Wuhan City. I didn’t feel our law enforcement agencies did a good job. It seemed that they were useless. Our public hygiene was terrible, which must be of great concern in the United States. So I invited a law enforcement officer to my studio and asked our audience to call in and tell him which restaurants failed hygienic standards. You know, China is a big developing country suffering from hepatitis. Western countries consider hepatitis a disease unique to developing

countries that have bad hygiene, which is rare in the United States. There are 100,000,000 Chinese hepatitis patients, a heart-wrenching figure. It looks like a small issue of individuals, but when you read the statistics, you definitely will regard it a big national issue. We asked the officer to send his people who should be listening to our program as well to check the restaurants reported by audiences. If problem really existed in the restaurants, they must be handled promptly. Then the next day, we would tell our audiences the results. It was such a program. I did it because I ate at a dirty restaurant myself. And this problem is not unique to that restaurant. I hope journalism can affect our lives. This exposure can better our life, force the restaurant industry to improve and conform to the law. (CCTV Chinese male reporter)

Eating is considered in China to be the most fundamental of human rights, and great emphasis is placed on feeding and being fed. Thus, perhaps the most innovative story idea I encountered in my research was the BBC Chinese Service's decision to capitalize on this most basic of human connections by facilitating dialogue between China and Britain around the topic of eating. Content was produced to be broadcast on the air, on the BBC Chinese website, and also through an actual joint festival held in western China called "Eat East, Eat West" (吃东吃西, a play on the Chinese word for "thing," *dongxi*, made up of the characters for east and west). This programming was designed to allow Chinese to gain exposure to the BBC through the neutral subject of food by providing recipes, cooking tips, and a food quiz offering a trip to London. In this day when controversial programming is expanding, it is interesting that food should provide a staple for Chinese media to reach across boundaries.

Characterizing the Daily Feed

One important aspect of this research that has thus far been addressed only tangentially is the culinary metaphor of “serving up the daily feed.” To explore this “news as food for thought” symbolism fully, it was helpful to position journalists in a metaphorical kitchen, likening their reporting work to the preparation of food for the consumption of others. Thus, after interviewing each reporter for at least half an hour about their work so as to make their values more salient in their minds, I asked them very bluntly, “If your reporting were a dish, what would it be?” Although the question usually evoked some surprised laughter, all of the journalists I interviewed managed to answer creatively and substantively in ways that revealed a great deal about the value orientations underlying their journalistic choices. Even though none of the journalists seemed to feel prepared at first to answer the question, all of their answers were meaningful and helped to add an extra layer of understanding to our characterization of the gatekeeping choices they make in preparing news to serve to their audiences.

The most obvious theme that emerged throughout the international broadcasters’ responses was the notion of mixing, a theme that came out most strongly among the British at the BBC. Seven of the ten British reporters at the BBC World Service told me that their work would be “a mixture,” “a fusion,” “a selection of different things,” or “a big mix.” Furthermore, each of the seven reporters who strove for a mix characterized the mixture of elements in their reporting as containing foreign or exotic elements—an Indian tahli, a Hungarian goulash, Spanish paella, or “a big masala mix,” as one told me, because “It would be bits of Britian—chips—and

quite a lot of American culture, because that's what's universal. And a bit of curry. It would be a masala mix of local stuff that you might not have heard of from different places prepared by a mix of people, ideally.” Another British reporter at the BBC emphasized

It would have to be cultural fusion. That's absolutely paramount. So it would have to be sort of Eurasian or Indochinese or something. It's the global conversation; it's the meeting of cultures. And it would have to be delicious.

The dish probably hasn't been invented yet. (BBC British female reporter)

I was not surprised to hear such internationally-minded responses from the BBC World Service. Their reporters, I was told by several interviewees, tend to have an extraordinary level of international interest and experience, and indeed the BBC World Service management appears to have gone out of its way, at least in certain rounds of hiring, to bring in people who had lived unusual lives in various parts of the world. One reporter told me that, after years of hiring “too many Oxbridge people” (i.e. graduates of Oxford and Cambridge Universities) who were “not particularly diverse,” the management settled on a new strategy:

The year I joined, they decided it was very important for them to be completely biased (biased is not the right word) to really try and change the kind of people. I had spent a decade essentially bumming around the world, but what I wrote on the application was that I built a boat, I went sailing, I wrote lots of poetry and published novels and sailing magazines and stuff.

They recruited someone who had just bicycled around China. They recruited an officer from the Gherka regiment who had just spent a year in Nepal. They

recruited a very, very young chap who was working in a warehouse in Chicago. They were looking for people who had seen more of the world, perhaps, than the people they had recruited hitherto. (British BBC journalist)

Judging by the values articulated by the recruits brought into the BBC World Service under this kind of vision, it is apparent that the strategy made a significant impact within the organization. Most of the BBC journalists I interviewed spent at least half of their interviews talking about interviewees or audiences in other countries. They emphasized *freshness*, uniqueness, and exoticness, conveying a sense of delight in scouring the world for interesting tidbits and serving them up in a palatable and culturally universal mix. A British BBC reporter told me that, if she were to compare her work to a dish,

I'd want it to be a strong taste and not an insipid taste. I'd want it to have something to chew in it. And it would definitely be warm food rather than cold food. (*laughs*) So strong, sort of piquant, and warm. Sounds sort of like a goulash, doesn't it? (BBC British female reporter)

Spiciness was a major theme that emerged from all the five sets of journalists' interviews, although the range of characterization of what spiciness meant was broad. A British BBC reporter described spiciness as "cutting edge," and a Chinese colleague at the BBC told me that spicy represents something "not something completely risk-free but interesting enough to attract their (the audience's) attention... so they get a lovely shock, but then hopefully it wouldn't upset their stomach completely, you know." An American reporter at VOA thought along the same lines, describing her ideal work as "a spicy jambalaya dish, because I do like

some of the hot-button issues—gay marriage, the crisis in the Catholic church, those sorts of things.” There is a sense of risk, of excitement, of pushing the envelope of human experience. One Chinese reporter from China Radio International decided that he wants his reporting to be

Strong-flavored dishes, like spicy Sichuan cuisine. I don’t like bland dishes, like some Japanese dishes. I think life is a process of pursuing excitement. Although I choose Sichuan cuisine today, I may choose Hubei cuisine tomorrow, or Hunan cuisine the day after tomorrow, because they are all hot. The level of heat is different. If I go to the northeast, I may want more salty and sour stuff. But only with all kinds of flavors can I feel more excited.

(Chinese CRI male journalist)

It was common for Chinese reporters, both in China or abroad, to draw their food-reporting analogies from the eight main schools of Chinese cuisine—Sichuan, Guangdong (Canton), Hunan, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, and Fujian, each with its own distinct characteristics. “China has a long food culture,” I was told, and “Confucius said the most important thing for people was eating.” Because Chinese conceptions about food are so rich, evocative, and historically grounded, the Chinese reporters I interviewed were quick to draw on these established culinary notions in ways that belied many deeply-held conceptions about how reporting “should” be done. A Chinese BBC reporter told me,

My reporting can’t be Sichuan dishes, for I think my report is not that hot—not that hot chili sort of type, because that’s not what I consider a BBC kind of report should be. I myself like it, of course. I am okay with different

styles. If it is a hot chili type, that would be more appropriate for sports type of reporting or for commentary with guidelines. Then, you can be appropriate for the kind of steamy taste of the comments. But otherwise, for general reporting, that should be a kind of, you know, taste considered as sort of general statements or descriptions. Maybe it's like Shanghai food, because I think this kind of food has an agreeable flavor, and it doesn't go to extremes. It's rather mild, occasionally sweet. It has style; it has a kind of status.

(Chinese BBC journalist)

Sichuan food was by far the most frequently referenced cuisine by the Chinese journalists, invoked for its strong, spicy taste. Although the above-mentioned Chinese reporter at the BBC felt that the "BBC style" might preclude him from producing general news programs that are too shocking, one of his female Chinese BBC colleagues told me matter-of-factly, "My programs are Sichuan cuisine, spicy. Leaders in China won't be happy with the programs." Indigestion, for her, isn't a problem, as long as it's the right segment of the audience feeling the heat.

Shanghai food was also mentioned by Chinese journalists for its lightness and sweetness, and Cantonese food for its freshness and simplicity. A journalist with the Xinhua News Agency in Beijing told me that he specifically avoids spicy stories: "I'd say our work is like Cantonese dishes. Because it's not very spicy, not very heavy, but simple and clear. In general, I think you want to get as many readers as possible." In other words, taking too many risks or presenting too much flavor can be a liability if it costs you listeners.

For the Chinese journalists I interviewed, propriety was often cited as a key element of good reporting. A Chinese journalist at the BBC told me that, indeed, flavoring stories requires a certain degree of care:

If I report stories with the milk of human kindness, these stories are like Shanghai dishes or something between Shanghai and Shandong dishes. That is to say, my dishes are light or a little bit strong. But they won't be spicy or bitter. I won't add my own spices. What I prefer is to use sounds and colors that are portrayed in others' words to set off my stories. I won't add my commentary. I let the original flavors play their roles. If I do commentary news, for example, sports news or political reports, I will give my own comments. Then, my programs would be like Sichuan dishes. I want to make my programs thought-provoking. As for the Sichuan dishes, I will make them spicy if they have hot peppers themselves. I mean, I do not want to add things in them. I prefer to explore the flavors in the original materials.

(Chinese BBC male journalist)

Statements like these bring out the overlap between the categories of *emotionality* and *justice*—the space in which it is desirable to present excitement, sweetness, and human interest, as long as it is not artificially manufactured or contrived. None of the journalists in any of the samples expressed any tolerance for “additives,” at least in ideal stylistic terms. This kind of authenticity, of bringing out the “flavors in the original materials” with nothing added, was echoed by an American journalist at VOA who said,

I guess my style may be like a peanut butter and wildflower honey sandwich on really good peasant bread. The peasant bread for substance and honesty. The peanut butter for the flavor and comfort, and ease to make. And the wildflower honey because it's sweet, but also it's wildflower honey, so it's sweet in itself when it's doing its own thing rather than being shaped or domesticated. All together, it has substance, comfort, flavor, and a bit of a wild streak. (VOA American male journalist)

This notion of substance emerged also as a key theme between cultures—one that is universally acknowledged as important, and most often associated with protein. Both in the East and in the West, protein in the form of meat or nuts was considered most substantive, with “carbs” in the form of sweet or starchy foods providing comfort and pleasure. An American editor at VOA summed up this distinction with reference to the typical American diet:

You know, meat and potatoes might be germane (to describe my work), because they are fundamental food stuffs. So maybe I would go in that direction. I would say it's a high-protein diet. A low-carb, but not no-carb diet. The carbs are the sugary sweet things, the fillers. It's stuff that you need, but only in small amounts, and usually you get too much. (VOA American male editor)

A few American reporters, perhaps not surprisingly, also associated their work with what many consider to be the typical American staple meal, hamburgers. One jovial program host, for instance, told me that if her work was a dish,

It would be prime rib. (*spoken with great exaggeration*) No, it wouldn't. (*laughs*) I was going to say like a sirloin hamburger. Fun to eat, but it's substantial. You know. It's packaged in a sort of chatty, more conversational way, and as a result people think our show is lightweight. It's because we're a little sometimes silly, you know, in between spots. Just a different approach; we're trying to get younger listeners. But we're quite substantial.

(VOA American female reporter)

Chinese reporters at VOA picked up this same motif of substantial, but not heavy. Two of them, one male and one female, summed up this perspective by likening their reporting to chicken salad. One told me that chicken salad is a perfect metaphor "because it makes you feel full, but in the meantime, it will make you feel enjoyable. It will not give a lot of burden because it won't make you feel like, 'Oh God, it is so heavy.'" Her colleague echoed nearly the same sentiment:

Because it tastes fresh although it has meat, chicken inside. It still tastes very fresh. It is different from other salads, but not enough for a whole meal. You would like to have other things to eat if you just have a salad. However, chicken salad is enough for a lunch portion. It is fresh, not very heavy. So my stories are like this, very fresh and not very heavy.

(VOA Chinese male reporter)

Another stylistic issue I heard, particularly from male reporters who emphasized *aesthetics* as an important presentational value, was that of coherence—making the various elements of the report flow together and develop a composite

flavor. An American male reporter at VOA (who happens to report on health issues) found himself amused when he heard himself likening his reporting to chicken soup:

I'm thinking it has to be something... coherence is really important to my stories. I want them to flow together from beginning to end. All the parts should be connected. So for some reason, soup, just because it's a liquid, should flow better. Something that's good for you, good nutrition, but also tastes good. Goes down easy, but it has everything you need in it. Maybe chicken noodle soup. (VOA American reporter)

Along similar lines, an older VOA reporter who had described himself as “a typical white-bread American” compared his work to a casserole because it can hide elements for the purpose of providing surprise as the dish is consumed: “I think it's a casserole... a little fattening sometimes, hopefully very tasty, with little morsels of surprise in there. You don't necessarily know the ingredients before you go into it. Satisfying, I hope. Something like that.”

A pattern that emerged among the journalists in China (but not among their Chinese colleagues in America or Britain) was the notion of certain flavors “growing on” the audience after prolonged experience. Four of the ten reporters I interviewed in China expressed this strikingly similar concept:

- 1) It's a dish whose taste lasts. The taste can remain in your mouth for a long time. Perhaps it's like snack peas. They seem very common, but the more you eat, the stronger the taste.
- 2) I think it's like a fish-flavored vegetable in the south. Probably you haven't heard of it. This kind of vegetable grows in Sichuan and Yunnan

Provinces. I just love it. You may not like it in the beginning because of the fishy smell. But one day, you might suddenly find it so delicious. The more you eat, the more addicted you'll become.

- 3) Maybe it's like a glass of strong wine. The stronger, the more tasty. Our culture is like that. The more you taste it, the more you'll like it.
- 4) Bitter melon. Because I think it does not taste good initially. Likewise, if you expose some issue, it is not a happy experience. But after a while, you will feel its benefits and think better of the taste.

In all four cases, the journalists made the point that although the taster might not exactly enjoy the taste at first, repeated exposure brings a degree of appreciation. It appears that many Chinese broadcasters expect their audiences to be patient with their reporting and keep consuming it until they eventually come to appreciate the strong taste for its lasting qualities. Because this idea emerged several times in the Chinese data, its connection to Chinese culture is worthy of further investigation.

Because of noteworthy insights like these, I found the culinary metaphor to be a rich and evocative way to bring out a significant degree of depth and meaning from the journalists' characterizations of their work. A degree of commonality emerged between cultures in likening substance to protein and comparing the piquing of interest to adding spice. Across cultures, the level of cooking was important: "raw" elements are considered to be fresher, and flavors are valued for being as close to the original, authentic flavor as possible with no additives. Still there were important variations between "comfort food" reporters in the US, "discomfort food" reporters in China, and "fusion food" reporters in England. This device is one that is worthy of

further exploration for its ability to allow journalists to use common culinary metaphors to discuss the nitty-gritty of how they prefer to “serve up the daily feed” to consumers.

What is World-Class Journalism?

Through the process of interviewing fifty international broadcasters, it became clear that they have one pressing concern in common—struggling to preserve their space of integrity and independence from which they feel they can constructively engage people around the world. None of the journalists I spoke with felt that they themselves are producing propaganda, although some of the Chinese reporters I spoke with in Beijing indicated that they felt that their stories are occasionally twisted by institutional forces and that a lot of the truth is often left out. Clearly, the emphasis on *justice*, objectivity, completeness, accuracy, and fairness that I heard so often from the Chinese reporters in the study has a great deal to do with the political realities they have had to work with throughout their lives. Yet I believe that their articulated striving for greater balance can be taken as a good sign of things to come for the Chinese media system, as journalists in China are clearly aware that there is ample room to build their reputation for world-class objective journalism.

Because international broadcasters hold a powerful and public microphone, there are pressures for political or economic forces to encroach upon this public sphere of discourse. As institutional and market forces mount to make broadcast pieces shorter, snappier, and more attention-grabbing to compete for the increasingly scarce commodity of consumers’ attention, a process appears to be under way that many broadcasters call the “McDonaldsization” of the airwaves. I heard real stress

from American, British, and Chinese reporters alike over the pressures they feel about their programs being cut back, their services being threatened, their role in the world potentially disappearing. Funding support for international broadcasting is being called into question as members of the Cold War generation retire from positions of power, and the case to be made for maintaining “voices that can be heard around the world” is falling increasingly into commercial hands. However, as I heard from broadcasters who try to stay tuned in to the pulse of world society, the need for maintaining open channels of communication free from political or corporate influence is more vital than ever. A reporter at the BBC articulated the longing that I heard from many reporters: “It’s about ordinary people in their own voices of power around the world, being able to say what they feel without fear.”

The culinary metaphor points to the vital role of international broadcasters in preparing and providing intellectual nourishment for people who consume their programming. It has been said that our modern society is “rich on convenience, but poor on nutrition,” and this trend appears to apply to how people feed our minds as well as how we feed our bellies. Because the corporate mandate that is dominant in today’s broadcasting causes media outlets to emphasize gaining attention and selling it to advertisers, too little thought is given to the level of nourishment provided to consumers. As funding for international broadcasting is increasingly called into question, it is important for practitioners, planners, and policy makers to seriously consider the vital role of the airwaves to bring essential information where it is needed.

For example, in one interview a young American journalist at VOA tasked with covering health issues told me about what he feels was one of the most important stories he has covered, fighting malaria in Africa:

My God, so many people have malaria in Africa. I try to do some real practical stuff to give them the information they need. I went to a meeting in Philadelphia, and came back with a really nice piece about controlling mosquitoes. It's basic, you know, these researchers working in Africa just walked around people's houses and found something really important. In a lot of places, people will be doing some kind of construction, and they'll have a basin just dug into the dirt where they're mixing cement, and after the construction they'll just leave it. So they'll leave this basin, and the basin collects water, and the water is a breeding ground for mosquitoes. But the people don't make the connection, they don't know about the connection between standing water and mosquitoes and these horrible fevers and chills and this disease that kills their children. In some places, it coincides with the rainy season. Like malaria season is the rainy season, which is also the season for some fruits. So some people think if you eat too many mangos, you'll get malaria, or if you stand out in the rain too long you'll get malaria. So I was talking to these researchers who had gone around and shown people about mosquitoes. If you get bitten by mosquitoes, you can get malaria. They would take a little dipper, like a little glass jar and dip it into the pool of standing water, this little cement mixing basin. They showed them the larvae and then would let them watch as mosquitoes grew and developed and finally

came out of the water. They had never seen this before. And you know, just reporting on that was amazing. They tell me what they learned in Africa, and then I can go tell the many people who listen about this. And I hope that people hear it and they themselves go, “Ah, I didn’t know that.”

(VOA American male reporter)

As I conducted my interviews, this story moved me tremendously. Here was a useful story being delivered to people in Africa who desperately need to learn ways to fight the malaria that kills their children. I was touched by the earnestness in the reporter’s voice as he spoke about how such a simple thing as teaching the connection between standing water, mosquitoes, and malaria could literally save lives.

However, before I finished my research, this reporter’s source of outside funding source dried up and he had left the organization. VOA was still producing pieces on pop music and the Westminster Dog Show, but nothing more on malaria. The public service mandate is clearly eroding, and no one that I spoke with during the course of my dissertation seems to know how to get it back. This was the most sobering realization of my research process. I realized then that perhaps I need to build on this dissertation in many more ways.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Major Findings

There are five major findings from this study. First, the ten-pronged category scheme characterizing presentational values that underlie broadcasters' strategic decision-making has proven useful for examining journalistic contexts across cultures. Second, the "inductive sandwich" method of using both qualitative interviews and systematic measures such as freelisting and a selection task has provided a level of validation for the findings and structured analysis to discover patterning that may not otherwise be as apparent in the journalists' discourse. Third, national origin emerged as the most significant predictor of differences between journalists, more than age, gender, organization, or journalistic training. Fourth, the nature of the differences by national origin centered mostly on the *justice* value, as Chinese journalists have been shown to be more likely to articulate strivings for balance, objectivity, fairness, and accuracy than their Western counterparts. Fifth, the culinary metaphor has proven to be a rich way to deepen journalists' understanding and expression of their own role in providing a "daily feed" for the consumption of others. The following section discusses the implications of these findings.

First, to discover how presentational values affect broadcast decision-making in different cultural contexts, grounded tools such as those developed in this study can help researchers approach newsrooms and gain meaningful information from journalists' discourse in a concise and systematic way. Because newsworthiness values used in earlier gatekeeping studies focused mainly on characteristics theoretically situated within the news stories themselves, insufficient attention has been paid to the more subtle personal and strategic considerations at work in public communicators' minds. This study has contributed a ten-pronged category scheme, grounded in the discourse of international broadcasters themselves, that characterizes the various considerations that guide journalists' presentational decision-making on a daily basis: *aesthetics, breadth, convenience, depth, emotionality, freshness, germaneness, helpfulness, incisiveness, and justice*. This category scheme was tested through application to the discourse of dozens of international broadcasters in this study and was found to produce evidence of personal and cultural differences that could be validated through separate systematic measures. Because the category scheme is thorough, alphabetical, and easy to apply, a useful heuristic model could be developed both for research and training to provide a vocabulary for journalists to more deeply understand the presentational values that inform their own reporting decisions.

Second, the "inductive sandwich" method developed and tested for this study has proven valuable in gaining multiple layers of meaning from the data collected from journalists. The freelisting task asked reporters to articulate and list the values that are most important to them within an open-ended, ideal scenario; the selection

task asked them to consider the broader field of choices and then narrow down and rank-order their values within their top three selected values. These two measures provided a systematic approach that yields standardized results that can be compared across samples. Both of these tasks were relatively quick, taking only five to ten minutes. The bulk of the time spent with each journalist for this research was preserved for face-to-face interviews that provided more rich information on what journalists mean by these values and why they emphasize them as they do. The standardized task provided understanding of where the journalists' values come from and how they manifest in professional decision-making. Using the simple standardized framework to guide the approach to the qualitative data provided a structure that allowed for more systematic and thorough analysis of the text than would be possible through interpretive analysis alone.

Third, this study provided for analysis of the data to answer the question of whether or not national origin is the most salient source of differences within the journalists' discourse as well as their selections in the open- and closed-ended tasks. Although examining the data through the lenses of gender, age, organization, and level of journalistic training did produce some noteworthy patterning within the responses, none of these factors resulted in either the breadth or depth of differences that stemmed from national origin, Chinese versus American or British. It was apparent that national origin had more significant influence than professional context, insofar as Chinese working for the BBC in London or for VOA in Washington demonstrated more of the same thought processes as their Chinese counterparts in China than their own colleagues at VOA or the BBC. Support was found for the

contention that there are nationality-based differences that manifest in journalistic decision-making, and although gender, age, training, and organization also produced some patterns of difference, they were not found to be as significant as national origin, at least as far as presentational values are concerned.

Fourth, this study revealed a notable emphasis among Chinese reporters on the *justice* value, which was the most significant finding to appear in the interview data, as well as in the freelisting and selection tasks. Compared to their Western counterparts, Chinese were considerably more likely to reveal an emphasis on striving for objectivity, balance, accuracy, and fairness in their reporting. Although American and British reporters were more willing to articulate their tendency to allow their own sense of right and wrong to appear in their reports, Chinese journalists were more likely to claim neutrality and state that they prefer to let the audience judge the merits of certain arguments and information on their own. Whether this difference stems from cultural factors inherent within Chinese society or from political factors arising from China's current position on its developmental trajectory as a major international broadcaster remain to be explored.

Finally, the culinary metaphor developed through this study yielded substantive insights about journalists' perception of their choices in presenting their work for the consumption of others. Some similar metaphors have arisen between cultures, such as equating protein with substance, for example, or sugar and spice with emotional appeal. Journalists from all three cultures represented in the study were all most likely to refer to dishes from their own cultural repertoire, although journalists at the BBC World Service were most likely to talk about "fusion" cuisine

using elements from other cultures. Chinese reporters made metaphorical use of the eight schools of Chinese cuisine, and were also likely to articulate striving for work that may start off less appealing but becomes more palatable over time. Overall, the culinary metaphor proved to be a useful device for drawing out the presentational values that are most important to journalists, and may provide a useful tool for journalists and other communicators in the future to discuss and compare across cultures both the differences and similarities in their strategic presentational styles.

Contributions

The major contribution of this study is to provide tools for both researchers and practitioners to systematically analyze producer intent. Theoretically, this new framework extends gatekeeping theory by shifting conceptions of newsworthiness from characteristics inherent in news items themselves to strategic values on the part of producers. This framework is thus much more sensitive to contextual factors and hence more conducive to cultural theory-building. Conceptually, this research delineates a ten-pronged value category scheme that has proven useful in structuring analysis of journalists' discourse and searching for patterns by various demographic factors. The conceptual categories provided in this framework help to illuminate both the ideals and the constraints that underlie journalistic decision-making across contexts, serving as a useful heuristic for understanding the value climates operating within organizations and providing a vocabulary for journalists to enhance their reporting, both individually and as part of a team. Being trained within this grounded category scheme can be helpful for public communicators to increase their level of

reflexivity about their intent and thus approach their journalistic work with a higher degree of sensitivity.

This study has also provided grounds for theoretical and conceptual linkage between the suggested ten-pronged value framework and a food metaphor that functions well in different cultural contexts to help journalists elaborate their values for comparative purposes. Although traditional conceptions of media-making have been largely based in the commercial and political considerations that have driven the development of media infrastructures around the world, the food metaphor provides a less politically-charged and thus more universal set of concepts that may be used in any context to help communicators elucidate their strategic presentational values. In this study, journalists from very different backgrounds shared common terms for basic culinary concepts (e.g., protein = substance, spiciness = shock or controversy, raw elements = news without editorial commentary), thus this metaphor can be expected to provide useful terms for dialogue and understanding within and across cultures.

Although this study represents only a small fraction of the work that can be done to elucidate how and why differences emerge in the decision-making of journalists of different backgrounds, it provides a substantial number of tools to help in organizing and analyzing qualitative data for comparative purposes. This study has yielded both a new functional value category scheme, a systematic approach for exploring presentational values in both ideal and constrained contexts, and an overall methodological framework for making meaning from journalists' discourse. It is hoped that these tools may be useful both for research and for training purposes as

both scholars and practitioners gain a shared vocabulary to characterize producer intent and explore linkages between strategic values and actual journalistic products.

The Meaning of Justice

Because one of the most notable findings of this study centers on the Chinese participants' relative emphasis on *justice* as compared with their Western counterparts, I spent a significant amount of time in follow-up interviews asking both Chinese and Western journalists what this value means to them. I spoke with about half of the participants again after their initial interview about this issue, along with making formal presentations at both the BBC and VOA to invite all the journalists who had been involved in the study to have a look at my findings and to have a chance to contextualize the observable patterning in the data. At the BBC, 15 out of the 20 journalists interviewed there came to hear the results, and at VOA, 12 out of the 20 were in attendance. I was unable to do the same kind of presentation in China, because the journalists who had participated in the study there worked at three different agencies and were more sensitive about keeping their involvement in the study confidential.

Each time I presented the journalists with graphical representations of the freelisting and selection task data organized by category, there was notable interest in the consistently greater emphasis placed on *justice* by Chinese journalists. I asked participants about their interpretation of this pattern, asking Chinese journalists in particular if they felt this finding was because justice is relatively abundant and emphasized within their cultural milieu or because it is relatively scarce in their society. One hundred percent of the Chinese journalists to whom I posed this

question told me that they feel this emphasis is because justice and balance have always been scarce in the Chinese media. I was told repeatedly that they grew up feeling skeptical of the official Chinese news reports they saw, because those reports typically presented a one-sided government-sponsored view of both domestic and international events. After a lifetime of witnessing biased reporting served as standard fare, the Chinese journalists said that they have been left with a great desire to hear more sides of a story than just the official view. As consumers, they want the freedom to hear a full range of opinions, so they feel obligated as producers to make this a standard principle in their reporting.

When I asked Chinese journalists in follow-up interviews whether they thought that the Chinese emphasis on *justice* was more of a cultural or a political issue, a CCTV editor summed up the views I heard from many people that

In terms of culture, China is quite open to the outside world now. Many foreigners come and Chinese leave and return. They bring with them some Western opinions. Well-educated people, like me, expect objective information. We have already realized that the Chinese system is not quite transparent. Many farmers and workers are busy with survival, hence they have little time to think about these issues. However, people like me think more about our system. The public wants more information from different sources. They have come to realize this now. So, it's not a cultural issue. The influences of culture are less and less. It is a systemic problem.

(CCTV Chinese male editor)

One point that I heard repeatedly in follow-up interviews with Chinese journalists, and resisted for quite some time for fear of being ethnocentric, was that the idea of objectivity in news reporting is considered to be a Western notion that Chinese society is coming to accept as part of its modernization. Thus, in Chinese journalism circles, to be a modern, open-minded, world-class reporter has come to be synonymous with striving for balance and impartiality. Journalists at Xinhua, CCTV, and CRI all spoke of Western role models, including authors, scholars, or former teachers, who taught them principles of objective reporting that they claim to be invaluable to their work. This tendency helps to explain why the *justice* value emerged so frequently in this study of journalists' discourse, which tended to focus on ideals rather than actual practice.

In contrast, the Western reporters I spoke with in follow-up interviews were more skeptical about a journalist's ability to actually achieve absolute objectivity and impartiality in reporting events. Their comments reflected more of a postmodern tendency to acknowledge the subjectivity of so-called "truth," such that being aware of biases is better than pretending they do not exist. Because the Western journalists did not report having grown up feeling dissatisfied with the level of objectivity in the media they consumed, they did not express the same sense of striving toward balance and impartiality as did the Chinese journalists. They instead reported taking such principles for granted, assuming them as a very basic "bottom line" without which journalism is not journalism at all.

There were more subtle differences in journalists' notions of *justice* than this study can fully characterize. For example, a British reporter at the BBC commented,

“When we hear Americans in Western movies talking about ‘Justice,’ we know it's Old Testament justice, a necktie party, or howling bloodstained vengeance. But the proper European idea of justice is law administered with mercy so as to satisfy people's idea of fairness.” Because of the many rich subtleties that remain to be drawn out of international reporters’ conceptions of comparative *justice*, this topic will need to be dealt with further in future studies.

Limitations

One limitation of this research is that it was only able to address ways in which journalists think of and articulate the values and goals underlying their work. This study did not undertake any comparison of journalists’ stated values with actual content of the material they produce, focusing at the present time on the strategies themselves rather than on how the strategies influence journalistic products. Because this project was designed to develop and test a new category scheme, efforts were concentrated on examining points of consonance between interview data and systematic freelist and selection task data for the purpose of better understanding journalists’ strategic considerations within their work context. With a fully elaborated category scheme, it will be possible in subsequent studies to allow journalists and journalism students to participate in coding their own work and thus provide researchers with a better window into the strategic producer intent that underlies the production of actual reports and broadcasts.

As for this study, however, the potential discrepancy between articulated and actualized strategic values is particularly important to note when evaluating data that lead to theoretical assumptions based on the journalists’ responses. For example, in

the freelisting task there was a difference between the level of internalized, substantive values expressed by journalists who had majored in journalism and those who had learned all of their skills on the job: 74% of words listed by former journalism majors reflected internalized values related to their work as opposed to only 58% of responses from those who had learned exclusively on the job. At least in terms of the words they articulate, these data suggest that participants who majored in journalism have thought through their role as journalists more clearly and thus have developed more deeply-ingrained notions about what constitutes good journalism, leaving them less dependent on external standards. However, the difference noted between the two groups in this task may simply be due to an ability to articulate journalistic values in words. In other words, former journalism majors who have had to research and write papers about journalism may have developed a richer vocabulary and may be able to talk about journalistic values more substantively. However, this training may make no difference when it comes to the actual practice of journalism on the job. Future work will be needed to determine the extent to which differences noted in how journalists talk about their work actually affect their story selection and treatment of subjects.

Another limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size, especially in terms of analyzing the freelisting and selection tasks. The percentages and numbers listed in the freelisting and selection task sections must be interpreted in light of the caveat that the sample sizes ranged between thirty and ten. In particular, the small sample of international feature journalists in China should not be construed as representative of the entire Chinese international broadcasting enterprise for a few

reasons: a) the participants were a self-selecting snowball sample of Chinese journalists who are relatively friendly to outsiders and open to research, b) the journalists who participated represent three organizations (China Central Television, China Radio International, and the Xinhua News Agency), thus no one organization is well represented, and c) there was a mixture of television, radio, and print journalists in this sample, in contrast to the journalists at VOA and the BBC, who were all radio feature reporters.

One other sampling issue left unaddressed by this study was to examine differences between Chinese reporters from Mainland China and Taiwan. Although three of the thirty Chinese journalists who participated in this study were Taiwanese, the small size of that sample made it unwise to generate conclusions based on such limited data. Especially due to the highly politicized nature of the Mainland-Taiwan relationship, I chose to refrain from mentioning differences between the Taiwanese and Mainland samples, out of caution for these differences being overstated. In the future, concentrating on similarities and differences between reporters in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong will help to shed further light on whether the differences noted are more cultural or political in nature.

Because this study caused journalists to engage in articulating strategic value considerations that often go unstated, it is possible that a degree of priming took place through the course of the interviews that may have affected what was salient in the minds of the journalists before they engaged in the freelisting and selection tasks. The decision was made in this study to begin with interviews in order to build rapport with journalists and allow them to mentally review aspects of their jobs that influence

or reflect on certain value considerations underlying their work before being faced with unfamiliar freelisting and selection tasks. In this trial of the study, this ordering made sense in order to help participants gradually articulate their values in their native language over the course of a 45-minute interview before being asked to suddenly list words and make choices between values. However, in future studies it may be worthwhile to vary the ordering of these tasks to examine any priming effects that may occur.

This study focused on journalists employed by state-funded international broadcast organizations, concentrating on reporters at VOA and the BBC in particular because it was possible to interview both Chinese and Western journalists employed by the same agencies. This approach helped to control for organizational factors that may otherwise be conflated with cultural factors. However, once a sufficient number of Chinese journalists at VOA and the BBC had been interviewed, a degree of generalizability was obtained by also interviewing their peers employed in China by the Chinese official media. Thus, the decision for this study to focus on governmental media provided a degree of utility in controlling for variables. Future research should apply the tools developed in this study to commercial and public broadcasters in a broad variety of contexts around the world.

In the future, now that a workable category scheme has been developed, the next step should be to take this scheme into both newsrooms and classrooms to explore how the value categories are articulated and actually manifest in news reporting within different contexts. Because this project worked mostly with ideal values that that most reporters would like to use (i.e., without limitations of time,

money, or resources), the *convenience* category was unfortunately not well developed in this study. However, including *convenience* as one value among the ten allows future studies to address constraint issues, whether personal or professional, without negative judgment. Because our category scheme is grounded in the lives of real media producers who often need to base their output decisions on a multitude of resource issues, the scheme can be used in such a way as to capture a broader spectrum of reasons why media producers do what they do. As such, it becomes a tool to help both insiders and outsiders to the media production process better understand journalists' ideals as well as their constraints, and to perhaps clarify how producers and managers can make their work environments more ideal.

Future Research Directions

Several avenues of research should be undertaken to allow this line of inquiry to reach its full heuristic potential. First, the set of communication value categories produced in this research should be applied to the work that journalists and other communicators actually contribute to the public sphere. Early studies along these lines should set up conditions for journalists to comment on the pieces they have produced in such a way as to reveal their reasoning for including certain story topics, narrative elements, and stylistic choices. To characterize the underlying value structure informing decisions made in newsrooms around the world, researchers will need to enter those newsrooms and observe journalists in action to better understand how their own personal values interact with constantly-changing institutional and market contexts. Journalists and journalism students can be trained in these ten

categories to help them better understand and even code their own choices according to the various demands that act on them.

This line of inquiry will benefit from studying a wider range of newsrooms, commercial as well as publicly and privately funded, to explore the extent to which these value categories are operationalized and reveal patterning between and across cultures. One obvious step would be to compare journalists in Mainland China with their counterparts in Hong Kong and Taiwan to gain more traction on the issue of whether the *justice* value is related to Chinese culture or more to the Mainland's current historical moment. If the question is to discover both human elements that unify reporters around the world as well as contextual elements that define and divide them, researchers should include cultures outside of East Asia, America, and Britain—hopefully as far as South Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, and southern and eastern Europe. This breadth may also mean reaching beyond journalists to other kinds of public communicators, including speechmakers, educators, public relations professionals, diplomats, and others who are professionally involved in crafting strategic messages designed to attract and influence others.

A possibly exciting avenue of research will be to conduct studies that present public communicators with actual case studies that reflect value choices to see how different operationalizations of various presentational values play out in day-to-day practice. This line of inquiry could be valuable not only for investigative purposes, but also as a heuristic training tool for journalism students and professionals. Undergraduate courses as well as in-service training sessions for journalists could be designed to highlight their own presentational values and explore how these interact

with their institutional contexts under various conditions. Using exercises such as individual and group freelisting, individual and group selection tasks, and free discussions based on cross-culturally valid metaphors such as the culinary paradigm, journalists and journalism students can better understand that *newsworthiness* is indeed in the eye of the beholder and develop skills to more reflexively comprehend their own decision-making process. Rather than viewing themselves as merely gathering *obvious* news from pre-packaged recipes recommending certain bits of news as *worthy* of broadcast, journalists must be given the opportunity to craft their own menu and realize the important function they provide in a healthy civil society. As journalists become more aware of their role as meaning-makers and can better grasp the idea of their “daily feed” providing mental food for thought for their audiences, a deeper sense of public responsibility may be fostered that will leaven the field over time.

Finally, as this line of research gains greater grounding qualitatively, I anticipate that greater quantitative use of the value scheme will allow for larger and broader sample sizes. As this value framework is strengthened through future studies, issues such as the correlation between demographic factors and stated values, as well as between stated values and produced content, can be studied systematically in ways that can better address statistical significance and work toward greater external validity. Over time, I hope to be able to develop this line of research into a large multi-national survey with journalists and other public communicators in different parts of the world. As the category framework is refined and intercoder reliability

can be established, it will be possible to find out more about how these values play out in different cultures and contexts.

Parting Words

James Carey noted that the role of broadcast media is an “invention in historical time that, like most other human inventions, will dissolve when the class that sponsors it and its possibility of its having significance for us evaporates” (Hanson & Maxcy, 1996, p. 238). As current debates continue around the world about unipolarism versus multilateralism, as land and water and air are put up for ownership to the highest bidder, it is more critical than ever before to reflect on the role of our world’s great connector: international broadcasting. As the World War II generation retires and passes from the halls of leadership, funding and support for old Cold War institutions such as the Voice of America and the BBC World Service are increasingly coming into question. As these invisible threads of communication that have stretched between continents through the 20th century fall increasingly into commercial hands, are there ways to facilitate the international flow of information free of direct commercial or political influence?

As developing regions of the world increasingly bring their ancient wisdom and ethics to bear on crafting modern societies, it is more important than ever for scholars to be involved in the debate over how international communication channels are funded and staffed. Large broadcast outlets such as Al-Jazeera and CCTV will increasingly become agencies to watch to understand how emerging broadcasters crystallize the structures and strategies of 20th century giants in the interests of engaging global audiences.

Cross-culturally valid tools need to be developed and refined to allow both practitioners and policy makers from different regions of the world to address the communication needs of the next generation. As narrow-casting becomes more prevalent due to the Internet and the proliferation of media options in modern societies, bringing people together around common terms and concepts will become increasingly difficult. Thus, academics will need to facilitate substantive discussions on the future of broadcasting to help better prepare broadcast professionals to consider their role in the world society. Hopefully the value scheme developed through this dissertation and future studies will provide some tools toward catalyzing those discussions.

Appendix A

English Interview Protocol

- 1) What do you consider to be your “cultural” background? (e.g. where did you have your life’s most formative experiences, etc.)
- 2) How did you become employed with this organization?
- 3) Have you had formal journalistic training? If so, what do you think was its aim?
- 4) What are the 3 most recent stories you’ve reported? Why did you choose them?
- 5) How do you go about choosing feature stories to report?
- 6) Who benefits most from your work? How?
- 7) What do you consider to be “effectiveness” in your work? How do you achieve this effectiveness?
- 8) Do you have any particular role models in this field?
- 9) What other networks or news sources do you most respect in this field? Why?
- 10) If you were to describe the style or “flavor” of the stories you write, how would you describe it? If your reporting were a food, what would it be?
- 11) Do you think your background culture affects the style/flavor of your stories?
- 12) How does the style/flavor you strive for compare to that of other journalists or news organizations?
- 13) What do you know about the composition of your audience? When you broadcast, whom do you imagine broadcasting to?
- 14) What kind of stories do you think your target audience prefers? What gives you this impression?

- 15) How does your target audience differ from other audiences around the world?
- 16) What kind of interactions do you have with your editor/boss?
- 17) How does your place in your organization affect your work?
- 18) What does “propaganda” mean to you? Does your organization produce it?

Appendix B

Chinese Interview Protocol

- 1) 你是怎样看待你的文化背景的?
(比如说, 你在何处经历了你人生中最有影响力的事情, 等等。)
- 2) 你是怎样进入这个新闻机构的?
- 3) 你曾经接受过正式的新闻从业者的训练嘛? 如果有, 你认为这样的训练其目的何在?
- 4) 你最后报导的三个新闻故事是什么? 为什么你选择它们?
- 5) 你是怎样选择深度报导的?
- 6) 谁从你的工作中获益最多? 他或者她怎样获益的呢
- 7) 你的观众是由什么人构成的呢? 你认为你是在向什么人报导新闻呢?
- 8) 你认为你的观众想看到什么样的新闻故事? 为什么你会这么觉得?
- 9) 你的观众与世界上其他的观众有什么不同呢?
- 10) 你是怎样考虑你工作中的“效率”的? 你又怎样达到高效率呢?
- 11) 在这个行业中, 你有没有什么特别的典范来遵从呢?
- 12) 在这个行业中, 有什么其他的网络或者新闻来源你最尊重呢? 为什么?
- 13) 如果你需要描述一下你写的新闻有什么样的风格或者“味道”, 你会怎样描述呢?

- 14) 你认为你的文化背景会影响你写作的风格呢？
- 15) 同其他记者或新闻机构的报导风格相比较，你的风格是怎样
- 16) 你同你的编辑或老板有什么样的互动？
- 17) 你所在的位置是怎样影响你的工作的？
- 18) “宣传”对你而言，意味着什么？你所在的新闻机构做宣传吗？

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