

## Reports, Inferences, and Judgments in Deceptive and Legitimate News Stories

By

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**Abstract**

U.S. journalism has been tarnished by recent incidents of high-profile deception. This calls for a closer examination of underlying patterns in deceptive news. A fundamental tenet of journalism is that news articles are based on facts, not assumptions or evaluations. A content analysis of recent deceptive news articles found that they contain a lower proportion of report statements (facts) and a higher proportion of both inferential statements (assumptions) and judgment statements (evaluations) than a random sample of ostensibly legitimate articles produced by the same major news organizations during the same time frame. Implications for the practice and future of journalism are discussed.

Keywords: News, Deception, Inferences, Ethics, Content analysis

### **Reports, Inferences, and Judgments in Deceptive and Legitimate News Stories**

U.S. journalism has been tarnished in recent years by incidents of high-profile deception. Reporters such as Jayson Blair of the *New York Times*, Stephen Glass of the *New Republic*, and Jack Kelley of *USA Today* engaged in numerous fabrications for years before they were finally caught and their deceptions uncovered. Quality journalism claims to distinguish itself from readily available but unchecked information, to attempt to verify its reports, to guard against lazy and sloppy reporters who make unintentional errors and, above all, to weed out reporters who deliberately deceive their audiences. At a time when public trust in journalism is at an all-time low<sup>1</sup>, a close examination of underlying patterns in deceptive news seems warranted.

Much attention has been paid to journalists who engaged in deception, to the news organizations for which they worked, and to ethics in journalism generally.<sup>2</sup> However, little attention has been paid to the content of deceptive stories themselves. This study explores how news articles which were later found to be deliberately misleading differ from ostensibly “legitimate” news articles—those not known to be deceptive. (The label “legitimate” is used here merely as a convenience to describe news articles which have not been identified as deceptive.)

A fundamental tenet of journalism is that news articles are based on facts, not assumptions or evaluations.<sup>3</sup> This study tests the notion that deceptive news articles contain a greater proportion of *inferences* (i.e., assumptions) and *judgments* (i.e., evaluations) and a smaller proportion of *reports* (i.e., facts) than do ostensibly legitimate news articles. These hunches are based on the idea that when a reporter fabricates or plagiarizes, that substitutes for the first-hand observations and the interviewing of real sources deemed essential to produce a fair and accurate story. Because of this lack of basic reporting, a reporter who engages in deception is forced to fill in missing information gaps by making inferences. A deceptive

reporter might try to present at least some of these inferences as reports, but they are *false* reports. Other inferences are likely to be passed on unchanged. This should result in a greater proportion of inference statements in deceptive news than is likely to be found in an article composed only of pertinent first-hand observations and interviews with sources.

In addition, because some inferences, especially stereotypical ones, are negative, such inferences may turn into judgmental statements, as well. If it is true that deceptive news contains a lower proportion of report statements than does ostensibly legitimate news then this finding will reinforce the importance of reporters making first-hand observations, conducting interviews with real sources, and otherwise following long-standing professional norms.

### ***Statement types***

Journalists are familiar with the distinction between fact and opinion and, therefore, have little difficulty distinguishing between a report and a judgment. Journalists have been taught to stick to the facts and to leave their opinions at home. “To exchange information,” Hayakawa and Hayakawa<sup>4</sup> wrote, “the basic symbolic act is the *report* of what we have seen, heard, or felt.” They defined a report as a statement capable of verification: “The room is getting hotter.” We can record temperatures and determine to what extent this statement rings true. This is not to say that all reports *are* verified, only that in theory they have the potential to be verified. A *judgment*, in contrast, is a statement of favor or disfavor: “The air conditioner is lousy.” These definitions coincide well with terms journalists use to describe the reporting function: Gather facts. Attribute information to sources. Let sources give their facts and opinions, and you, the reporter, report them. Accurate and fair news stories generally are short on judgments and long on reports.<sup>5</sup>

The third type of statement is less familiar but also affects the quality of reporting. An *inference* is a statement about the unknown based on the known. Any statement about the future

is an inference: “The meeting will be held tomorrow.” Attribution, however, turns this inference into a report: “The mayor said the meeting will be held tomorrow.” All assumptions are inferences: “The air conditioner must be broken.” Perhaps the air conditioner is turned off or you have a fever. Any statement about how someone feels or believes is an inference: “She was happy.” She could have been faking or we could have misread signals. “She believes in the right to ....”: We do not know what she believes. We know what *she said* she believes; we can report that. Hayakawa and Hayakawa<sup>6</sup> maintained that communicators do not pay enough attention to their use of inferences and that reporting suffers from overuse of inferences.

Journalists and educators have codified these ideas into professional norms. Reporters are taught to include verifiable information in stories, to attribute information to sources, and to keep their opinions and judgments out of stories unless they have a compelling reason to do otherwise. Since accurate and fair stories are believed to be based predominantly on reports, the accuracy and fairness of a story is likely to suffer as inferences and judgments increase.

### ***Questions of media bias***

Analyses based on the use of the three statement types have been used to examine questions of media bias for many years and across a wide range of topics. Among the issues that have been explored using this approach are German unification,<sup>7</sup> the environment,<sup>8</sup> race relations,<sup>9</sup> and agriculture.<sup>10</sup> Such research primarily has tested bias in newspaper or wire service copy, but studies also have analyzed television news transcripts<sup>11</sup> and blog posts.<sup>12</sup> One of the most recent and notable studies of this kind was Sweetser’s<sup>13</sup> examination of bloggers who were given media credentials to the 2004 Democratic and Republican national conventions. She used the Hayakawa–Lowry bias categories, quantitatively categorizing blog posts into eight groups: *reports* (attributed, unattributed), *inferences* (labeled, unlabeled), and *judgments* (attributed and

favorable, unattributed and favorable, attributed and unfavorable, unattributed and unfavorable). Such a complex accounting of each sentence in the text, however, is not necessary to measure accurately the reports, inferences, and judgments in a news article. Lowry<sup>14</sup> himself reduced his analysis to simply reports, inferences, and judgments, and Sweetser<sup>15</sup> also collapsed her results to examine them via that three-part (as opposed to an eight-part) categorization.

This longstanding technique for analyzing news bias through the use of reports, inferences, and judgments allows us to consider, in a new way, a recent rash of high-profile deception in U.S. journalism. In doing so, we make a fresh and distinct contribution to the academic literature on media bias, which has tended to focus on manifestations of political slant.<sup>16</sup> If fair and accurate news stories presumably are based on reports, sourcing their material and avoiding opinions, what of the demonstrably deceptive news stories of late? If deceptive journalists are not constrained by professional norms of factual reporting, to what extent is this reflected in their use of reports, inferences, and judgments, relative to that of their “legitimate” colleagues?

### ***Deceptive news***

Errors occur in journalism and while some, like typographical errors, can be annoying, we prefer not to think of them as “deceptive.” Other errors, however, can be misleading in more than a trivial way such that readers might feel deceived. Articles that contain such deliberate errors we call “deceptive news.” Deceptive news results from a disregard of one or more journalistic professional norms, often taking the form of fabrication or plagiarism. Deceptive newspaper and wire stories usually have corrections appended to them, identifying the deception. We define a deceptive news story as one that deliberately misleads audiences.

Deceptive news articles range in their levels of deception but all suffer from the same basic problem. Either in part or whole, at least one element of the story is missing. One made-up quote from one made-up source means a reporter must fill in missing information gaps created by the failure to interview a real source and get a real quote. Instead of communicating what has been observed, one must resort to relating what one *thinks* the situation is. Plagiarism also substitutes for first-hand observation, and has the same effect.

Interestingly, very little empirical exploration of the content of deceptive news has been conducted. What work has been done, however, indicates that the products of news deception are alike in notable ways. On average, deceptive news stories and news columns appear on the front page more often<sup>17</sup> and are longer<sup>18</sup> than ostensibly legitimate ones. They also contain more sources and more ethnically diverse sources,<sup>19</sup> and more direct quotations.<sup>20</sup> Such differences are relatively easy to explain. If a reporter is going to make up a quote, a source or an entire story then why not make up exceptional ones, thereby delivering what appears to be an enterprising story worthy of prominent display?

### ***Unintentional effects***

Besides these presumably intentional effects, deception also has a presumably unintentional effect. Deceptive news articles contain more stereotypes than legitimate stories.<sup>21</sup> What explains this difference? One theory is that reporters who make things up or steal the words of others are avoiding shoe-leather journalism, that is, the legwork necessary to make accurate and fair observations. Consequently, deceptive news stories and news columns must somehow compensate for weak reporting.<sup>22</sup>

Anecdotal evidence about recent cases of deceptive reporting supports this theory. When a reporter was sent to a city 1,800 miles away to cover a story, instead he relaxed at home. He

took material from another reporter's story and he apparently used unauthorized access to his newspaper's photo archive to add descriptions.<sup>23</sup> Other authors of deceptive news stories also admitted cutting corners. A reporter who made up a source to say just the right thing in a news column said she did so to make the story more compelling. She said she "tweaked" some of her stories to make them "indelibly impressive."<sup>24</sup> Another reporter said the untrue information contained in a news magazine cover story resulted from an effort to use literary devices to provide a "higher truth."<sup>25</sup> While techniques of literature are used in literary journalism, the latter is still journalism and thereby expected to deal only with nonfiction. Having convinced his editors to send him to Africa to cover a story and having then discovered that it was less of a story than he had promised, the reporter turned in an account which the magazine later disavowed.<sup>26</sup> In all of these cases, the resulting stories contained information that was not only false but stereotypical.<sup>27</sup>

Deceptive news articles are compelled to fill in the missing information gaps left by the lack of legwork journalism. The holes in the story are filled with assumptions, and sometimes these are stereotypical. This supports the social psychological principle of the *automaticity* of stereotypes. Generally, humans process information elaborately when able and motivated, but heuristically when unable and unmotivated.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, humans are likely to engage in stereotypical thinking unless able and motivated to avoid it.<sup>29</sup> When able and motivated to communicate legitimate news, reporters make first-hand observations and interview witnesses, trying to produce an accurate and fair rendition of events. To make up for their lack of reporting, reporters who are not so able or motivated fall back on stereotypical thinking.<sup>30</sup>

***Why more inferences and judgments***

If the missing information gaps left by the deceptive reporter's lack of legwork journalism is filled with assumptions then there should be a greater proportion of inferences in deceptive stories. Likewise, since deceptive stories contain more stereotypes and since stereotypes are inferences, it follows that deceptive stories should contain more inferences. Furthermore, since stereotypes also tend to be negative, deceptive stories might contain more judgments, as well. Lasorsa and Dai<sup>31</sup> found that deceptive news is more negative in tone than legitimate news. This negativity could be conveyed in the form of judgmental statements.

Through deception, however, a reporter can turn an inference or a judgment into a report. In other words, a deceptive reporter can easily falsify reports. When reporters fabricate and plagiarize they presumably intend to "improve" the appearance of their work, to increase its appeal. Since quality journalism is believed to be grounded in reports rather than inferences and judgments, reporters can be expected to seek to present as many relevant reports as possible. Furthermore, since deceptive news articles are known to contain more direct quotations and more sources than do legitimate stories,<sup>32</sup> and since direct quotations are by definition reports, and since sources are used to attribute information (i.e., make reports), it is likely that deceptive stories contain *more* reports than do legitimate stories.

However, while legitimate news articles are about the known, deceptive news stories are not. A reporter may try to make a deception *appear* to be about the known but nonetheless deceptive stories, like inference statements, are literally about the unknown. Therefore, we contend that if a reporter does not make a concerted effort to avoid the inferences on which their work rests then those inferences are likely to creep into their work. Just as deceptive news articles tend to contain more stereotypes, we expect that they also are likely to contain more inferences. The story that brought down *New York Times* reporter Jayson Blair mistakenly

assumed that patio furniture would be on the patio. The reporter from whom Blair plagiarized knew that this seemingly innocent inference was incorrect.<sup>33</sup> As Blair's reporting deceptions increased, he became increasingly adept at making inferences.<sup>34</sup>

Because deceptive stories tend to be longer than legitimate ones, they are likely to contain more statements of all three types. However, and more importantly, we suspect that the *proportion* of reports to inferences and judgments will be lower in deceptive stories than in legitimate ones. This hunch is based on the idea that when reporters produce deceptive news they are likely to make assumptions. They are forced to fill in information gaps created by their lack of first-hand observing and interviewing of knowledgeable sources. They often fill in the missing information by jumping to a conclusion (i.e., making an inference). Hayakawa<sup>35</sup> maintained that communicators should make concerted efforts to avoid using inferences and that careless communicators often are unaware they are making them.

It is also possible that deceptive reporters are more lax generally about the types of statements they use because they do not care much about the accuracy and fairness of their stories. If this is true then we should see a disproportionate use not only of inferences but of judgments in deceptive news. These ideas led us to the following hypotheses:

H1: Deceptive news stories and news columns will contain a larger proportion of inferences and a smaller proportion of reports than will ostensibly legitimate news stories and news columns.

H2: Deceptive news stories and news columns will contain a larger proportion of judgments and a smaller proportion of reports than will ostensibly legitimate news stories and news columns.

### ***Norms and constraints of newswork***

We present these hypotheses with a caveat, however. Like others in the social sciences, these hypotheses attempt to examine a particular facet of human phenomena, and therefore cannot fully reflect the complexity of the news production process as a whole. We acknowledge that the narrative shape and subtle nuances of any news article—not to mention the very definition of “news” itself—reflect the forces that went into its creation, from the influence of individual predispositions and organizational routines, to issues of sourcing patterns and socio-cultural constraints.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, in addition to the professional norm of fact-checking, due-diligence journalism, there are a variety of factors, some more obvious than others, that contribute to the ultimate shaping of news texts, as several decades of media sociology research has confirmed.<sup>37</sup> (see, e.g., Berkowitz, 1997; Benson, 2004; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Reese, 1990; Ryfe, 2006, 2009; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978).

Much of this literature, particularly the influential newsroom ethnographies of the 1970s, has emphasized the “constructivist” nature of news, challenging the notion that journalists simply gather “facts” that exist “out there” and are waiting to be discovered and packaged for tidy distribution.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, contemporary journalism has an uneasy relationship with the highly contested and ideologically sensitive terrain of “facts,” “truth,” and “objectivity.”<sup>39</sup> This is particularly true as the profession’s claims to authority are eroded amid the decline of legacy news media and the concurrent rise of bloggers and citizen journalists who find legitimacy through authenticity.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, even while few observers would claim that journalism is a perfectly objective portrayal of a reality “out there,” the professional norm of truth-telling, of communicating factual reports over inferences and judgments, remains a canonical feature of deontological journalism. Thus, recognizing the enduring relevance of fact-seeking in journalism, we attempt to examine the breakdown in usage type—i.e., the proportion of reports

to inference and judgment statements—in the comparative contexts of deceptive and legitimate news.

### ***Method***

In order to examine the extent to which deceptive news relies upon inferences and judgments at the expense of reports, a set of news stories and news columns known to be deceptive was compared to a set of ostensibly non-deceptive news stories and news columns produced by the same news organizations over the same time period.

An online search for locating recent cases of deceptive reporting was conducted using the Lexis-Nexis database. An effort was made to identify reporters who engaged in deception and about whom essential information relating to their deceptive activities was available (e.g., when the deception occurred, the article in which the deception occurred, the nature of the deception, how the organization uncovered the deception, what the organization did about the deception). This led to the identification of high-profile journalists working for five major American news organizations: the Associated Press wire service, the *Boston Globe* daily newspaper, the *New Republic* monthly newsmagazine, the *New York Times* daily newspaper, and the *USA Today* daily newspaper. This does not mean that these five news organizations harbored or cultivated deceptive reporters. Quite to the contrary, these news organizations showed themselves to be particularly open regarding cases of deception they uncovered. It is possible that other cases of reporting deception were even more extensive but occurred at news organizations less willing to publicize it. We analyzed all the known deceptive news stories and news columns written by these high-profile reporters between the years 1998 and 2004, a total of 181 articles.<sup>41</sup>

These deceptive news articles were compared to a random sample of ostensibly “legitimate” ones produced by the same news organizations. The legitimate content was sampled

by taking two constructed weeks for each publication for each of two years, 1998 and 2004, a sampling method recommended by Riffe, Lacy and Fico<sup>42</sup> for this type of content. Because *USA Today* is published only Monday through Fridays, the total number of stories sampled from it was 20. For the other newspapers and the wire service, the total number of stories sampled for each was 28. For the monthly newsmagazine, the total number of stories sampled was 24. The sample thus consisted of a total of 128 ostensibly legitimate news stories and news columns.

Trained coders read each story and identified each sentence as a report statement, an inference statement or a judgment statement. Sentences that contained any judgments, regardless of any inferences or reports, were coded as judgment statements. Sentences that contained any inferences but no judgments were coded as inference statements. Sentences that contained only reports were coded as report statements. Inter-coder reliability for the statement type variable was calculated using Cronbach's kappa statistic, a more conservative measure than simple percentage of agreement because it gives no credit for chance agreement. Two coders independently coded 20 percent of the 309 total news stories and news columns ( $N = 62$ ). Inter-coder reliability was .81, an indication of considerable reliability.

The proportions of report, inference and judgment statements within each story was calculated by dividing the total number of each statement type in a story by the total number of sentences in that story. For example, a story containing 20 total sentences, 15 of which are report statements, consists of 75 percent reports.

The independent variable in this study is at the nominal level of measurement: stories were categorized as either deceptive or legitimate. The dependent variables in this study are at the ratio level of measurement: the proportions of reports, inferences and judgments in each

story. Therefore, to determine how statistically significant the differences between the deceptive and legitimate article are, an appropriate analytic tool is the independent sample t-test.

### ***Results***

As expected, the 181 deceptive news stories and news columns contained more reports, inferences and judgments than did the 128 ostensibly legitimate ones. The deceptive articles contained an average of 52.1 report statements while the legitimate stories contained only 30.6. The deceptive articles contained an average of 9.6 inference statements, compared to 4.3 in the legitimate articles. The deceptive articles contained an average of 5.6 judgment sentences while the legitimate stories contained only 2.2.

Because deceptive news stories tend to be longer than legitimate ones, however, it was necessary to control for story length. Thus, the proportions of reports, inferences and judgments in each story were taken. When story length was taken into account, the picture changed dramatically. Compared to the ostensibly legitimate news stories and news columns, the deceptive ones contained a lower percentage of report statements. The legitimate stories contained an average of 82.8 percent report statements, while the deceptive stories contained an average of only 76.9 percent. The legitimate and deceptive stories also differed in their proportions of inference statements. The deceptive stories contained an average of 15.3 percent inference statements, while the legitimate stories contained an average of only 11.6 percent. Furthermore, the news stories and news articles also differed in their proportions of judgment statements. The deceptive stories contained an average of 7.8 percent judgment statements, compared to an average of only 5.6 percent in the legitimate stories (see Table 1).

### ***Discussion***

Since deceptive news stories and news columns tend to be longer than legitimate ones, it is not surprising that they contain more of each of the three types of statements. What is enlightening, however, is the ratio of report statements to inference and judgment statements. That the deceptive stories contained a lower proportion of report statements and a higher proportion of both inference and judgment statements suggests that the writing of deceptive stories somehow affects the use of statement types in news stories and news columns.

In noting these findings, however, we must account for the complexities at play. First, different types of publications would be expected to produce different levels of inferences (and judgments). For example, the *New Republic* news magazine would reasonably take more liberties with inferences than the *Associated Press* wire service, which seeks to provide a more “objective” portrayal of facts. We attempted to account for such distinctions by drawing randomized samples of ostensibly “legitimate” news articles from both outlets, in such a way as to favor neither one. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of statements in deceptive stories are reports. This reminds us that, just because there is a slightly higher number of inferences in deceptive stories, it does not automatically follow that the inferences are where the core of deception resides. Nevertheless, that there is a significant difference at all in the proportion of inferences in legitimate versus deceptive stories suggests that, on balance, deception is more likely to appear in reporters’ assumptions. Finally, the relatively narrow differences in proportions of reports, inferences and judgments between legitimate and deceptive stories indicate that these distinctions may be rather subtle, even while they are statistically significant. Further research would do well to puzzle out these differences in more detail.

The deceptive stories studied here were all written by reporters working for large, prestigious, nationally known news organizations. These reporters were selected for study

precisely because more information was available about them than other reporters. In this sense, they were “high-profile” reporters. Previous research found deceptive stories to be longer<sup>43</sup> and on the front page more often;<sup>44</sup> likewise, one reason the deceptive articles might contain a greater percentage of both inferences and judgments is that such reporters may be given more leeway in their writing than other reporters. All of these reporters were seasoned journalists with relatively long reporting careers. Some even were regarded as “stars” in their newsrooms. Not counting previous journalistic experience, the reporters who wrote these 181 deceptive stories worked for their news organization between four and 25 years. They averaged 10.7 years with their news organization.<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps these reporters were able to take advantage of their positions to make inferences and judgments more freely than either their lower-profile counterparts or reporters at less prestigious news organizations. Future studies might explore whether deceptive news produced at smaller and less well-known publications differs from the deceptive news studied here. (One problem with this approach is the difficulty of uncovering much information about deception at such publications, which is one reason why this study focused on deception at major news organizations.) It would also be enlightening to examine the characteristics of deceptive journalism produced by other news media (e.g., television news) or by other kinds of news workers (e.g., bloggers), as well as deceptive news at publications in other countries besides the United States.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that journalism does not occur in a vacuum. Value-neutral “facts” are not simply waiting to be collected, in some antiseptic fashion, by neatly objective reporters—despite, perhaps, some professional claims to the contrary. Throughout the assembly, packaging and presentation of news, there are a host of factors—from individual and

organizational routines, on up to professional culture and ideological constraints—that contribute to shaping the final product.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, as media become digitized and commoditized in the 21st century, the once-stable environment for news production has become ever more complex, particularly as U.S. journalists operate under increasingly precarious work conditions.<sup>48</sup> This discussion of the socio-cultural context for newswork serves to remind us that the use of reports, inferences, and judgments in news reports does not merely occur at the level of the individual reporter, but indeed connects with larger forces at work in journalism and society. Nevertheless, precisely *because* those socio-cultural conditions are relatively constant for U.S. journalists, we can reliably investigate the extent to which there are differences in usage between deceptive and legitimate news.

Despite its limitations, this study supports our general theory that deceptive journalism, because it relies on some element of assumption and falsification, is associated with a greater use of inferences and judgments. That is, when journalists avoid the “shoe-leather” reporting necessary to make fair and accurate observations, invariably they must rely on heuristic devices, such as stereotypes,<sup>49</sup> to fill in the information gaps. Unless a reporter is both able and motivated to produce a legitimate story, that reporter is more likely to succumb to weak reporting. Reporting, after all and above all, means the communication of reports.

More broadly, we can apply this line of theorizing to the present challenges facing legacy news organizations. Across-the-industry staffing cutbacks and bureau closings have complicated the process of “witnessing”<sup>50</sup> that is so central to journalistic authenticity and authority.<sup>51</sup> Today, it is less likely that professional journalists, as a whole, will bear “witness,” in person, to any given event or potential news source in society; and yet it is more likely that they (indeed, all of us) may bear witness to events and source material *virtually*, because of the ubiquity of

broadcast-capable technologies in the hands of ordinary people. These developments raise questions about the future of shoe-leather reporting in the digital age: e.g., if journalists are not so able or compelled to witness something in person, how does that affect their use of reports, inferences, and judgments to describe the scene?

Ultimately, these findings squarely reinforce the importance of reporters making first-hand observations, conducting interviews with credible sources, and otherwise following the long-standing professional norms that journalists believe will allow them to compose accurate and fair news accounts. In today's media landscape, where consumers are confronted with an overwhelming amount of information of widely varying validity and reliability, the importance of quality journalism is hard to underestimate.

**TABLE 1**

*Proportions of reports, inferences and judgments, by story legitimacy*

<b>Reports</b>	Mean	S.D.	t value	p value
Legitimate Stories	.828	.145	2.878	.005
Deceptive Stories	.769	.196		
<b>Inferences</b>	Mean	S.D.	t value	p value
Legitimate Stories	.116	.110	2.572	.01
Deceptive Stories	.153	.136		
<b>Judgments</b>	Mean	S.D.	t value	p value
Legitimate Stories	.056	.074	2.252	.025
Deceptive Stories	.078	.088		

Note: Legitimate stories = 128. Deceptive stories = 181. df = 307. Independent samples t-test.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *Press Accuracy Rating Hits Two Decade Low: Public Evaluations of the News Media: 1985-2009*, September 13, 2009, <http://people-press.org/report/543/> (accessed Sept. 17, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Lee Wilkins and Renita Coleman, *The Moral Media: How Journalists Reason About Ethics* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> E.g., see Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect* (NY: Three Rivers Press, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> S. I. Hayakawa and Alan R. Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action* (NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1991), 23.

<sup>5</sup> Note, however, that reports do not necessarily equate with accuracy; e.g., “water freezes at 12 degrees Fahrenheit.” Furthermore, a reporter can bias a story by choosing reports selectively, giving one side but omitting another. It was the General Semanticists, one of whom was Hayakawa, who coined the term “slanting” to describe this form of bias (see Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics* (Lakeville, CT: International Non-Aristotelian Library, 1958). Nevertheless, accurate and fair news stories generally are believed to be based on reports and exclude the writer’s judgments.

<sup>6</sup> Hayakawa and Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action*.

<sup>7</sup> Dominic C. Boyer, “On the Sedimentation and Accreditation of Social Knowledge of Difference: Mass Media, Journalism and the Reproduction of East/West Alternatives in Unified Germany,” *Cultural Anthropology*, 15 (November 2000): 459-491.

<sup>8</sup> Richard A. Pride and Barbara Richards, “The Denigration of Political Authority in Television News: The Ecology Issue,” *The Western Political Quarterly*, 28 (December 1975): 635-645.

<sup>9</sup> Tony Atwater and Kwadwo Anokwa, “Race Relations in Ebony: An Analysis of Interracial Statements in Selected Feature Stories,” *Journal of Black Studies*, 21 (March 1991): 268-278.

<sup>10</sup> Dennis T. Lowry, “Agnew and the Network TV News: A Before/After Content Analysis,” *Journalism Quarterly*, 48 (summer 1971): 205-210; R. Terry Jr. and D.E. Lawver, “University Students’ Perceptions of Issues Related to Agriculture,” *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 36 (4, 1995): 64-71.

<sup>11</sup> e.g., Dennis T. Lowry, “Measures of Network TV News Bias in Campaign ‘84 or Should Jesse Helms ‘Become Dan Rather’s Boss?’” (paper presented at the annual meeting of AEJMC, Memphis, TN, 1985).

<sup>12</sup> Kaye D. Sweetser, “Blog Bias: Reports, Inferences, and Judgments of Credentialed Bloggers at the 2004 Nominating Conventions,” *Public Relations Review*, 33 (November 2007): 426-428.

<sup>13</sup> Sweetser, “Blog Bias.”

<sup>14</sup> Lowry, “Measures of Network TV News Bias in Campaign ‘84 or Should Jesse Helms ‘Become Dan Rather’s Boss?’”

<sup>15</sup> Sweetser, “Blog Bias.”

<sup>16</sup> e.g., see Frederick Fico and Eric Freedman, “Biasing Influences on Balance in Election News Coverage: An Assessment of Newspaper Coverage of the 2006 U.S. Senate Elections,” *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 85 (autumn 2008): 499-514; Frederick Fico, Gari Alumit Zeldes, Serena Carpenter, and Arvind Diddi, “Broadcast and Cable Network News

Coverage of the 2004 Presidential Election: An Assessment of Partisan and Structural Imbalance,” *Mass Communication and Society*, 11 (July 2008): 319-339; Geri Alumit Zeldes, Frederick Fico, Serena Carpenter, and Arvind Diddi, “Partisan Balance and Bias in Network Coverage of the 2000 and 2004 Presidential Elections,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 52 (October 2008): 563-580.

<sup>17</sup> Dominic L. Lasorsa and Jai Dai, “Newsroom’s Normal Accident? An Exploratory Study of 10 Cases Of Journalistic Deception,” *Journalism Practice*, 1 (June 2007): 159-174.

<sup>18</sup> Linden Dalecki, Dominic L. Lasorsa, and Seth C. Lewis, “The News Readability Problem,” *Journalism Practice*, 3 (February 2009): 1-12.

<sup>19</sup> Lasorsa and Dai, “Newsroom’s Norman Accident?”

<sup>20</sup> Dalecki, Lasorsa, and Lewis, “The News Readability Problem.”

<sup>21</sup> Dominic Lasorsa and Jai Dai, “When News Reporters Deceive: The Production of Stereotypes,” *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 84 (summer 2007): 281-298.

<sup>22</sup> Lasorsa and Dai, “When News Reporters Deceive.”

<sup>23</sup> Dan Barry, David Barstow, Jonathan D. Glater, Adam Liptak and Jacques Steinberg, “Times Reporter Who Resigned Leaves Long Trail of Deception,” *New York Times*, May 11, 2003, sec. A, p. 1; Jayson Blair, *Burning Down My Master’s House* (Beverly Hills, CA: New Millennium Press, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> Patricia Smith, “A Note of Apology,” *Boston Globe*, June 19, 1998, sec. B, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Howard Kurtz, “New York Times Feature Was Fiction; Michael Finkel Fired Over Slave Story,” *Washington Post*, February 22, 2002, sec. C, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Jason Brian Gorss, “The Sin of Synecdoche: David Quammen’s Epistemology and Literary Science Journalism” (master’s thesis, University of Tennessee, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> Lasorsa and Dai, “When News Reporters Deceive.”

<sup>28</sup> Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, *Communication and Persuasion: Central and Peripheral Routes to Attitude Change* (NY: Springer-Verlag, 1986).

<sup>29</sup> James A. Bargh, “The Four Horsemen of Automaticity: Awareness, Intention, Efficiency, and Control in Social Cognition,” in *Handbook of Social Cognition*, ed. Robert S. Wyer and Thomas K. Srull (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1994), 1-40; Patricia G. Devine, “Stereotypes and Prejudice: Their Automatic and Controlled Components,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 56 (January 1989): 5-18; Charles W. Perdue and Michael B. Gurtman, “Evidence for the Automaticity of Ageism,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 26 (May 1990): 199-216; C. Neil Macrae, Galen V. Bodenhausen, Alan B. Milne, and Jolanda Jetten, “Out of Mind but Back in Sight: Stereotypes on the Rebound,” *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 67 (November 1994): 808-17.

<sup>30</sup> Lasorsa and Dai, “When News Reporters Deceive.”

<sup>31</sup> Lasorsa and Dai, “When News Reporters Deceive.”

<sup>32</sup> Dalecki, Lasorsa, and Lewis, “The News Readability Problem.”

<sup>33</sup> Macarena Hernandez, “What Jayson Blair Stole from Me and Why I Couldn’t Ignore It,” *Washington Post*, June 1, 2003, sec. B, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> Blair, *Burning Down My Master’s House*.

<sup>35</sup> S. I. Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action* (NY: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1940).

<sup>36</sup> Pamela J. Shoemaker & Stephen D. Reese, *Mediating the Message: Theories of influences on mass media content*, (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1996).

<sup>37</sup> e.g., see Dan Berkowitz, ed., *Social Meanings of News: A Text-Reader* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997); Rodney Benson, "Bringing the Sociology of Media Back In," *Political Communication* 21 (July-September 2004): 275-92; Mark Fishman, *Manufacturing the News*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1980); Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and TIME* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1979); Stephen D. Reese, "The News Paradigm and the Ideology of Objectivity: A Socialist at The Wall Street Journal," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 7 (December 1990): 390-409; Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*; Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (NY: Free Press, 1978).

<sup>38</sup> Michael Schudson, "The Sociology of News Production," in *Social Meanings of News: A Text-Reader*, ed. Dan Berkowitz (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997), 7-22, 16.

<sup>39</sup> David T. Z. Mindich, *Just the Facts: How 'Objectivity' Came to Define American Journalism* (NY: NYU Press, 1998); Michael Schudson, "The Objectivity Norm in American Journalism," *Journalism* 2 (August 2001): 149-70; Michael Schudson and Chris Anderson, "Objectivity, Professionalism, and Truth Seeking in Journalism," in *Handbook of Journalism Studies*, eds. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen & Thomas Hanitzsch (NY: Routledge, 2008), 88-101.

<sup>40</sup> For more on journalistic authority in the digital age, see, among others: Christopher Anderson, "Journalism: Expertise, Authority, and Power in Democratic Life," in *The Media and Social Theory*, eds. David Hesmondhalgh and Jason Toynbee (NY: Routledge, 2008), 248-64; Matt Carlson, "Blogs and Journalistic Authority: The Role of Blogs in US Election Day 2004 Coverage," *Journalism Studies* 8 (April 2007): 264-79; Mark Deuze, "What is Journalism? Professional Identity and Ideology of Journalists Reconsidered," *Journalism* 6 (November 2005): 442-64; Sue Robinson, "'Someone's Gotta Be in Control Here': The Institutionalization of Online News and the Creation of a Shared Journalistic Authority," *Journalism Practice* 1 (October 2007): 305-21; Sue Robinson, "'If You Had Been with Us': Mainstream Press and Citizen Journalists Jockey for Authority Over the Collective Memory of Hurricane Katrina," *New Media & Society* 11 (August 2009): 795-814; Jane B. Singer, "Contested Autonomy: Professional and Popular Claims on Journalistic Norms," *Journalism Studies* 8 (February 2007): 79-95.

<sup>41</sup> These reporters also wrote articles that were not found to be deceptive; those stories were not included in this analysis.

<sup>42</sup> Daniel Riffe, Stephen Lacy and Frederick G. Fico, *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1998). See in particular Table 5.1, page 97, "Efficient Stratified Sampling Methods for Inferring to a Year's Content."

<sup>43</sup> Dalecki, Lasorsa, and Lewis, "The News Readability Problem."

<sup>44</sup> Lasorsa and Dai, "Newsroom's Norman Accident?"

<sup>45</sup> Lasorsa and Dai, "Newsroom's Norman Accident?"

<sup>46</sup> e.g., see David Bradbury, "Of Course it Happens Here," *British Journalism Review* 14 (September 2003): 17-21.

<sup>47</sup> Berkowitz, *Social Meanings of News*; Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*.

<sup>48</sup> Mark Deuze, *Media Work* (London: Polity Press, 2007); Mark Deuze and Timothy Marjoribanks, "Newswork," *Journalism* 10 (October 2009): 555-61.

<sup>49</sup> Lasorsa and Dai, "When News Reporters Deceive."

<sup>50</sup> John Durham Peters, "Witnessing," *Media, Culture & Society* 23 (November 2001): 707-23.

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<sup>51</sup> Barbie Zelizer, "On 'Having Been There': 'Eyewitnessing' as a Journalistic Key Word," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24 (December 2007): 408-28.