



Media, Wars and Identities - Part Two

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Ethnographic Studies is a journal for work in ethnography and ethnomethodology. Its aim is to promote qualitative inquiry in the human sciences. The policy of the journal is to publish mainly empirical studies, though it will also include theoretical/philosophical work which relates to current issues and debates in qualitative inquiry.

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SPECIAL ISSUE

Guest Editors: Baudouin Dupret, Jiří Nekvapil and Ivan Leudar

MEDIA, WARS AND IDENTITIES: BROADCASTING ISLAM, MUSLIMS AND THE MIDDLE EAST Part 2

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Introduction

Baudouin Dupret, Jiří Nekvapil, Ivan Leudar, Jean-Noël Ferrié

No 10 of *Ethnographic Studies* is the second of a two-part issue focusing on the practices of public discourse pertinent to conflicts and identities in the Arab and Muslim world.

Sebastian Abdallah contributes an article on contextualized identity shaping of Lebanese youth through online and offline activities in internet-café in Beirut. Young people pose themselves in one instance as the Christian defenders of Lebanon against a Muslim threat and in the next instance, as Hezbollah fighters against an Israeli enemy. Through the display of online chat sequences and line-by-line analysis in different instances, Abdallah argues that instead of having a fixed, essential identity the youth construct social identity vis-à-vis the other according to practical 'here and now' purposes.

Gary David and Paul Jalbert concentrate on the "rehumanization" of Arab and Muslim Americans in the media. Rather than focusing on negative portrayal, this article takes the opposite approach by examining how positive portrayals are constructed. By examining the structure of media-based attempts to present Arabs and Muslim Americans as essentially "human", this paper underlines the powerful impact that the negative portrayals have had on framing how these groups are viewed within US society, and whether attempts to undo degradation can be successful.

Baudouin Dupret and Jean-Noël Ferrié describe the presentation of the news headlines on four channels, three Arab and one British. News headlines are one technique among others through which "facts of the day" are selected, produced, ordered and hierarchized. In that sense, news headlines constitute an instructed relevance, an order producing the factual objectivity of natural current events. Although the news is presented in such a way that it corresponds to the world and to facts identifying the news of

the day, it is also a way of ensuring that the world corresponds to the ideological orientation given to it by the channel and to the specific conditions which the format "television news" has assigned to itself.

Analyzing a videorecording produced in a TV-control room during the live broadcast of a multi-party discussion on the Road Map for peace in the Middle East, Mathias Broth describes the ways in which the TV-crew exploits close-up shots of the listener, "listening shots", as a resource for visually categorizing participants in the studio. After establishing the listening shot as a members' phenomenon, he shows how such shots are oriented to as accountable in the emergent sequence of broadcast shots. At the level of the broadcast programme, listening shots are exploited to produce both confrontation and balance between the Israeli and the Palestinians present in the studio.

Michel Barthélémy focuses on a televised debate that gathers, on a French TV channel, some French-speaking people from Louisiana, invited to discuss the dispute that opposed France and the United States regarding the opportunity of a military intervention in Iraq. These data give the opportunity to investigate the interactional work that locally adjusts the identities of the co-participants to a debate in a way that is recognizably relevant to the topic at hand.

Editors regret that they did not credit Rosemary Miller for the English translation of "The Audience They Assign Themselves: Three Arab Channels and Their 'Self-Presentation'" in Issue #9. She is also the translator of "News Headlines: Stating in Brief what is Relevant in Today's World (al-Arabiya, al-Jazeera, al-Manar, BBC World)" in this issue. In the preparation of this issue, J. Nekvapil was supported by the grant MSM 0021620825.

Online Chatting in Beirut: Sites of Occasioned Identity-Construction

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The Middle East, Lebanon, Beirut.¹ Fanatics walking the streets holding Kalashnikovs, waving their fists, shouting. Abductions. Car-bombs. This line of association would be a fairly legitimate one for many Westerners following the news starting somewhere in the last thirty years. Although the Lebanese civil war has been over for fifteen years, these associations and the images they conjure up seem to retain a general legitimacy for people not directly engaged with this country or interested in it (see Jalbert, 1984). The recent violent assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri (Dahdah, 2005) seems to reassure a general image of savageness and lawlessness in the region and of the people living there. No need to change these general ideas or allow for some degree of nuance since they are apparently still very up to date. They come in handy as a **permanent** backdrop for everyday conversations and for the “news” about the region. The images are essentialist; non-changing and preferably non-changeable in nature (see Said, 1978).

But how essential are these images to a given Lebanese identity? In my research, I set out to explore different everyday activities of youth between the ages 15 and 25 in Internet-café in Beirut. These activities include chatting, playing network games and web-surfing. In discussing them, it will become clear that essentialist images have no explanatory potential whatsoever when it comes to accounting for motivations and actions in a range of instances. The aim

here is not to disprove or undermine a set of stereotypes by proving “the” contrary. I cannot and do not want to show who “the” youth of Beirut “actually” are for this would be to reduce a group of people to a set of general principles that can never do justice to the complexity of everyday experienced reality. My conclusion will not state that Lebanese people are for instance very hospitable (a label known to be given to people from the Middle East). A statement such as “Arabs are very hospitable” is by itself in effect meaningless because firstly, it does not display an evident measure according to which the extent of hospitality can be established. Secondly, it does not show through which activities and meanings attributed to these activities, the actors involved come to reflect on an accomplished activity as being an act of hospitality from one party to another. Similarly, youth under study cannot be labelled as being this or that group with identities having these or those characteristics. Any rash attempt at a categorization of these youth is tantamount to stereo-typification and moreover, willingly or not, liable to subject itself to alignments (be they local, regional or international) that oversimplify and impose a reality for the sake of vested political interests.

Language is supposed to give expression to thought, to liberate ideas, to give us freedom. But sub-editors and news agencies were – and in many cases, still are – using these words as a lazy and meaningless substitute. The language of clichés did not help us free our minds. The words imprisoned us. (Fisk, 2002:430)

The data analyzed throughout the article are at times offensive, politically laden and

¹ With many thanks to Baudouin Dupret, Dušan I. Bjelić and Ward Vloeberghs for their input and support in writing this paper.

display an extent of self-typification, making them prone to abuse in the ways indicated above. In my data collection, I especially had access to “chatters” from Christian backgrounds. In my other research the data was drawn from all over Beirut (and so from people from different religious backgrounds) but yielded similar findings (Abdallah, 2004). This article is therefore not meant to praise or criticize certain sectarian communities of Lebanon. Rather, the aim is to present particular groups of youth engaged in particular “virtual” activities. I will argue in the analysis that the nature of their engagement in activities is evidence for refuting the idea that a fixed, essential identity of a core self can account for the different and at times (seemingly or not) contradictory activities and utterances of the people in question. It suggests that identity, rather than being a core resource for choosing and engaging in certain activities, is constituted only *through* occasioned activities. As Moerman (1988) puts it in his research of Thai communities (namely the Lue people) in the Far East, scholars are at times more eager to subscribe to conventional ethnic labels and categories than the people under study:

Since multiple identifications are always present, the ‘truth’ or ‘objective correctness’ of an identification is never sufficient to explain its use. (...) The question is not, ‘Who are the Lue?’ (...) but rather when and how and why the identification ‘Lue’ is preferred. Truth or falsity is a criterion which should be applied to our analysis; it has no relevance to native category usage. (1988: 61-62)

In Widdicombe’s words

[I]dentity is available for use: something that people do which is embedded in some other social activity, and not something people ‘are’. (...) Thus, instead of asking what identities do people have, conversation analysts focus on *whether*, *when* and *how* identities are used. In other words, their concern is with the occasioned relevance of identities here and now, and how they are consequential for this particular interaction and the

local projects of speakers. (Widdicombe, 1998: 191, 195)

This paper will show that identities of youth chatting in Beirut are performative, ongoing accomplishments; dependent among other things on modes of communication, contextual constraints, language construction, technical resources and on youth’s situated agendas.

Finding One’s Way in Beirut

In a broad sense, Beirut is divided between the predominantly Muslim West (Sunnites living mainly in the North-West and the Shiites in the South-West) and the predominantly Christian East. The dividing line, which acquired the name “The Green Line” during the civil war (1975-1990), comes down from the south along the Damascus highway past the National Museum and from there leads up to Martyr’s Square (which has recently been renamed “Freedom Square” due to political developments following Hariri’s assassination on February 14th 2005 (see Ghazal, 2005). The term Green Line supposedly stems from the fact that all sorts of greenery grew wild and free along this line because no one bothered to maintain this strip (Fisk, 2002). The line served as a fault line between different militias at war with each other. One could not cross it without fear for one’s life, as snipers on both sides shot at virtually anything that moved. Today, one can move from one part of the city to the other without any trouble. The barriers and the snipers are gone but the line still exists in the minds of many Beirutis. According to Khalaf (1993) the Lebanese civil war has intensified the significance of territorially delineated confessional identities. Yahya places this trend in a longer history:

The segregation of the population on sectarian basis reinforced communal and neighbourhood solidarities. Most of these manifestations were

apparent before the war. However, as hostilities commenced, their scope and magnitude increased as people improvised various forms of survival. (Yahya, 1993: 129)

This sectarian segregation divided Beirut into a number of zones that constitute “separate, exclusive and self-sufficient spaces. Hence, now the Christians of East Beirut need not frequent West Beirut for its cultural and popular entertainment” (Khalaf, 1993:32). Likewise, Muslims and other residents of West Beirut need not visit resorts and other attractions of the Christian suburbs.

These communal solidarities have the dual effect of cushioning “individuals and groups against anomie and the alienation of public life” while “they also heighten the density of communal hostility and enmity” (Khalaf 1998: 150). This dynamic finds its way into youth’s online interaction in the Internet-café and takes up an important part of this paper.

East-Beirut

In one Internet-café in Sid el-Bouchrieh, a Christian suburb in East-Beirut, I spent three nights a week (roughly between 8 P.M. and 11 P.M.) doing participant observation over a period of four weeks in February and March 2004. Over this period, I spent 22.5 hours over eleven evenings in the café. In this time, I observed 65 customers (59 males and 6 females) making use of different services of the café. In addition to Sid el-Bouchrieh, I conducted over 70 observations in 30 other cafés in different neighbourhoods across Beirut.

In the North-East of Beirut I frequented Internet-café in neighbourhoods like Borj Hammoud and the Dawrah area where most inhabitants are from Christian, lower-income backgrounds.

West-Beirut

Here I obtained data in the following neighbourhoods. Hamra is a fairly wealthy neighbourhood in the North-West of Beirut, despite a majority of Sunni-Muslim inhabitants, it is probably the most religiously mixed neighbourhood of the city and the home of the (for most Lebanese families unaffordable) American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Lebanese American University (LAU), who are important influences in the shape and character of the neighbourhood: student and professor housing, businesses catering to the students’ wants and needs, etc.

Bordering Hamra to the South-East are Sanayeh and Zarif, residential areas with mainly Sunni Muslim inhabitants with mostly middle and some lower family income level. The south of Beirut is now known as the Dahieh or Shiite suburbs, which used to contain predominantly Christian areas before the war. A large part of these suburbs consist of slums and housing with minimum or less than minimum basic facilities. Neighbourhoods that I have visited in Dahieh are Borj El-Barajneh, Haret Hreik, Maamoura and Mrejeh.

Most of my observations were between 5 P.M. and 11 P.M in the spring of 2004. In these observations I saw over 600 customers making use of different services of the cafés. My observations entailed going to cafés, checking my e-mail, and typing material for my research, while keeping my eyes and ears open, and taking notes of my observations. In addition, I talked to employees, to customers and took notes of these conversations. I wrote down my interpretations of the findings immediately or shortly after (the same evening or the next day). As the number of my observations increased, I developed more general

interpretations of the activities. The intensity of observations in the cafés and availability of online data gave me the opportunity to immerse myself in processes of occasioned identity-construction, as I trust this paper will show.

Recurrent Themes Displaying a Mindset

The present paper is actually a description of practices of youth made possible by the analytical findings of two articles by Dupret (2003) and Zimmerman (1998). Adapting Dupret's approach of the Egyptian courtroom setting to the setting of Internet-café in Beirut, I will focus on three issues: (1) the methods by which youth produce and recognize online and real time actions; (2) the methods by which chat-settings and café situations are socially organized; (3) the methods by which youth achieve identities through social interaction. In this way, I hope to shed some light on chatters' "practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life" (Garfinkel 1967: 11).

Concerning youth's online activities, there are three topical orientations that prevail in their communication: contact with the opposite sex, contact with people in other countries and hostile religious-political encounters. In each of these instances, youth have different **situated agendas** (Zimmerman, 1998) according to which they align their **situated identities**. From this **alignment** proceeds a projection of the distribution of knowledge and of which **extra-situational resources** should be invoked. These three orientations of communication "set the stage" so to speak for youth's online interaction. Key issues are the unattainability of money and girls, the better life abroad and religious-political tensions between geographically dispersed groups. They are recurrent themes, points of

departure, "constantly mobilized backgrounds" from which the participants accomplish specific identities (Dupret, 2003: 21). In what follows, we will see how these analytical constructs operate in actual communication.

The following is part of a conversation that I witnessed including four youth between 20 and 26 years old on a street corner in front of an Internet-café in the neighbourhood Borj Hammoud (12 April, 2004).

Extract 1

1. Zaven: My uncle is coming over from America soon. He's going to buy a chalet at the beach just passed
2. Jounieh. That means we're going to have beach-parties every week.
3. Shady: Great.
4. Paul: Efess!!
5. Shady: This is gonna be great. Finally something else than hanging around here.
6. Paul: We're gonna have some fun this summer.
7. Shady: We need to get some girls to come with us though
8. Rani: Yeah, don't worry. They'll come
9. Paul: They'll come? And who are you? Don Juan?
10. (Laughter from all)
11. Paul: You'll get them to come with you in your Peugeot?
12. Shady: Look at that one (pointing at a car driving by)
13. Zaven: You'll get them to come in that one!
14. Paul: Give me a Ferrari
15. Shady: I don't need a Ferrari. I'll settle for that one anytime.
16. Rani: Yeah, but what are you going to do when you need to have parts changed? You don't have the
17. money!
18. Shady: Ahh, change parts ... whatever
19. Paul: Here in Lebanon, how do you wanna make money to buy **any** car?!
20. Rani: Lebanon sucks
21. Zaven: The government won't even let you have a **bicycle**. Don't even talk about cars.
22. Shady: Bunch of thieves all of them.
23. Paul: I've been wearing these shoes for two years now, I can't even buy new ones.

24. Rani: Europe is much better. There the government takes care of people.
25. Paul: You can make money without worries.
26. Rani: Even outside there's trouble. No place is perfect.
27. Paul: Hah! Better than here.
28. Zaven: Why are **you** here anyway? You're from where?
29. Sebastian: Holland
30. Zaven: Holland. So why are you here man? You're from Holland. You can make good money there
31. right?
32. Sebastian: Yes.
33. Zaven: Why would you come here?
34. Sebastian: Wanna get to know the country, the language.
35. Shady: Ah! This country. You don't need to know this place. You're better off without it. Believe me.
36. Zaven: If I could get out of here, I'd never come back. Not even for a visit.
37. Rani: You wanna get your ID-card right?
38. Sebastian: Yes
39. Shady: I'd give mine away for free. They don't have to pay me! Lebanese citizenship.
40. Paul: How many brothers and sisters do you have?
41. Sebastian: Three
42. Paul: So you need four. Guys, hand over four ID-cards to help this guy out.
43. (Laughter from all of them)
44. Rani: But you know, whatever country I visit, no matter how nice it is, when I'm on the plane back to
45. Lebanon, I get very excited. And when the plane lands, you can't imagine how happy I am to be back in
46. Lebanon.
47. Paul: But you have four stores that run well. Your father lives in America, your sister in Dubai. You
48. have money rolling in.
49. Rani: Yes I have money
50. Paul: So you're fine. You have no reason to leave Lebanon. If I had what you had, I wouldn't
51. go anywhere.

Although this is not a chat-conversation over the Internet, it is indicative of the kind of topics and the manner of speaking to which the youth are oriented. Two of the three topics introduced earlier are discussed here: the unattainability of girls and money and the better life abroad (the hostile religious-

political encounters will be discussed later). The chalet brings some relief into a monotonous life (lines 5/6). Lebanon stands for nothing but constraint (lines 19-25). America, in the form of an uncle, brings relief. Immediately another dilemma comes into play - how will they get girls to come with them to the chalet (line 7)? The fact that Shady brings it up reveals that it is an issue that is not dealt with easily. Rani gives a quick answer to prevent the great prospect of the chalet-weekends from being spoiled (line 8). Paul is then also quick to bring them back to reality: how will they **impress** girls enough to come with them (lines 9/11)? His rhetoric reveals that it will not be their miraculous charm (line 9) and the laughter of the others confirms this (line 10), so it must be some material way. But it seems that also here they are lacking, as Paul jokes about a vehicle that will not impress anyone (line 11) and what will surely impress is beyond their reach (lines 12/13). This time it is Rani who brings them back to the reality of material want (lines 16/17). Paul gives the country and its government the blame for this situation (lines 19/21). Shady agrees and adds malicious intent of the ruling authorities (line 22). Paul adds that even without a car, he is not able to maintain his current situation, e.g. providing a pair of shoes (line 23). Lines 24 to 43 are in fact a comparison between Lebanon and (Western) Europe, or "the better life abroad". With one rebuttal (line 26), they agree that life in Europe is better than in Lebanon. Lebanon is not even worth a visit (lines 35/36). Rani does express some love for the country (lines 44-46). Paul explains Rani's love by his material comfort (line 47/48) and asserts that that is all one needs to live happily in Lebanon. So in the end, Lebanon **can** be a place to visit or even live in but the youth's current view on their financial and material situation does not lead them to consider that option as a viable one.

A couple of dynamics need special attention here. First there seems to be a recurrent sequential structure to the way the different participants interact and position themselves: (a) someone presents a topic of conversation (usually an appealing and at the same time unattainable situation); (b) the others receive and confirm the idea (they enjoy the idea for a bit, or make jokes about it); (c) someone else objects to the idea (presents the unattainable-ness of the idea). Here are the most obvious examples:

- (a) Beach parties every week (line 2); (b) Great (line 3); (c) We need to get girls (line 7)
- (a) They [girls]’ll come (line 8); (b) And who are you? Don Juan? (line 9); (c) In your Peugeot? (line 11)
- (a) You’ll get them to come in that one (line 13); (b) Give me a Ferrari (line 14); (c) What about havin parts changed? (line 16)
- (a) Europe is much better (line 24); (b) You can make money without worries (line 25); (c) Even outside there’s trouble (line 26).

We see here a constant “changing of the guard” in the roles of introducer of topic (usual an idealistic unattainable situation) and bringer of (realistic or pessimistic) perspective. In between there are confirmers filling the gaps.

One of the most interesting sequences starts at line 19. Paul makes a remark about the material constraint in Lebanon. This sets in motion an almost automatic flow of negative remarks about Lebanon (line 20-22). It is comparable to the introduction of the prospect of the chalet. It was clear that they had talked about it before, as everyone immediately confirmed, visited and revisited the idea of having beach parties every week. In the same way “Lebanon sucks” (or a remark to the same effect) is not just a remark of content; it is a “mode” of speaking. It realigns the situated identities of the participants. The operative context shifts

from “standing on a street corner out of boredom and routine” (line 5) to “not having anything **but** this street corner because of the state and the government” (line 19-23). After all, without money for a car, a bicycle or even shoes, there is not much more to do than stand on a corner. The way Rani, Zaven and Shady joined into the complaint against the state has a ritualistic quality to it. I am not denying that they mean what they say. My point is that the content is performed in a standard procedure. This becomes all the more evident when Rani breaches the procedure (line 26) and Paul calls him back into place (line 27). Rani’s input was not relevant for the procedure at hand. The discursive function of line 19 is not just to make a point but to trigger among the others, or to “make programmatically relevant” (Coulter 1979: 56) a flow of confirmation which sets an agenda of apprehending the Lebanese state as the culprit of their immediately experienced constraints.

Extract 2

1. Paul: asl?²
2. John: 23 male, toronto
3. John: asl?
4. Paul: 26male, Lebanon
5. Paul: toronto in canada right?
6. John: ya
7. John: hey u from lebanon? I’m Lebanese as well, but I was born here
8. Paul: really
9. Paul: where ur parents from?
10. John: don’t remember. Beirut I think
11. Paul: u never came for visit Lebanon?
12. John: no
13. Paul: never?
14. John: no, i wanna o visit sometime
15. Paul: stay in canada, better for u
16. Paul: lebanon is shit
17. John: y?
18. Paul: y?

² By asking for ASL (Age, Sex, Location), chatters try to create some foothold in the virtual world of the Internet. Age, sex and location are apparently the most relevant factors, more than for instance name, occupation or religion.

19. Paul: nobody help u
20. Paul: no money
21. John: u don't have work?
22. Paul: yes work but no money
23. John: u have social security?
24. Paul: what that
25. John: hahaha!
26. Paul: we have nothing. No security, no insurance
27. Paul: we have only hezbollah
28. John: that doesn't sound nice. i wouldn't wanna live in lebanon
29. Paul: yes canada better. i want go to there
30. John: ya u should com in ur vacation
31. Paul: yes I like taht
32. Paul: but problem
33. Paul: no visa
34. John: what?
35. John: oh

Here we see Paul affirming his pessimistic view of living in Lebanon (line 16). Note that this view is presented in reaction to his chat-partner being a Lebanese from Canada who has never been to Lebanon. It is thus vis-à-vis his chat-partner that Paul characterizes his country and also himself: no money, no security, and no prospects. These are all things in which Canada contrasts with Lebanon. This conversation is an evident instance of Paul clinging to one of his hinge-topics. In reaction to John mentioning he has never been to Lebanon, Paul could have told him about the wonderful mountainous landscape, the sunny weather and beaches or the delicious food. But these are all irrelevant when one is focused on the “better life abroad.” John’s lack of knowledge of Paul’s social and economic circumstances is displayed in his question about social security and his suggestion to Paul about taking a vacation to Canada. Paul does not have any vacations from his work longer than two consecutive days (four days if holidays precede or follow a weekend) and being allowed into Canada is even less possible. This gives Paul the opportunity to expand on his typification of Lebanon as a place not worth living in (lines 26/27).

Describing the Setting of the Internet-café

To give an impression of the kind of setting in which the interaction takes place, I will here give an introductory description of the spaces and activities of one of the internet-café that I have attended. The café has three levels, consisting of rectangular shaped rooms (about four by 12 meters). On ground level there are two rows of five computers lined up against the walls. Here (male) youths between 15 and 24 years old play network games, such as **Counter Strike**; a “shoot ‘em up-game” played by two teams of five players each. So the two teams sit with their backs to each other along the rows of computers. They are not allowed to turn around and look at their opponents’ screens; that would give away their positions in the game. Youth usually set the time limit of the game at 45 minutes in which each team is out to kill as many members of the other team as possible and has the guns, knives and grenades to do so. Despite the blood that gushes out when a player gets shot, he or she can come back to life in the following round (which is usually not more than a few minutes). The game is about scoring points and the team with the most points when the time is up is the winner. What is striking about this kind of game (there are several games of this kind), is the emotional and physical involvement of participants. Youth shout, cheer, curse, laugh, jump up out of their chairs and can play the game for several consecutive hours. Many visitors of internet-café do not have money for a computer at home, and certainly not for an internet-connection. With prices in most internet-café ranging from 1,500 to 3,000 Lebanese Pounds³ per hour, they are an attractive option for relatively cheap access to ICT (Information and Communication Technology).

³ Approximately 1,500 Lebanese Pounds is equivalent to one U.S. Dollar.

While taking a break from this onslaught every now and then, someone walks up to the fridge to have a soft-drink or a snack at a reasonable price. This floor further contains the owner's desk with the central computer where all payments are made, a television set, computer hardware and software and music for sale. In the back of the room there is a door to the bathroom and a staircase. The basement is still under construction and will give room to another ten computers and an office for film-editing and publishing. On the first floor the shouting is a lot less as not quite so many people get shot on the screens. The ground level is for games and this level is reserved for Internet-use. Eight computers are available here, in two rows of four lined up along the walls in the length of the room. Male and female youth between 15 and 24 years of age are surfing the Internet, chatting, checking their e-mail accounts, doing homework assignments, acquainting themselves with the outside world and foreign ideas, and having fun doing it.

“*Nabqa wa nastamirr*” and Hezbollah: Producing and Recognizing Actions

Paul (the same Paul as in the street corner conversation and the chat sequence with John discussed earlier) is one of the youth hanging out in this café. Paul is a young Lebanese Maronite, 25 years of age, born and raised in East-Beirut, in a neighbourhood near Dawrah. He lives in a three-room apartment on the seventh floor with his sixteen year old sister, his twelve-year-old brother, and his mother, who is in her late forties. He has another twenty-year-old sister, who is married and has a six-month-old baby boy. She is married to a professional soldier in the Lebanese army who works three and a half days a week. When he works, she spends most of her time at her family's house. Paul's father passed away because of a heart failure at 48 years of age. Paul was sixteen years old at the time

and had to leave school and find work to provide for his family; he never got to finish high school or get a diploma. He now works at a printing press nine to twelve hours a day, alternating day- and nightshifts every week. He earns about two hundred dollars a month, depending on how many hours he has worked. His boss can call him at any time saying that there is not enough work and that he should not come in for the day. A day off means a day without pay and these kinds of days can add up to a week a month, seriously affecting Paul's income. Even with a “full month's pay” it is not easy for him and his family to make ends meet.

He goes to the Internet-café everyday and stays two to four hours a day. He says he goes there because he has nothing better to do, but there is more to it than that. When he comes, other customers warmly greet him. His friends are excited to see him and he is valued for his playing skills in network games. At first glance, the Internet-café is an affordable way of spending his free time. But over time it has become a place where he is recognized and appreciated. It is also a place where he is known as ***Napka***, his pseudonym in Counter Strike and his login name for his Hotmail account. He explains:

Paul: It's an abbreviation for a slogan of the Lebanese Forces during the Lebanese civil war: ***nabqa wa nastamirr***⁴. [It means ‘we will remain and endure’ - SA] They brought big ships to take away all the Christians so they could live safely in other countries. But the Lebanese Forces told them to send away the ships. ***Nabqa wa nastamirr***. This is our country and we will fight for it.

At another point he says:

⁴ ‘We will remain’ (نبقى in Arabic script) is usually transcribed as ***nabqa*** with a ‘q’ instead of a ‘k’ because a ‘k’ would make it sound more like ‘we cry.’ However, ***Napka*** is the way Paul chose to spell his nickname.

Paul: I hate Arabs, they're fanatics. They want to make Lebanon an Arabic republic, like Syria and Egypt. Right now it's called the Lebanese Republic, and that's how it should stay. They want to make Lebanon a Muslim state, but it's a Christian state, the only one in the Middle East. I hate Syria as well. What are they still doing here? They've been here for thirty years now! They come here for free and make money to take back to Syria. They also take taxes off everything, that's why a lot of things are so expensive. If a Syrian soldier dies in Lebanon, the Lebanese state has to pay thousands of dollars to Syria, because the Syrians are 'protecting us.' Phuh.

So his login name is a statement: Lebanon is not a Muslim or Arab state but a Christian one and it will **remain** that way. **Napka** is a well-known nickname for Paul among his friends in the Internet-café. Several months later it got more interesting. In this Internet-café in Borj Hammoud where only visitors from Christian backgrounds frequent, Paul decided to take on the name "Hezbollah" in a network game. Every time he would beat someone in the game, they would get a message on their screen saying, "You have been killed by Hezbollah."

Extract 3

Shady: What? Hezbollah? What's that? Who is Hezbollah?

Paul: Heheheh...

Rani: It's Paul he named himself Hezbollah! Crazy!

Shady: Jerk! Calls himself Hezbollah!

Rani: Hezbollah killed you! Hahahha!!

Paul: Hahahaha!!

I asked Paul if his friends actually got angry. They did not: "No, everyone there is Christian. Everyone knows that no one would be serious about something like that." From that time on, his friends in the Internet-café have been calling him "Hezbollah". This puts him in the unique position of having the nicknames **Napka** and **Hezbollah**; two forces who in Lebanon are each others' historical adversaries and are politically still at odds with each other.

We could of course here make a distinction between serious or sincere identity assertion and the ironic joking use of it, **Napka** being the serious one and **Hezbollah** the joke. But that would not do total justice to youth's accounting for these identity labels, especially looking at the following section from a chatting sequence on a Jewish chat site (April 10th, 2004, 23:30-03:00 am). Where pseudonyms correspond with previous data display, they are in fact the same people.

Extract 4

1. Danny: no

2. Stephen: then what else?

3. Rani: fuck Israel

4. Rani: fuck Sharon

5. Robert: none of your business!! haha!!

6. Paul: u fucking juich

7. Rani: Eireh be Israel

8. Danny: hey thanks man. Fuck you too

9. Efess: **we kick yo ass in de sauth Libanon**

10. Paul: kess ekhet all ze Juich

11. Rani: **7ezeb allah kik you OUT**

12. Stephen: don't waste your time on people who can't even spell English properly

13. Rani: **u kill jesus now we com kill you**

14. Efess: **nefta7 jihad!!**

I will take the online chat-site as the operative context of interaction.⁵ The

⁵ Starting from here I will give groups of chatters different numbers: the Christian chatters who I was with will be Group 1 and the Jewish and Muslim groups they encounter in the displayed sequences will be Group 2 and 3 respectively.

beginning of the excerpt starts in the middle of a conversation between three people, namely Danny, Stephen and Robert (lines 1/2/5). In this situation, many actions and reactions take place. What an analytic action is, when it starts and when it ends, is a subjective issue. Whether we can achieve an objective measure of what separates one action from the next, is irrelevant here. The important question is what the participants recognize as distinct actions that take place in the interaction sequence.

First, Group 1 enters the chat site. This can be read as an action in itself. It is the very important step of entering the interaction with the other. **They** take the initiative; **they** set out to change the character of a particular interactional setting. Group 1 perceives it as such: a joint action, stopping what they were doing before (e.g. playing games, chatting on another site, etc.) and entering the Jewish chat site. Group 2 acknowledges it that way: new participants, creating a new interactional situation that needs new communicative responses.

After that, each utterance can be seen as a distinct action. On the Jewish chat site, Danny, Stephen and Robert were having a casual conversation, which is partly displayed (lines 1/2/5). Rani's first action in the sequence is his disregard for that conversation (lines 3/4). It seems like participants of Groups 1 and 2 are ignoring each other in lines 1 – 5 but the phrases are entered into the window by different participants almost simultaneously, and the number of participants, the speed of their typing and of the Internet connection often have the result that the reactions to previous input in the window do not immediately follow that input (see also Group 3 lines 1 – 8). With Group 2, the first reaction to Group 1's input comes in line 8.

There is a clear difference in language use between Group 1 and 2. Group 2 uses proper English spelling while Group 1's English is broken: incorrect tenses (lines 9/11/13), incorrect spelling (insofar as it can be called incorrect because deviating spelling is also used by chatters proficient in the English language for reasons of speed and convenience, lines 9/11), and mixed with Arabic and chat-codes (lines 6/7/11/14). Before moving on I will clarify some of the use of Arabic language in Latin script. First, chatters use some numbers for sounds that the Latin alphabet does not have: 2 = **hamza** (ء), 3 = 'ayn (ع), 7 = emphatic **ha** (ح), kh = **kha** (خ), gh or g = **ghayn** (غ). Other than that, the rules are not very rigid. The script is not meant to be scientifically correct or precisely represent Arabic phonetics. It is just meant to be functional, so native speakers understand each other and therefore, fairly pragmatic. The **shadda** (doubling of consonants) is not consistently employed, for example: "you want" can be written either as **baddak** or **badak**. Emphatic sounds are usually not differentiated from non-emphatic sounds, for instance: the emphatic **sâd** (ص) and the non-emphatic **sîn** (س) can both be expressed with an "s", so **sayf** could be either "sword" or "summer." The vocalization (but also the general transcription of the words) depends on the educational background of the chatter. French educated use more French phonetics (**chou ismek** = what's your name) and English educated use more English phonetics (**shoo baddek** = what do you want). This code is also used in text-messages of cellular phones. An example of Arabic in Latin font is **7ezeb** (line 11), meaning (political) party. In the excerpt from the Jewish Chat site it is clear that members of Group 1 are French educated, looking at their spelling of Jewish in lines 6 and 10 (**juich**), which looks a like the French **juif**. The "ch" used in this word is also a French sound which in English would be

spelled “sh”. In line 10 the word **ze** looks like a French pronunciation of the English **the** but could also be seen as the product of the Lebanese dialect in which different **th**-sounds of Standard Arabic (ث ذ ض ظ) are often turned into a “**z**” or an “**s**”. The Arabic transcription displays a clear Lebanese dialect in words like **ekhet** (sister, line 10) and **7ezeb** (party, line 11) which in Standard Arabic would sooner be transcribed as **‘ukht** and **hezib**. Examples of the chat-code are “u” used for “you” (line 6) the number “4” used instead of the word “for.”

The level of actually interacting in the sense of assuming subsequent discourse identities of speaker and listener are minimally developed, as Group 1 is more talking “at” Group 2 than talking **to** them. All their input consists of catch phrases or one-liners that have nothing to do with Group 2’s input (lines 1/2/5/8/12). By talking “at” them I mean that Group 1 simply deposits comments at Group 2’s feet with which they have to deal. The comments do not ask for a reaction in the form of an answer or a rebuttal. They are statements that construct and pose a reality that Group 2 has no choice but to accept. A rebuttal might be logically possible but Group 1 has no room in or between its assertions for any form of reaction from Group 2. On the chat-site as well as in the café, members of Group 1 were reacting to **each other’s** content rather than that of Group 2. Throughout the chat-sequence they display the same disregard for the input of Group 2 as when they first entered the chat-site. Hence the communication of Group 1 can be described as reacting **to** each other and directed **at** Group 2. Group 1’s input does not consist of actions of seeking contact or even conflict. Their action seems to be intended as disturbing the chat room, creating “noise” that makes it harder for others to communicate with content that is intended to aggravate the others. Stephen (line 12) treats

it as exactly that: noise that is irritating but does not need specific attention.

Now I turn to the content. The youth (Rani, Paul and Efess) jointly logged on to a Yahoo! chat-room called “Jewish Chat.” They cursed at Jews (line 6), Israel (line 3) and Prime Minister Sharon (line 4). Interestingly enough, they praised Hezbollah for their actions against Israel in the South of Lebanon (lines 9/11), while they usually take Hezbollah as one of their main points of ridicule and aggravation (see also the following chat sequence). This makes Efess’s statement in line 14 (“We’ll start a jihad”, which is an Islamic term for Holy War against unbelievers) all the more interesting as a display of self-identification with Hezbollah and Islamic ideology. The victims of the attack (Danny, Robert and Stephen) in the chat-room did not seem impressed enough with the level of English of the Lebanese youth to take them serious (line 12).

Members of Group 2 are confronted with an incompliance to “the natural facts of life in society” (Garfinkel, 1967: 54), namely an uncalled for breach of general values of politeness and decency, or at least asking for the ASL before starting the chat-conversation. We expect that such breaches “call forth immediate attempts to restore a right state of affairs” (Garfinkel, 1967: 42) and the members of Group 2 do so in quite similar fashion. In line 8, Danny responds to Group 1’s insults with a “casual” insult. The message basically says “the says to you” with an attitude of disdain conveying that Group 1 is not worthy of much attention. Stephen explicitly states this in line 12: reacting to Group 1 is a waste of time. Danny and Stephen have restored the incongruity by sanctioning Group 1’s failure to comply with “the expectancies of everyday life as a morality” (Garfinkel, 1967:53).

I asked Paul why they were attacking Jews like that. He answered: “Because they crucified Christ,” which Rani also mentions in line 13. At another point Paul said:

Paul: I hate Arabs. I wish America would come to the Middle East and kill all Arabs. Drop a nuclear bomb on them! Why in the Middle East, they don't have respect for people, respect for democracy? Why isn't it like America and Europe, without dictatorships and terrorists? Because of them, I can't go anywhere. At the American embassy they just look at my nationality and put a stamp “refused”. “You're Lebanese, Arab. You're a terrorist. You killed five hundred American soldiers in 1982”. You know what I was doing in 1982? I was drinking from a baby bottle! (kenet 3am bechrab bibrone!) What do I have to do with this?! (...) It's not wrong what Israel is doing. They're all crazy Arabs blowing themselves up, killing innocent children. Sometimes they [Israel] go too far. I can't blame them. They want peace but the Arabs are such fanatics ... (May 10th 2004)

Paul told me this at his home. Thus another place and time bring out other identity ascriptions and avowals. The different instances of interactions show that in some cases Hezbollah is “they” as opposed to “we” Christians; the statement “we will remain and endure” is an assertion *against* them. In the previous sequence however, the message seems to be: “Hezbollah will remain and endure”. This is not simply a change of opinion or of allegiances over time, as Paul's nickname “Napka” is still in use. The following section from a chatting sequence on a Muslim chat site, only one week before the visit to the Jewish chat site (April 4th, 2004, 01:00-03:00 am), confirms this.

Extract 5

1. Ahmad: no, not in the Koran but in the hadith it's clear what Muhammad sala Allah 3alayhi wa sallam taught us.
2. Nabil: yes but that's not what I mean

3. Efess: **Hey wat u takking about? Mohamad?**
4. Paul: **wa nnebi!! hahaha!**
5. Paul: **i tell u about nebi. i fuck him yesterday**
6. Efess: **i fuck his sister**
7. Nabil: it can say so in the hadith but dtill many people don't listen
8. Nabil: i'm talking about the ummah and how they live
9. Shady: ***s mohamed is a gey!!***
10. Rani: islam is all gays
11. Paul: u think u com to kek out the Chretians we come to kik u out. All te muslesm we kill them
12. Paul: wekik u out of Libanon!
13. Efess: **drobon kelon**
14. Nabil: who r these guys
15. Rashad: he, get out of here if u can't talk like a human being
16. Amine: think they came from th sewer
17. Shady: (big cross)
18. Paul: **ferst we kik u from irak, then bush come to kik you from the Libanon**
19. Paul: **in the sea!!**
20. Efess: **kik your ASS**
21. Nabil: hey what's this? Gog et a life somewhere what do you want?
22. Shady: ***god bless mel gebson!@!***
23. Ahmad: ah, ignore them ya Nabil

24. Efess: **yo fecking muslim**

S

- 25. Nabil: hey your day will come. U think u can get away with this?
- 26. Rashad: Allah will come to judge you all n what where will you go then
- 27. Ahmad: let's get off here – we can talk somewhere else man
- 28. Amine: our time when will come. When Allah will judge you, we will kill you christian pigs
- 29. Shady: (big cross)
- 30. Shady: (big cross)

31. Efess: **kik your ASS
HAHAHA!!**

32. Rani: islam is al for stupid pepl

Starting with language use, Group 3 uses quite proper English with some exceptions in lines 14 (**r** instead of **are**) and 15 (**u** instead of **you**). Line 1 is also an exception where Ahmad transcribes the Arabic prayer over the prophet of Islam in Latin font. Lines 7 and 16 contain typing mistakes (**dill** instead of **still** and **th** instead of **the**). Group 1's input displays a spelling according to a specific phonetics (which as I have mentioned before, most likely stems from a French educated background) that finds its way into both the Arabic and English that they produce: **takking** for **talking** (line 3), **gey** for **gay** (line 9), **Chretians** for **Christians** (line 11) and the Arabic **wa nnebi** in line 4 (**by the** prophet) and **drobon kelon** in line 13 (**hit/strike all of them**). Furthermore, Group 1 clearly has little mastery of tenses in English, as they do not use much else than the simple present in their verbs, also when other tenses are expected (lines 5/6/18). Typing mistakes are not easily determined for Group 1 because the misspelling of the words may well be intentional due to lack of knowledge of the English language. However, it would seem that the "s" in line 9 is misplaced, **muslesm** in line 11 was meant to be **muslems** and the '@' between the

exclamation marks in line 22 is a typo. The spelling of **fucking** (**fecking**) in line 24 could be a typo but could also be a spelling mistake or phonetic spelling. The same goes for **takking** in line 3 and **pepl** in line 32.

Because different chatters write their messages simultaneously, it again looks like Nabil in line 7 and 8 ignored Efess' and Paul's statements in lines 3-6 (see also sequence with Group 2). But his first reaction comes later in line 14.

As noted, this took place only a week before the attack on the Jewish chat site. The youth were playing games, openly visiting pornographic web-sites, enjoying the images together and drinking from a vodka bottle. Four of them logged on to a Yahoo! chat-room called "Muslim Chat." There, Ahmad and Nabil were chatting about Islamic doctrine and later in the sequence we see more chatters present (lines 15/16). Group 1 engaged in the chat conversation by insulting the Prophet Muhammad. The insults were of sexual and homosexual nature (lines 5/6/9). In line 3 it looks like Efess might have actually looked at what other chatters were talking about (which was not the case in the previous sequence) because he asks a question about their content. It is more likely, however, that it was meant rhetorically as an introduction to his insult in line 6. After these insults, they continue about how they would one day violently get rid of Muslims from Lebanon (lines 11/12/18). Remarkable in line 18 is Paul's identification with the United States Army when he says "**we kik u from irak**" and counting on Bush in his struggle against Muslims. This is the same Paul that in previous sequences called himself "Hezbollah", declared a terrorist organization by the CIA.

Shady's input in line 22 ("god bless mel gebson") is most likely a reference to Mel

Gibson's production of the movie "the Passion of the Christ" (which came out not long before this interaction took place). His other input in the sequence consists of an insult against the Prophet Muhammad in (line 9) and big crosses in lines 17/29/30 so line 22 can be seen as an assertion of Christianity and Jesus by opposing them to Muhammad. This acquires a political load combined with Paul's input in lines 11, 18 and 19.

The big cross-symbols (which can be made with the Alt-button in combination with a numeral code, lines 17/29/30) and the huge fonts have the effect of disturbing the communication of those engaged in the chat-room, as it makes the page scroll faster (lines 3/9/22). As may be expected of Group 3, its members reacted with bewilderment (lines 14-16), comparing members of Group 1 to animals living in the sewers. Group 3 manages to "resolve the incongruity" (Garfinkel, 1967: 63) of Group 1's strange actions but as a result of the persistent nature of their actions bewilderment eventually transforms into anger, threatening the "Christians attackers" that Allah would have His vengeance for their insults (lines 25/26). When this does not work, the only other solution is to withdraw from this breach of compliance (line 27), hence confirming the need, the uncontrollable urge, to sanction actions and "restore the situation to normal appearances" (Garfinkel, 1967: 47).

The youth in the Internet-café (Group 1) seemed to enjoy the chat-partners' reactions (Group 3) and laughed loudly at what they had to say.

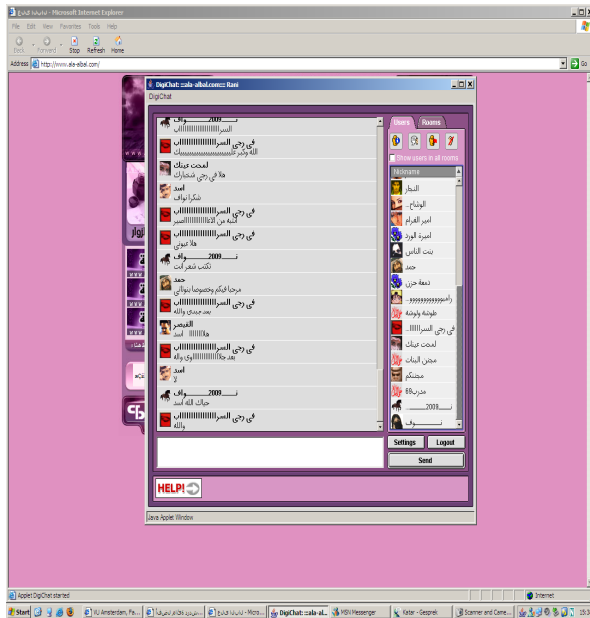
From an interactional point of view, Group 1 pays more attention to how Group 3 reacts, but this does not come out in the actual input in the sequence. Toward the last lines, Group 3 takes the input of Group 1 more seriously and reacts to the content (lines 25/26/28),

but Group 1 does not respond to this, so once again we can say that their actions are directed **at** Group 3 and not **to** them.

The active contribution of the participants in the Internet-café in Borj Hammoud are their entrance into the chats-site, having no regard for the existing interaction sequence on the site, disrupting that sequential order and trying to establish a new sequential order. I will elaborate on this in the sections that follow.

Methods of Social Organization of the Chat-sites

There are different ways of chatting, varying between different levels of private and public communication. First, there is chatting with friends, or at least people whom the user has included on their contact list (the most famous example of this is MSN-Messenger). One opens a chat-site on the Internet and logs on with an e-mail address or a login name, combined with a password. Several windows will appear on the screen, one of them revealing who of their "chat friends" is currently logged on. People who are online and have that person on their contact-list will get a message on their screen telling them that he or she has just logged on. Another window functions as a sender and receiver of text between chatters, thus the whole "conversation" can be read from this window. This form of communication is interactive and the texts take less than a few seconds to pop up on the screen of the receiver after one has sent a text. This makes the interaction quite fluent depending on the quality of the Internet-connection and the speed of the typist.



Left-part of the box: in the lower-compartment the chatters type their input. They press 'Enter' and their input appears 'online' in the upper-compartment of the box and becomes visible to other chat-partners. Right-part of the box: The contact-list of the chatter indicating who is currently online and who is not.

Second, there are chat-forums on specific topics (for instance, on current international developments). These are provided for instance by news networks or other organizations that have an interest in public opinion. One opens the site that hosts the forum and logs on to the forum by clicking on the icon that opens the web-based chat-application. Depending on the host, one can get into the forum directly, or will need a login name and a password. Anyone who wishes to discuss or express an opinion about the given topic can do so with total anonymity. This makes chat forums interesting sites of debate because people do not fear any consequences from articulating any point of view. Third, there are chat-rooms divided by topic or interest. These are widely disseminated. Some of the most popular are Yahoo! and Hotmail and they function in a similar way to the chat forums. In addition, chat-rooms often provide the option for say, two people to “go out of the room” and chat privately.

The first and last forms of chatting noted above are the most popular among youth in Internet-café. In October 2003, MSN (the biggest chat-room provider) stopped its free public chat-room services and switched to paid subscription. This created a disruption for frequent chat-room users of Internet-café because they were used to logging in on chat-rooms with their Hotmail-accounts. As stated, however, there are many free chat-room providers and youth quickly found their way to them after MSN's policy change.⁶ Besides, MSN did not change its Messenger service, which still allows people to chat with friends on their personal contact-list, free of charge.

Youth chat mainly in colloquial Lebanese Arabic and mix this with French or English (depending on their educational background). They write this language in Latin script and use numerals or combinations of Latin characters for sounds that do not exist in the Latin alphabet (see section 4 for details). This code has most likely developed because chatting in Arabic font did not develop immediately with the advent of online chat-communication and native Arabic speakers wanted to communicate in Arabic. Today, Arabic script is made available by several chat-providers, but it has not received as much popularity as the Latin transcribed chat-code discussed here. This Latin transcribed chat-code is no longer a pragmatic substitute for Arabic font. It has become a style of communication in itself. A practical convenience is that this style makes it easy to switch between languages, use foreign words, or computer language (which is mostly English).

⁶ Some of the popular chat-websites among Lebanese youth are: www.arank.com, www.mirc.com and www.arab10.com.

The conversation usually starts out by asking each other for their ASL (Age, Sex and Location). If a male youth, for instance, at that point finds out that he is chatting with another male, the conversation usually ends immediately, either by saying “sorry, bye” or just leaving the chat-window without prior notice. The other male usually does not mind this because he is also most likely looking for a female with whom he can chat. Chat-conversations often have light topics, everyday things (“What is the weather like in your country?” “What do you do for a living?” “What kind of music do you like?”), but they can also be very serious. For example, I observed a Lebanese male (25 years old) chatting with a female from the United States. She told him that she was often depressed and felt that she had no reason to live. The Lebanese youth tried in his broken English to cheer her up and sometimes asked me to help him with his English. It turned out that her parents were fighting a lot and she felt that she was to blame. He managed to encourage her by showing her that when parents fight, the children are usually not the cause and it is certainly not the children’s fault. They simply have issues to resolve, and she should not take the blame for them. She thanked him for the advice and they are still in contact with each other through MSN-Messenger.

On the Net, everyone is faceless and anonymous, and there is no guarantee that if someone sends a picture or gives other information, that it is in fact information about the chatter in question. In this uncertainty, ASL is a code that chatters adhere to or at least use as something to ease their suspicion in their virtual social contacts. From my observations and engagement with respondents, who participate in chat-rooms, I conclude that most of the time, chatters are honest in

revealing their ASL, although they might play around with other details.

Extract 6

1. Paul: asl?
2. John: 23 male, toronto
3. John: asl?
4. Paul: 26male, Lebanon
5. Paul: toronto in canada right?
6. John: ya

It suggests that, because youth have an interest in getting honest information from their chat-partners, they are inclined to give honest information as well. There are, however, exceptions, those who abuse or make fun of the ASL-code. The following is an example of two friends joking with each other:

Extract 7

Chat sequence	Interpretation
1. paul: :)	(smiley face)
2. Rani: kifak ya man!	How are you man!
3. paul: ahlan kifak ya men	Hi, how ar you man
4. paul: waynak	Where are you
5. paul: asl plz	ASL please
6. Rani: kel chi tamam! 18 sana, bint min Australia	Everything is fine! 18 years, female, from Australia [answer to ASL]
7. paul: coolllllllllllllllllllll	cool
8. paul has selected the "Falling Hearts" IMVironment.	[paul made digital hearts fall on the chat window]
9. Rani: any way, 3am tinbusit?	Anyway, are you enjoying yourself?
10. paul: akid	For sure
11. Rani: chou hol falling hearts 2usas?!	What’s the story with those falling hearts?!
12. paul: btetjawazinehhhhhhhhh hhhh	Will you marry meeeee [addressing a female]

What is most interesting in this code is how participants project identities on their chat-partners and build their own for the practical purposes of the conversation at hand.

Methods for Achieving Identities in Social Interaction

As partly mentioned before, an important accomplishment of the interaction is the attributing and assuming of situated identities. When the youth enter the Muslim chat-site they have no guarantee that the participants will be (Lebanese) Muslims or that they hold the political ideas that they are assumed to have. The same goes for entering the Jewish chat-site. But the youths **need** the other participants to be certain kind of people (a certain **audience**) in order to perform a certain identity and pursue a certain agenda. So identities are construed and configured according to pursued agendas.

Pre-alignment and alignment

Before Group 1 enters the Muslim or Jewish chat sites, we can assume that the participants have fairly standard discourse identities (current speaker, listener, story teller, story recipient, questioner, answerer, repair initiator and so on – Zimmerman 1998:90), as can be seen among members of Group 2:

Extract 8

1. Danny: no
2. Stephen: then what else?
- ...
3. Robert: none of your business!! haha!!

Situated identities for Group 3 can range from “A Muslim interested in meeting other Muslims/debate about Islam and religious topics” to “a participant interested in Islam,” etc., concluded from their input, repeated below:

Extract 9

1. Ahmad: no, not in the Koran but in the hadith it's clear what Muhammad sala Allah 3alayhi wa sallam taught us.

2. Nabil: yes but that's not what I mean
3.
4. Nabil: it can say so in the hadith but dtill many people don't listen
5. Nabil: i'm talking about the ummah and how they live

We can also assume that before Group 1 enters the chat site they have **pre-aligned** themselves. They are premeditated to disrupt whatever sequential order is taking place on the site and intend to cause a new agenda and alignment of identities among all participants. Before they join, situated identities among participants of Group 2 and 3 can differ in alignment but afterward we can see that the alignment can unanimously be labelled as defenders of previous sequential order.

Extract 10

Group 2

8. Danny: hey thanks man. Fuck you too
- ...
12. Stephen: don't waste your time on people who can't even spell English properly

Group 3:

1. Nabil: hey what's this? Gog et a life somewhere what do you want?
- ...
2. Ahmad: ah, ignore them ya Nabil
- ...
3. Nabil: hey your day will come. U think u can get away with this?
4. Rashad: Allah will come to judge you all n what where will you go then
5. Ahmad: let's get off here – we can talk somewhere else man
6. Amine: our time when will come. When Allah will judge you, we will kill you christian pigs

How does Group 1 achieve this realignment of identities?

Shaping identity through the context of its mobilization

Chat rooms are windows on the screen in which every participant can insert their textual input. Most rooms are categorized by topic or theme of content, which in a broad sense presupposes in what “mode” participants enter the room (but of course not rigidly determines it). The organization of communicative input structures the shape of the interaction. Depending on the number of participants, how fast they type, the language they use, the size and the face of font and the speed with which they understands inputs is a response to what interaction is taking place. In this way, participants do not just respond to content but also to how the content is presented to them. Which language is used? What style of language (i.e. chat-codes and abbreviations, mixtures with Arabic, or clearly deficient English)? Here is an illustration of this mixture of languages:

Extract 11

Rani: ktir basatet i7ki ma3ak il yom
 paul: yeah me too so be online ok
 paul: promise me
 Rani: ok
 paul: chou ok ma fi ok bel larouse
 paul: say i promise u brother
 paul: [smiley]
 Rani: i promise u brother!!

A second framework of identity shaping consists of the participants’ topical “hinges”. They have a set of recurrent themes that colour most of their conversations; that position them in what to speak about and how to speak. These themes also provide for them a guideline what audience they need in front of which to perform an identity that will “play out” the right theme. Thus, they transform their identities and those of their audience in order to accomplish a situated activity according to set agendas (Zimmerman, 1998). We understand this

better if we acknowledge that these referential instances are

“thoroughly contexted moments in which roles, values, institutions, passions, and strategies are embodied. They are the products of social interaction, and therefore negotiated, contingent, and sometimes momentous. We cannot understand the substantive, pragmatic, human and meaningful nature of any such occasion without attending to its situated particularity” (Moerman 1988:41).

On a Muslim chat site the audience is transformed into a Lebanese or Middle Eastern Islamic threat to (Lebanese) Christianity, so that theirs can be an identity of the protectors of Lebanon and their communities.

On a Jewish chat site they need the others to be militant Israelis, threatening the stability of Lebanon and descending from the executors of Jesus Christ (this is already an interpretation because Rani actually makes the other chatters out to be the killers themselves – extract 4, line 13, Group 2). The interesting point here is that the emphasis of Group 1 is not on their Christian identity (although it is present) but they assume an almost Muslim identity: Hezbollah kicked you out (extract 4, line 11); *we*’ll start a jihad (extract 4, line 14). This is a clear instance of mobilizing an identity for the purpose of accomplishing a situated activity.

Chatting with a Canadian from Lebanese origin, Paul needs John to be an inheritor of “the better life abroad” according to which he can perform his identity of lacking in every aspect that counts.

On a street corner in Beirut, four youth needed me to be a representative of the better life abroad, so that they could perform the contrast of their lives with all unattainable virtues of life.

Conclusion

Throughout this article, we have seen that participants in different situations, chatting with different people and construing their identities differently in each situation. The main building blocks of their identity-construction are assigning their chat-partners specific identities and invoking specific extra-situational events and facts that they deem relevant for asserting a specific here-and-now-relevant identity. These identities can be or seem contradicting: from ridiculing Hezbollah on one occasion to praising them, or even *being* them, on the next. From hating Israel to sympathizing with it. From being Don Juan with a chalet at the beach to having nothing but a street corner and a single pair of shoes.

The variety of ... that one person can display in a range of instances, reveals the indexical nature of identity often thought to be highly stable or fixed. The chatters studied here are not confused or overly pragmatic opportunists, lacking straightforward morals - at least not more than you or I.

Writing on identity among other things, Moerman (1988) says it is produced and problematic.

“They [reference occasions, recognition, knowing, personality, etc.] are problematic in that they are contingent, consequential, defeasible, etc. for the members, speakers, actors themselves; problematic because negotiated by the actual situated agents of society, language, and culture. Formulations of “recognition” or “person” or “knowing” as entities that exist outside of and determine what happens can never account for what happens.” (1988:46)

Macrostructures do not determine what happens between individuals; rather they are actively invoked to actualize occasions and their institutional provenance. Thus, for instance, the pursued agenda and chosen situated identities draw up a “continuously evolving framework within which their

actions, vocal or otherwise, assume a particular meaning, import and interactional consequentiality” (Zimmerman, 1998:88). However, because these instances are situated, indexical, elevating them to a higher level of generalization would be unjust.

Identity is constructed and reconstructed in each instance for practical purposes and temporary relevancies at hand. To ignore this is to harm the everyday experienced realities and to fail to acknowledge the complexities and ingenuity of interaction. If identity is to be studied, it must be done in an elaborate range of instances without the scholar preferring one over the other as more meaningful for purposes of over-generalization and (stereo)typification. Identity does not let itself be caught by scholarly models. We must rather find it where how and when it presents itself: in context.

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Undoing Degradation: The Attempted “Rehumanization” of Arab and Muslim Americans

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Introduction

The attacks of September 11th, 2001 and the subsequent “war on terrorism” have brought forth increasing attention on Arab and Muslim Americans. While images of Arab and Muslim Americans have long been a part of Western media, the increase of media outlets (such as cable news networks, radio talk shows, internet sites) have contributed to an overall increase in coverage of these groups. Beyond accounts of events in the Arab and Islamic Worlds, the coverage has included discussions of the place of Arabs (immigrants and their descendants) and Muslims in Western society. This has been spurred by the “clash of civilizations” thesis that posits Western and Islamic civilizations constitute different cultures and values that will inevitably come into conflict when in contact. Furthermore, every new event or occurrence related in any way to Islam or the Arab World recharges conversation around the qualities and attributes of those who fall into the categories of ‘Arab’ and ‘Muslim’. Given that the “war on terrorism” is a war without a definite ending, we can expect this discourse to continue indefinitely.

Research on the presentation of Arabs and Muslims in the media primarily has focused on negative and dehumanizing portrayals, which show persons in these categories as essentially different from those in the “West”. This paper takes an opposite approach by examining recent attempts in

the media where writers, politicians, commentators, and organizations have tried to present Arab and Muslims Americans as essentially “like everyone else.”

This paper is not meant as a challenge to those studies that have clearly demonstrated the intensely negative stereotypical depictions of Arabs and Muslims. Furthermore, we do not assert that these images are lessening in severity, number, or impact. On the contrary, by focusing on the extensive attempts to present Arab and Muslim Americans as essentially “human”, this paper underlines the powerful impact that the negative portrayals have had on framing how Arab and Muslim Americans are viewed within US society. In short, because it has become so taken-for-granted and commonsense knowledge that Arabs and Muslims are different (not like *us*), it has become necessary to argue actively against this view. This paper examines these arguments, and whether arguments for a group’s same-ness can succeed.

Degradation of Arabs and Muslims in the mass media

Derogatory portrayals of Arab culture and Islam based on stereotypical characterizations can be found throughout United States history. The primary view of the Arab and Islamic World depicted in the West has been that of a gathering threat in the form of advancing armies and

immigrants. This antagonistic and suspicious feeling extends back to the earliest period of the US (see Allison 2000), and has been rendered as negative portrayals in movies and television (Shaheen 2001, 1997, 1984), literature (Terry 1985), and news coverage (Jahsahn 1989; Jalbert 1992, 1984; Ghareeb 1982; Said 1997). In all of these instances, Arabs and Muslims are presented as a certain formulaic type, reduced to a finite set of characteristics that are consistently emphasized. For instance, in his review of 900 films, Shaheen (2001: 2) has found that Hollywood typically portrays Arabs as “brute murderers, sleazy rapists, religious fanatics, oil-rich dimwits, and abusers of women.”

Research on the presentation of Arabs and Muslims in the mass media has shown how members of these categories are constructed as the “quintessential Other that is fundamentally different from us” (Michalek 1988: 3). In a 1982 interview conducted by Jack Shaheen (2000: 23), James Baerg, Director of Program Practices for CBS-TV, remarked “I think the Arab stereotype is attractive to a number of people. It is an easy thing to do.” He continued to comment on how such a character is easy for the viewing audience to accept; and that it is a useful device to use when an episode is slow, “the same thing as throwing in sex and violence.” The image of Arabs and Muslims is then presented in a very limited, narrow, and finite fashion. Edward Said (1979) refers to this as Orientalism, speaking to the process by which the West manufactured the East (i.e. Orient) and deals with it by: making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, teaching it, settling in it, and ruling over it. Or, as Clarke (1997: 10) explains, “Crucial terms such as ‘East’, ‘Orient’, and ‘West’ become devices for reducing endless complexities and diversities into manageable and falsifying unities.” This attitude toward the ‘Orient’

permeates all aspects of social life and is expressed throughout society’s institutions in terms of how Arabs and Muslims are framed and perceived. More recently, there has been much debate on whether there is a “clash of civilizations” as proclaimed by Samuel Huntington (1997) between East and West. For Huntington and those who have invoked his argument, class and politico-ideological conflicts will be replaced by conflicts along religious and ethnic/cultural fault lines. This manifests itself today as the clash between the Islamic world and the Western secular world. This is also portrayed as a collision between the forces of modernity (i.e. the West) and anti-modernity or traditionalism (i.e. Islam or Islamic “fundamentalism”). Thus, for Huntington, terrorism is not only the result of a disturbed mind, but more extensively a disturbed culture that manufactures terrorists¹. Subsequent violent reactions against globalization and modernization (e.g. secularism and free markets)² are seen as being rooted in the Islamic and Arab cultures’ backwardness and their inability to integrate modern values into their traditional systems. Hence, the injection of “modernism” into current Islamic and Arabic culture will inevitably lead to their decline. They are, in essence, incompatible. The portrayal of Islam and Arab cultures as deficient and antithetical to Western culture has a cumulative effect on how members of these categories are perceived. Harold Garfinkel called this process of negative portrayal the *status degradation ceremony*.

¹ For a detailed examination and critique of such views, see John Esposito’s *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality* (1999).

² It is beyond the scope of this paper to engage a complete inventory of arguments regarding what constitutes modernity and globalization. In short, the authors are referring to a model of development which includes the secular nation-state, privatizing free market economics, and the mass exportation of “Western” pop culture.

In short, he defined this as “Any communicative work between persons, whereby the public identity of an actor is transformed into something looked upon as lower in the local scheme of social types” (1956: 420). It is important to note that this is not simply a matter of belittling a group; but significantly altering the identity and constitution of the group, or what Garfinkel called “the destruction of one social object and the constitution of another” (p. 421).

The extent to which Arab and Muslim Americans have been dehumanized and degraded is evident in the reaction against these groups in the aftermath of September 11th, 2001. For example, a report by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) stated that they received “1717 reports of harassment, violence and other discriminatory acts in the first six months” after September 11th, along with 325 complaints in the next six months (2002: 29). The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) (2002) received reports of over 600 violent incidents in the six months after September 11th, along with hundreds of calls concerning discrimination. The United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division investigated over 380 cases of civil rights violations related to the September 11th attacks. Finally, at least twelve deaths were attributed to anti-Arab and Muslim sentiment, where persons *thought to be* Arab and/or Muslim were murdered (in some cases these people were neither Arab nor Muslim). Thus, the consistent and constant negative and degrading presentations of Arab and Muslims have resulted in establishing a widely shared commonsense understanding that, in the end, casts a cloud of suspicion over, and posits as the enemy, those who are identified as belonging to these categories.

Membership categorization and eternal other-ness

The investigation of how language is used has produced several analytical insights which can help us understand the logic of how meaning is achieved in general and by media purveyors, the focus of our work here. Many of them were developed in the context of membership categorization analysis (Hester and Eglin 1997), explicating the power that categories have in different contexts³. One of those insights was introduced by Harvey Sacks ([1974]1992) regarding the relationship between the category of person and the category of action. He introduced these discoveries through his now famous two sentences, “The baby cried. The mommy picked it up.”, in which he coined the concept: **category-bound activities**. He constructed two viewers’ maxims to help orient to the phenomenon he was describing:

“If a member [of a culture] sees a category-bound activity being done, then, if one can see it being done by a member of a category to which the activity is bound, then: See it that way. The viewers’ maxim is another relevance rule in that it proposes that for an observer of a category-bound activity the category to which the activity is bound has a special relevance for formulating an identification of its doer...If one sees a pair of actions which can be related via the operation of a norm that provides for the second given the first where the doers can be seen as members of the categories the norm provides as proper for that pair of actions, then; (a) see that the doers are such members and (b) see the second as

³ We understand “meaning” to be an emergent, socio-cultural product, achieved by participants in any interaction (This includes interpersonal, speech communication, mass media, etc.), for specific practical purposes, in specific contexts. All meaning is context bound and its construction relies on the participation of interlocutors or presenters for its shape and character. To quote one of our mentors, Jeff Coulter, in this regard, “There is no such thing as decontexted meaning”.

done in conformity with the norm.” (Sacks 1974: 225)

This referred to the kind of relationship that logically exists between the doer of an action and the action itself. So, for example, letter carriers are employees of a postal system, whose work is to deliver or carry the mail to addresses in his/her assigned area of delivery. Now, anyone can ‘carry’ the mail; but not anyone can deliver the mail (i.e., have the authority and the public trust to transport these letters to their individual delivery points). To do so and not be a member of the postal services could result in arrest.

This means, in analytical terms, that the person category **letter carrier** is category-bound to the action category **to deliver**. Other commonsense examples include: police officers arrest and voters elect, “where the doers can be seen as members of the categories the norm provides for [such] actions”. In other words, there are conventional rules operating which allow us to hear/view that police officers are members of a category which enables them to arrest and that voters are members of a category which enables them to elect; and that they engage in these activities in conformity with the established norms of the society. This is the logico-programmatic boundedness, free from intent or motivation, that Sacks wanted us to pay attention to.

Categories of persons and of activities are used every day in conversation and in other environments of communication. As this work addresses media productions, we pay particular attention to the uses of media purveyors. Also, we focus upon the categorization practices engaged in with regard to describing Arabs and Muslims and their activities. For example, when (print or broadcast) reporters in the corporate media use the categories ‘Arab’ and ‘Muslim’ in

their stories, they invoke the logic of a pre-existing set of categorial relationships, not ones which have the status of those we have already discussed, i.e., police officers and voters, but ones which are prejudicially constructed to have only the semblance of those relational and bounded properties. As abundantly documented elsewhere, the negative stereotypes attributed to Arab and Muslim peoples by the mainstream corporate media have been so thoroughly inculcated in institutions in the United States and in the minds of the people that we can speak of these established ways of thinking and seeing as pre-existing. As such, when non-critical thinkers consider matters relating to Arabs and Muslims, they fall into the traps of negative stereotypes and prejudicial conclusions. Accordingly, we have often heard/seen the categories ‘Arab’ and ‘terrorist’ used together. To most non-critical people, these categories go together just fine. But what do they mean together? Are they logically connected? Do they follow established norms? In the context of a society which has established negative appreciations for these people, there is a sense that understanding Arabs and Muslims as terrorists makes perfect sense. In other words, even if the idea that “Arabs and Muslims are terrorists” is ridiculous and unfounded, if the idea is advanced to the non-critical hearer/viewer, due to the tremendous power of the propaganda machine, that is what they are nonetheless.

So, what has happened? Is this the category-boundedness Sacks was writing about? No. There is no logical boundedness between the person categories ‘Arab’ and ‘Muslim’ and the activity category ‘terrorist’. The connection is artificial and created through the lens of intolerance and racism; hence, it is false. This means that there does not exist any conventional relationship between the categories Arabs and Muslims and the activity of terrorism. This is true of any

ethnic or racial group: there is nothing intrinsic in these groups which render any of their activities predictable or of any particular character. Such a claim is *prima facie* nonsense. However, this does not prevent the tremendous power of propaganda to override this truth and create contrary appreciations of these groups. Such constructions have been given another name: *transitivity*, whereby the activity category is transferred to the person category and is taken incorrectly to have the same logical status (see Jayyusi 1984).

Allow us to demonstrate this transitivity outside of our present context. If a person categorizes a man as having an effeminate gait and, based upon this description of his walk, further categorizes him as being a homosexual, the person is engaged in the achievement of transitivity. This means that the connection that he has created is artificial and a distortion of the commonsense practices people engage in. Walking with an effeminate gait has nothing to do with one's sexual orientation; however, prejudicial connections can replace logical connections to produce such appreciations of people. Analytically speaking, this practice represents the distorted and artificial creation of understandings which seems to follow the logic of Sacks' concept of category-boundedness but which does not. So, just as walking with an effeminate gait does not make a man a homosexual, so too being Arab or Muslim does not make one a terrorist.

The logical problem lies in the fact that indeed "terrorists" engage in "terrorist acts". That is precisely the logical point here. In other words, homosexuals engage in sexual relations with members of the same sex; that is what makes them homosexuals; that is the category-bound activity, not walking with an effeminate gait. People who engage in acts which are categorized by the mainstream

media as terrorist are terrorists to those who are uncritical about their information consumption. Once someone or some group of people is uncritically categorized (labeled) as terrorist, the action category (transitivity) logically follows, but is understood as being bound. Whether the claim that "Arabs and Muslims are terrorists" is well founded or not does not matter in the context of a corporate media which can spin anything to produce the desired public sentiments required at the moment. Also, when most people are non-critical in their consumption of media productions, the transitivity logic takes hold. Their use is routine and taken for granted. This is partly why these discussions can seem to be superfluous or unnecessary. However, when such categories are used in particular contexts in which they invoke certain stereotypes or artificial boundaries, these practices become problematic.

Also, the connection, the *boundedness*, between the person category and the action category is a logical one, independent of intent or motivation, although often reporters know very well how these connections work and use them subtly to connect action with certain people. With our example, we have "terrorists" (Arabs or Muslims) who engage in "terrorist activities." Once the connection is made it is difficult to un-make, as the more it is heard and seen the more the connection is taken-for-granted. This kind of connection is routine in the corporate media in the U.S.

To place this discussion in present contexts, consider the current usage of the categorical phrase, "War on Terrorism", initially directed toward Afghanistan and now toward Iraq, with Syria and Iran possible candidates as well. This phrase, routinely used by the U.S. Administration, along with the various stages of alert, has the effect of frightening large segments of the public, resulting in an

increasing desire for security which then becomes the justifications for military action. The countries that are seen as primarily responsible for terrorism are also those inhabited by Arabs and Muslims. Thus, terrorism as an activity becomes transferred solely to Arabs and Muslims. And these countries are populated by Arabs and Muslims.

The commonsense upshot of this rhetoric (the categorizations) is that Arabs and Muslims are terrorists because the United States is “waging war on terrorism” in their countries (Afghanistan and Iraq), meaning that their countries are the source of terrorist activities and that the doers of terrorism are terrorists. If one believes what the members of the U.S. Administration say, then the category-bound logic seems plausible. However, if the U.S. Administration claim is only propaganda which serves its intentions and purposes, then the transitivity logic which resides in the rhetoric becomes observable and recognizable. Hence, acts which could otherwise be understood as ones of self-defense or frustration are now understood as acts of terror. With a substantial majority of the population in the United States being non-critical consumers of corporate media presentations, which are routinely advancing the image that Arabs and Muslims are terrorists, chances are very good that they will accept those media presentations at face value and will understand that any activities Arabs and Muslims engage in are terrorist in character.

This was made very clear by the U.S. Administration’s reaction to the “suicide bombing” attack at a military checkpoint in Iraq which resulted in the death of four U.S. Marines. On March 29, 2003, Major General Stanley A. McChrystal, the vice director of operations for the military’s Joint Staff, told reporters, “It looks and feels like terrorism.” On March 24, Pentagon

spokeswoman Victoria Clarke speaking of Iraqi “deceptions” during the war said “some liken it to terrorism.” Finally, on March 25, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer also on the Iraqi tactics and strategies stated, “it tells you that we’re really dealing here with elements of terrorism inside Iraq.” However, Fred Kaplan (2003) of www.slate.com, using the definition of terrorism as supplied by the U.S. State Department,⁴ notes on April 1 that, “any attack on armed troops in wartime cannot, by definition, be terrorism.” While these Iraqi tactics (such as feigning surrender or any act that endangers civilians) violate rules of military engagement as laid out in the Geneva Conventions, they do not constitute terrorism. In the end, the extent to which these acts are **actual** acts of terrorism is not the primary issue. Rather, the important point is that these acts are **hearable** as acts of terrorism. The transfer of Arab and Muslim actions as terrorism makes the claims of the U.S. Administration that much more hearably valid, even when they are factually inaccurate.

Any act of violence committed by Arabs and Muslims is terrorist by virtue of Arabs and Muslims **being** terrorists. Similarly, violence committed by non-Arabs and Muslims are not likely to be viewed as terrorism because it is an activity principally bound to the categories of Arab and Muslim. Not being part of those categories then potentially exempts persons from being considered terrorist (even though their actions fall in line with conventional definitions of terrorism). Despite the fact that there is nothing inherent in being Arab or Muslim that automatically results in

⁴ Terrorism as defined by the U.S. State Department is “premeditated, politically motivated violence propagated against noncombattant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.”

committing terrorist acts, the categories of Arab and Muslim are commonly perceived of as being connected to the activity of terrorism, along with other stereotypical descriptors such as backward, oil-rich, misogynistic, fanatical, etc.

The pervasiveness and strength of these beliefs and perceptions can be seen in the structure of arguments that counter these attitudes. To undo the degradation of Arabs/Muslims with negative characteristics, two general tactics have been used. The first attempt involves **undoing** the category transitivity from the negative activities by demonstrating that persons who are in these categories are not in fact predetermined on the basis of their membership to engage in the activities in question. By injecting activities that may have been seen as **category-exclusive**, these strategies effectively re-humanize Arabs and Muslims in the eyes of others. The second strategy involves demonstrating that people who are in these categories are “just like us.” This is done by linking Arab and Muslim Americans to activities thought to be bound to our categories. This approach attempts to provide a bridge between categories through shared activities and traits identified as being positive and admirable

In many ways, this can be viewed as an attempt to reinsert aspects of normal-ness or human-ness in groups (i.e. Arabs and Muslims) that are seen as devoid of this character. The process of undoing degradation involves rebutting commonsense notions and practical reasoning through highlighting those behaviors that are seen as positive and preferred. This also involves respecifying behaviors that are believed to be category-bound as exclusive to that category, as well as adding new behaviors to the category as being bound to it. In both ways, undoing degradation is meant to provide a new

commonsense of the category through observable behaviors. In a sense, behaviors that already were observable are rendered seeable through their inclusion in the category.

The goal of the following paper is not to evaluate the success of this venture. Nor is its aim to determine whether in fact such steps were necessary or warranted. Finally, the paper does not seek to impute motivations for the tones that emanated from the media and government officials. Rather, the paper will examine the structure of these arguments for the humanness of Arabs and Muslims, and based on this, consider the taken-for-granted assumptions and understandings regarding what constitutes being Arab and Muslim.

Excerpts and analysis

A corpus of data was gathered through media outlets and organizational materials primarily from right after September 11, 2001 until March 2003 and the invasion of Iraq. Materials were collected from newspapers, television and radio transcripts, organization documents and press releases, internet news and commentary sites, and political press releases. We focused primarily on articles examining Arabs and Muslims in the United States, including Arab Americans and Muslim Americans. We currently have examined over 142 pieces of data.

In the course of examining the data for this paper, the authors identified three general sets of strategies that were employed in the attempt to undo degradation. These strategies are:

- Demonstrating the existence of positive behaviors among Arab Americans and Muslim Americans;

- Explaining the presence of negative behaviors among some Arab Americans and Muslim Americans (as well as Arabs and Muslims);
- Establishing equivalency (or just-like-us-ness) between Arab Americans, Muslim Americans, and mainstream Americans.

As will be shown in the media excerpts presented here, these three strategies are used individually and in concert with one another. It must be stressed that the strategies identified here emerged from our readings of the data, and were not overtly asserted as strategies by those engaged in the process of challenging prejudicial attitudes and stereotypical characterizations. Furthermore, this list is not meant to be exhaustive or exclusive. It is simply meant as a heuristic to highlight the primary ways in which people go about undoing degradation. The excerpts presented here reflect examples of how these three strategies are used, sometimes individually and sometimes in concert with one another. In both cases, the strategies are meant to challenge commonsense notions of the categories ‘Arab’ and ‘Muslim’. Our purpose here is not to assess how successful these attempts are; but rather to understand how these attempts are constructed.

Demonstrating positive behaviors

In this section, we examine how ‘positive’ behaviors are used to demonstrate the worthiness, and in many instances the just-like-us-ness, of Arab and Muslim Americans. Of course, the word **positive** is very loaded in terms of being highly variable depending upon the context, group norms, expected preferential practices, etc. We use the term not to delineate specific practices that in every instance can be viewed as positive, or as if being positive was an inherent characteristic to the practices

themselves. Rather, the word ‘positive’ refers to how they are used in the context of the talk itself. These practices are raised as if they are examples of behavior that should be looked upon in a positive light. Thus, it is not our judgment that these practices are positive; they are positive in the judgment of the speakers.

This section is divided into different subsections based on general themes used in the presentation of positive behaviors. Specifically, we delineate the following categories of positive behaviors: 1) being law-abiding; 2) having a family; 3) being in the military. This obviously is not an exhaustive list, and various other behaviors are intertwined into the excerpts given here. At the same time, in our examination of our data, these three themes were highly prevalent. This is understandable given the general mood in American society regarding Arab and Muslim Americans. Groups that are being degraded often are accused of being disruptive to the social and civil order, being cultural amoral, and having loyalties that are detrimental to the nation. Thus, by claiming that the group is law-abiding, is family oriented, and is patriotic, these claims can be challenged. This is demonstrated in the following excerpts.

Law-abiding

Excerpt 1: From *The Today Show* (NBC), “Jim Zogby of the Arab American Institute discusses his concern of Arab-Americans being scrutinized because of the attack.” (September 13th, 2001)

- | | | |
|---|-------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Katie | We should mention, Jim, that |
| 2 | | there are seven million Muslims |
| 3 | | living in the... |
| 4 | Jim | Yeah. |
| 5 | Katie | ...United States, law-abiding |
| 6 | | citizens, who are productive |
| 7 | | members of our society. |

8 Jim Right. And 3 and 1/2 million
 9 Arab-Americans. The president
 10 has two in his cabinet, and there
 11 are six in Congress, and--and my
 12 kids on college campuses. And
 13 stories we've gotten already of a
 14 15-year-old boy beaten up in
 15 Los Angeles and fights in
 16 Dearborn, Michigan, and a kid
 17 attacked at a campus in North
 18 Carolina. These--these are things
 19 that shouldn't happen, but
 20 because of the--what--what your
 21 numbers were showing with--
 22 with--with Tim a--a moment
 23 ago, the pent-up anger is coming
 24 out. The problem is, it's taking--
 25 it's taking a form of a--of a kind
 26 of bigotry that's no different than
 27 the bigotry that caused the
 28 violent attacks in the first place.
 29 It shouldn't.
 30 Katie And it...
 31 Jim It shouldn't be used against
 32 innocent Arab-Americans.

The first excerpt has to do with questioning the mistreatment of people who are “law-abiding”. The sequence begins with the assertion that there are “seven million Muslims” and “3 and ½ million Arab-Americans” living in the United States, who are “law-abiding citizens” and “productive members of our society” (lines 2-9). It continues with the observation that there are Arab Americans serving at high levels of the government (lines 9-11). It is even said that there are Arab Americans on college campuses (line 12).

The expressions of the positive attributes of Arab Americans and Muslim Americans (law-abiding productive members of society) are juxtaposed to apparently random attacks against members of these categories. The reason for these attacks⁵ is given as bigotry

⁵ A report by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) stated that they received “1717

borne out of anger. In fact, Jim Zogby states this bigotry “is no different than the bigotry that caused the violent attacks in the first place.” (lines 26-28). Thus, persons who perpetrate attacks against innocent Arab (and Muslim) Americans are acting on a misdirected and unfounded hatred **just like** those who attacked the United States on September 11th. Furthermore, Arab Americans and Muslim Americans are innocent victims **just like** other Americans.

Now remember, these kinds of expressions are not a matter of truth-value, i.e., they are not presented as evidence of living within certain normative guidelines; but rather, they are assertions of these kinds of practices which count as demonstrations of being like someone who would not conventionally be identified as other than like “any other American”. So the invocation of the analytical construct category-bound activity is correct because, for this activity, for this set of people, the application of the category “American” is conventionally appropriate.

Excerpt 2: From “A day to wait, and pray; at the immigration service, Arab men face their uncertain futures.” Richard Leiby. **The Washington Post**, January 11, 2003. Pg. C01.

reports of harassment, violence and other discriminatory acts in the first six months” after September 11th, along with 325 complaints in the next six months (2002: 29). The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) received reports of over 600 violent incidents in the six months after September 11th, along with hundreds of calls concerning discrimination. The United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division is currently investigating approximately 380 cases of civil rights violations related to the September 11th attacks. Finally, at least twelve deaths were attributed to anti-Arab and Muslim sentiment where persons **thought to be** Arab and/or Muslim were murdered (in some cases these people were neither Arab nor Muslim). A 2003 report by CAIR reports that anti-Muslim incidents in the US are up 70%, and hate crimes are up 121%.

1 Abdo, looking confident in a Ralph Lauren
 2 Chaps jacket, is a 41-year-old airport shuttle
 3 driver from Virginia. He isn't expecting
 4 trouble: He obeys the law, pays his taxes and
 5 has filed the necessary paperwork for an
 6 upcoming hearing on his expired visa. He's
 7 planning to depart for a California vacation
 8 this week with his wife and child. He surveys
 9 the unsettled faces of the men in the room.

Here is an excerpt in which an Arab man, Abdo, who “obeys the law, pays his taxes” (line 4), “has filed the necessary paperwork for an upcoming hearing on his expired visa” (lines 5-6). In this way, Abdo is portrayed as a person to whom law-and-order is important. He is doing the required things to contribute to the establishment of a moral social order. Obviously, we are not privy to Abdo’s entire life, and therefore cannot be sure whether he obeys all laws all the time. However, the claim of obeying the law is buttressed by the examples of “pays his taxes”⁶ and “filed the necessary paperwork.” He has even planned “a California vacation this week with his wife and child”. These are all activities that people in the U.S. engage in; so, Abdo is no different from any other American. He is a hard-working, decent man, who cares for his family by providing for them and he also goes on vacation. What could be more American than that? His conduct is commensurate with that of other decent Americans; so, he is confident that he will be treated accordingly and without “trouble”.

These are activities which are proposed by the reporter as ones that can be argued to be essential ones in American society, ones

⁶ Paying one’s taxes is a common theme invoked when persons are trying to convey their belonging as a citizen of the US. In fact, Arab American entrepreneurs have been accused of *not* paying taxes and using the resulting profits for illegal purposes (see David 2005).

upon which this country was based. Again, the concept of category-bound activities can be invoked to demonstrate the kind of connection that the reporter is making. If one can see that obeying the law, paying ones taxes, taking care of expired visas, and going on vacation are activities that Americans engage in, then it is fitting that people who engage in them can be seen as Americans. And, *a fortiori*, this is true for any person, including Arabs. This makes perfect sense. However, the reporter observes that Abdo “surveys the unsettled faces of the men in the room”. In other words, even if the logic of the situation, which is reported as being grasped by Abdo, is expressed, other presumably Arab men in the room are not convinced. This is not surprising in the face of decades of anti-Arab media propaganda. However, an attempt to reestablish a sense of connection on the part of the men in the room to “being American” by the reporter is clear.

Having a family

One of the conditions that seems to be proposed most often in these kinds of assertive discourses by Arab and Muslim Americans is the fact that they have a family. The category ‘family’ carries with it a sense of civic responsibility (i.e., part of its many logical properties). Family men are not conventionally the kind of men who engage in activities related to terrorism. On a commonsense level, this operates to inform readers and listeners that there should be no fear of people who have families because, presumably, they would not engage in anything which could jeopardize the well being of others or their family members. The importance of family to Muslim Americans is strongly conveyed in this advertisement funded by the **Council on American-Islamic Relations**, a Washington, DC-based non-profit civil rights and advocacy group.

Excerpt 3: From a *Council on American-Islamic Relations* advertisement (March 16th, 2003)



WE'RE AMERICAN AND WE'RE MUSLIMS

MY NAME IS AMINAH KAPADIA, and I'm a wife, a mom and a student. I'm studying for a Masters degree in education, and I volunteer at our children's school, where I'm also active in the PTA. I was born in Philadelphia, to Puerto Rican parents, and have lived in the United States my entire life. My husband, Zubin, is from India, but has called America home for more than thirty years. He's an attorney and former economic officer for the U.S. Department of State. Now he spends his time running a consulting firm and coaching our sons' T-ball and soccer teams.

Like many Americans, my husband and I face the challenge of raising our children in an unpredictable world. That's why the basic principles of our religion, like tolerance, justice and devotion to family, are a central part of our lives. As the Prophet Muhammad told us, "The best of you is he who is best to his family. None of you will have faith until he wants for his brother what he wishes for himself."

We believe the security of our nation is dependent upon the strength of our families, and Islam teaches us the values that provide that strength.

WE'RE AMERICAN MUSLIMS

CAIR

Number five of fifty-two in the Islam in America series.
To learn more about the series, visit www.americanmuslims.info

The appeal in this photograph is obvious: how could a terrorist look like this? While it may be true that people are sometimes not what they seem, all of this works at the level of commonsensical expectations. Terrorists are depicted as shadowy characters, described as having knives or guns or having facial expressions which make people cringe with fear. The people portrayed in this advertisement, on the other hand, present a classical family portrait, smiling, loving, caring and together. The image portrays the kinds of images and (family) values that are commensurate with the archetype of what it looks like to be "Americans."

The category 'family' is of most import here, especially since the Prophet Mohammad himself is advanced as evidence to her claims. Indeed, the affiliative categories build the picture of the family concept: wife, mom, student, volunteer, PTA, husband, coach. The wife is "born in Philadelphia," "America is our home" and dad was an "economic officer for the US Department of State". What is more, they adhere to the "basic principles of (Islamic) religion": tolerance, justice, and devotion to family.

Furthermore, the mother is the one highlighted in the text of the ad, which is contrary to commonsense notions of Muslim women as subservient and thoroughly disempowered and domesticated. Everything presented in this text, in fact, serves to combat commonsense stereotypical notions of Muslims. Both parents are well educated, civically involved, and are entirely devoted to their family. Interestingly, neither parent is Arab (the mother is American of Puerto Rican ancestry and the father is Indian). Both parents place themselves and their family into the category of American *just like any other American*. In fact, the title of the ad, "We're Muslims and We're Americans" speaks to attempting to establish equivalency (which will be discussed later).

It is the use of these categories which creates the context of what family means and which expresses the appeal that she and the members of her family are just ordinary Americans. It is also interesting that the spokesperson for the family be the mother, also an American kind of tradition, i.e., "mom and apple pie". All of these categories work to construct a bond between the members of this family and those of any other family in America, thereby demonstrating that the activities of this family are similar to, if not the same as,

those engaged in by other typical American families. American families look like this and not like something else. If we, the family depicted, look like that too, then why all the fuss and prejudicial actions? Images and discourse such as these posters arguably work to destroy simultaneously destroy negative commonsense categories and construct positive ones, thereby achieving the undoing of degradation.

Military service

The giving of one's life in the course of serving in the military is known in the US as "the ultimate sacrifice." Military members are seen as the primary source of liberty and democracy, the safeguards of "the American way of life." Memorial Day is a national holiday when the country remembers the service of persons in the military, and recalls past and on-going wars. Since all branches of the American military are volunteer-based, serving in the military often is seen as a selfless expression of patriotism and duty to the country. Serving in the military then is perhaps the greatest expression of "Americanism" and patriotism. It is also one of the behaviors most frequently pointed to by Arab and Muslim Americans when trying to demonstrate their worth and value to the US. This is demonstrated in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 4: From Karen Branch-Briosio "Muslims in the US military reassert their patriotism." *The Tribune* (Port St. Lucie/Fort Pierce, FL) (April 3rd, 2003)

1 Allis belongs to the Association of Patriotic
2 Arab Americans in the Military. The group was
3 formed by a Marine gunnery sergeant
4 whose uncle found himself shunned after
5 the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001 - until
6 he posted in his business a photograph of
7 his nephew in full military regalia.
8

9 As the nation wages war against Iraq, a
10 Muslim nation, many of the thousands of
11 Muslims in the U.S. military find
12 themselves questioned again.

13
14 "I don't feel like we're at war with another
15 Muslim nation. We're at war against a
16 dictator and his evil government," said
17 Allis, who is on standby for deployment to
18 Iraq. "I felt like I was going to fight against
19 a dictator who killed other Muslims."

20
21 At latest count, 4,070 active-duty members
22 of the U.S. military list Muslim as their
23 religion: 1,940 in the Army; 869 in the
24 Navy; 744 in the Air Force; and 517
25 Marines. But organizations such as the
26 Patriotic Arab Americans in the Military
27 and the American Muslim Armed Forces
28 and Veteran Affairs Council believe the
29 number is closer to 10,000. There are about
30 1.4 million troops.

The title of the Association of Patriotic Arab Americans in the Military (APAAM) speaks to the organization's focus. The website of the organization (www.apaam.org) states that the organization was formed in response to September 11th and the intense negative backlash against Arab Americans. Serving in the US military is presented as evidence to demonstrate one's patriotism. Also, an Arab and Muslim like "Marine gunnery sergeant" (line 3) can also "fight against a dictator who killed other Muslims" (lines 16-17). So, being an Arab and/or a Muslim does not limit one's critical faculties such that one cannot see the wrong-doings of other members of the same religion or ethnic ancestry. As a result, Muslim and Arab Americans can also fight against those who, according to the US administration, are a threat to the US. A logico-practical upshot of such categorization practices is that these people, also members of the military and sworn to uphold the constitution of the US, deserve respect. This is demonstrated in the Uncle in the story avoiding harassment by

posting a picture of his nephew, who is serving in the military, in his store (see lines 4-7). A bond is created between serving in the military and supporting one's country, **just like** everybody else.

It is not only that there are Arab and Muslim Americans in the military; but there are many such members. These numbers are highlighted in lines 19 – 27, and estimates put the total number of Arab and Muslim Americans in the military at around 10,000. Like other members of the military, Arab and Muslim Americans are part of the Armed Forces who are committed to protecting our nation. If we can place our trust in the US military to protect our shores, and many of those in the US military are Arab and Muslim Americans, why should people treat them any differently from other members of the military just because they are Muslim and of Arab ancestry? This question is raised in Excerpt 5 from the CNN news show "Live Today":

Excerpt 5: From CNN Live Today. "To be American." (October 24th, 2001)

- | | | |
|----|--------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Unidentified | It just kind of rings a |
| 2 | male | question in my head. Am I |
| 3 | | really an American or not? It |
| 4 | | is kind of hard to think |
| 5 | | about. Do I have the same |
| 6 | | rights as, like, an American- |
| 7 | | born, or do I have different |
| 8 | | rights because I'm Arabic? |
| 9 | Crowley | The question rings not just in |
| 10 | (voice-over) | his head, but across the |
| 11 | | generations. |
| 12 | Unidentified | My grandfather came here in |
| 13 | male | 1896. I'm a veteran. My |
| 14 | | brothers are veterans, and |
| 15 | | yet I feel like I am not – you |
| 16 | | know, I have not found my |
| 17 | | rightful place in America. |
| 18 | | When do I become an |
| 19 | | American? |

In connection with the military theme, the category **veteran** is invoked. This is an interesting use of military service in that the person speaking has not himself served in the military. Rather, his father and brothers are veterans. Nevertheless, this is given as enough evidence to substantiate his claim that he should be considered American. Thus, being a veteran or having served in the military is a patriotic umbrella that should (in the view of the speaker) encompass himself as well. While he may not have served in the military, his family has and this contribution is enough to guarantee himself membership in the category **American**. However, the question still arises in the minds of some in American society as to whether or not having served in the US military, and being a veteran, is enough for Arab Americans and Muslim Americans to become "an American." Again, according to the speaker, serving one's country should be more than enough to be regarded as a member of that country and "found [a] rightful place in America" (lines 16-17).

There are many men and women, who were not born in the U.S., but who have served in the U.S. military whose Americanization is in question. Indeed, the very status of citizenship is embedded in that question. Can veterans rightfully take on the category 'American'? That is one issue for this analysis; that is, taking on the category 'American' **because** certain proposed criteria or prerequisites are met; such as having served in the U.S. military. We can hear said for example that, "What more could anyone ask than to put ones life in harm's way to prove allegiance to any nation state?"

However, here is a situation in which this man's family has been in the U.S. since 1896. This means that he was born in the U.S. and has ancestors in this country; yet he does not feel that he has "found [his] rightful place in America". Is the fact that someone

is Arab what precludes him/her from being accorded the same rights as someone else? As we all know, the U.S. does not represent any specific ethnic group; but rather a mixture of cultures from all over the world. How is it that some of those people feel a sense of belonging and others do not?

Of course, we also know that racism is a fundamental feature of this culture; the foundation of this country is predicated on it. Black Africans have been discriminated against in the U.S. from the beginning. Brown people have also suffered in this way. Is it simply that Arabs are brown people that they have less and have access to less? Or is it because of a campaign of negative propaganda for many years that works its way into the mind of the culture and makes it implausible that black and brown people (including Arabs) could take on membership in the category “American”? And this, in spite of the fact that black and brown people do the same things white people do, e.g., serve in the military and become veterans; but, for some reason(s), they are unable to become American. What is it about being an American that seems so elusive? What are the criteria? What are the rights of passage? When have you done enough so that you can have the same rights as other Americans? Surely, having served in the military should be, all by itself, enough to gain the right to be called an American, indeed a true American!

Having a professional job

One’s occupation is a well known component of one’s social status. While earnings is an important component of how the status afforded to an occupation, perceived prestige is also highly important. Thus, while manual laborers can earn more than college professors, the college professor is higher in terms of status and prestige. The hierarchy of jobs is seen in the color-coding

scheme associated with certain types of work, such as in blue collar for manual labor work, white collar for professional or managerial work, and even pink collar for work associated with women. Furthermore, one’s job is of great importance to one’s identity in American society. Upon meeting someone for the first time, the question, “What do you do for a living?” is frequently asked. Having a job associated with high prestige is frequently given as evidence of positive traits. This is shown in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 6: From “Islam is Peace~ Says President”. Remarks by President George W. Bush at Islamic Center of Washington, DC. (September 17, 2001).

1 America counts millions of Muslims
2 amongst our citizens, and Muslims make an
3 incredibly valuable contribution to our
4 country. Muslims are doctors, lawyers, law
5 professors, members of the military,
6 entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, moms and dads.
7 And they need to be treated with respect. In
8 our anger and emotion, our fellow Americans
9 must treat each other with respect.

The categories used by George Bush in this excerpt are a litany of professions that should generate “respect” in “our fellow Americans”. The 1989 occupational prestige scores for some of these categories demonstrates the level of prestige associated with them in the public mind (see Nakao and Treas 1990). For instance, physician received a rating of 86.05, making it one of the most highly prestigious occupations. Lawyers similarly received a high rating of 74.77. Law professors likewise have a lot of prestige with a score of 73.51. This is compared to manual labor occupations that typically received ratings in the range of twenties to forties. At the very least, these ratings demonstrate how the professions listed by President Bush are perceived in

general, underlining the point that by linking Arab and Muslim Americans to them, the status of Arab and Muslim Americans hopefully is enhanced.

While there is nothing intrinsic about being a doctor or lawyer or, for that matter, a member of any other profession that requires respect, Bush appeals to “our fellow Americans” to “treat each other with respect”, because “America counts millions of Muslims amongst our citizens”. Conversely, there is nothing intrinsic about being a member of such professional categories that requires that people not respect someone. Why should this pious invocation on the part of Bush be made? After all, it should stand to reason that “fellow Americans...treat each other with respect”, regardless of their profession or their religious affiliation. This is one of the fundamental precepts of the Founding Fathers. So, why make a point of invoking it in this context? Again, a concerted effort is being made, on the part of politicians and media purveyors, to reestablish or reassert that Muslims are not bad. In fact, we should see them as positive members of the culture and treat them as such. Again, this seems necessary because of the history of negative press with regard to Muslims. This is accomplished, as depicted in this report, by reminding us that there is a connection between citizenship and respect; that citizenship is manifest in a multiplicity of ways, including practicing a profession and being “moms and dads” and that respect is a natural outcome of such practices, even in the case of Muslim citizens. This positive representation on the part of Bush may come late in the day; and, in light of the violence perpetrated upon members of the Muslim communities in the U.S., including beatings, assaults, and murder, it is a minimal intervention. Reminding the reader of these crimes against Muslims is important because, in such a context, even the most

callous of politicians must appeal to the citizenry to curb such widespread profiling.

A similar theme can be seen running through Excerpt 7, taken from the *Los Angeles Times*. In this excerpt, various professional occupations are listed as those who are once Iraqi immigrants who now consider themselves American.

Excerpt 7: From Faye Fiore “‘No third way’ for U.S. Iraqis.” *Los Angeles Times*. (December 26, 2002).

1 This diverse and undefined population
2 includes business and military elite who
3 were ruined by Iraqi President Saddam
4 Hussein and want their due. There are
5 recent refugees who fled from his rule after
6 the Persian Gulf War and want to go home.
7 There are the bankers, physicists, doctors
8 and investors, well-educated American
9 citizens who came here decades ago and
10 have no intention of ever moving back --
11 the products of two cultures who go to
12 mosques and movie theaters, eat pizza as
13 often as kebabs and send their children to
14 American schools during the week, Arabic
15 school on Sundays.

Linked with the professions of “bankers, physicists, doctors and investors, well-educated American citizens” is the addendum that Iraqi Americans have a strong dislike for Saddam Hussein. This positions them in line with the current Bush Administration policy of regime change in Iraq. Being well-educated gives them the authority to be sound judges of the policy and its worth. We can imagine whether persons who were not well-educated but supported this policy would be seen as persuasive advocates. So, we should pay closer attention to the testimonies of these particular members of the elite core of Iraqis because they “were ruined by ... Hussein”, making them enemies of Hussein and perhaps friends of the U.S. This helps to

build a case for Bush against Hussein, while having the appearance that he is applauding the collective achievements of Iraqi Arabs. It is interesting that it is not mentioned that many Arab citizens, Iraqi and otherwise, who have M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s in mathematics, computer science, physics, medicine, etc., are driving taxis in major cities in the U.S., because they have little or no opportunity to practice their profession in this country, too often a result of the exclusionary racist and extreme ethnocentric attitudes which thrive in this country. But, they are citizens who go to the movies and eat pizza, just like everyone else.

Accounting for the presence of negative behaviors

This section will discuss some examples of attempts to explain or mitigate the presence of negative conduct on the part of Arabs and Muslims, in the name of Islam, as though it is necessary to do so because they are only known to perpetrate evil because they are not trustworthy and that they are the first we should think of when some atrocity or malevolent act has come to our attention. As we can quickly ascertain, many atrocities worldwide have been perpetrated by members of religious organizations, from cults to major religions, in the name of those religions. Whether it be the Crusades (or current invocations to the deity by the Bush Administration), the Jihad, or the practices of the Jewish State, all have and do claim to have "God on their side", while they massacre and pillage. Admittedly, these acts have been engaged in by the more extreme members of such religions; however, we can recall some of the cries by ordinary people to kill these or those people because they have been vilified and demonized and rendered evil; hence, Reagan's "Evil Empire" or Bush's "Axis of Evil". Propaganda of this nature is pivotal to gaining mass support for dreadful acts of

terror, which would otherwise be recognized for what they are, and not abhorred. So, again because we have a history of depicting Arabs and Muslims in particularly villainous ways, there seems to be a need to reframe or mitigate certain activities on their part which are incorrectly understood to be bound to them. Hence, we see attempts to marginalize those who do engage in those kinds of activities by claiming that those people are extremists or are outside of the mainstream of the religious group, on the fringe or those people are not true Muslims or they do not understand that Islam is a religion of peace.

We can observe in this context that the artificiality of transitivity is operating: there is nothing about being a Muslim or adhering to the precepts of Islam that makes anyone a terrorist or anything approaching such categorization. Yet, there seems to be a necessity to debunk any connection of this kind because of the sustained villainy against Arabs and Muslims. Consider Excerpt 8 below:

Excerpt 8: From *All Things Considered* (National Public Radio). "Acts of Violence against Arab-Americans in the US." (September 17, 2001). Rick Karr reporting.

1	Reporter	Worshippers at the mosque say
2		that if indeed the terrorists
3		justified their strike with some
4		interpretation of Islam, it's
5		certainly not an Islam that they
6		recognize. Gassan Amein(ph) is
7		a worshipper at the mosque, and
8		a Bay Ridge businessman.
9	Mr.	I really do not understand how
10	Gassan	these people think or how they
11	Amein	use Islam, such a peaceful, such
12		a beautiful religion. I
13		understand my religion very
14		well, and I can tell you that my
15		religion does not encourage or
16		does not allow anybody to do

17

such an act.

This excerpt demonstrates the common theme that those who commit acts of violence in the name of Islam are not real Muslims. The commonsense understanding of Islam among large sections of the US is that it is a violent religion, and therefore those who are Muslims must be violent as well. To undo this equivalency, either side of the equation must be shown to be false. If many Muslims are portrayed as peaceful, then Islam must be a religion of peace (or cannot be a religion of violence *per se*). Likewise, if Islam is shown to promote peace, then real Muslims should be peaceful as well.

A problem of course arises when persons who claim to be Muslims commit acts of violence in the name of Islam. It is difficult to assert that Islam is a religion of peace when persons who are Muslims are not acting in a peaceful way. There are two primary tracts that can be taken to solve this dilemma. First, the violence can be rationalized in some way such that the persons committing the violence are absolved of primary responsibility. In other words, they can be shown to be prompted to violence by some other action outside of their control (e.g. some form of self-defense). Second, the persons who commit the violence can be shown not to be real Muslims, and to be operating outside of Islam. This is the approach taken in Excerpt 8. Mr. Amein maintains that “I really do not understand how these people think or how they use Islam, such a peaceful, such a beautiful religion.” He further states, “I can tell you that my religion does not encourage or does not allow anybody to do such an act.” Persons who commit acts of violence in the name of Islam therefore are not Muslims.

This same approach can be seen in the following two excerpts:

Excerpt 9: From Sara Steindorf. “An American, a Muslim, a teen: What’s it like to be a follower of Islam in the United States today?” *The Christian Science Monitor* (November 6, 2001).

1 “I have the same religion as the Sept. 11
2 terrorists,” Feda says, “but the terrorists
3 make it completely different.... They stretch
4 the ideas of Islam, and think their attack was
5 justified because it was a jihad [holy war]....
6 But really, killing innocent people is not a
7 jihad - nor is it even allowed in Islam.”

Excerpt 10: From Akbar Ahmed. “I’ve spent my life trying to repair the image of Islam.” *The Independent*. (September 20, 2001).

1 Yet the actions of the hijackers had nothing
2 to do with Islamic theology. The killing of
3 innocent civilians is specifically forbidden
4 in the holy Koran. Killing a single innocent
5 individual is like killing all of humanity, the
6 Holy Book warns. The actions of the
7 hijackers may have had nothing to do with
8 Islam, but the consequences and causes of
9 their actions has everything to do with how
10 and where Islam will be going in the 21st
11 century.

In Excerpt 9, Feda does not challenge that the September 11th terrorist are Muslims. However, she challenges their interpretation of Islam, fashioning them as extremists who “stretch the ideas of Islam” (lines 3-4). She also raises the issue of *jihad*. The popular understanding of *jihad* is that it means “holy war.” This is but one potential translation. Literally, *jihad* means “struggle”, or the struggles that one goes through in trying to live a righteous life according to the tenets and prescriptions in Islam. In the context of violence, *jihad* can mean struggle against oppressors (which is where the connotation

of holy war originates). The multiple ways in which *jihad* can be interpreted means that there is the potential for people frankly to get it wrong and misinterpret its meaning and use. This is what Feda is asserting, underlining her claim by stating, “killing innocent people is not a jihad - nor is it even allowed in Islam” (Excerpt 9, lines 6-7). Those who kill “innocent people” (another phrase open to interpretation) are not following Islam.

Excerpt 10 repeats this pattern. Again, we are told that “The killing of innocent civilians is specifically forbidden in the holy Koran” (lines 2-4). We also are told that “The actions of the hijackers may have had nothing to do with Islam.” (lines 6-8). The hijackers are referred to as “hijackers,” and not “Muslims.” The use of this category is rooted in the activity of this group of people: namely, hijacking. Hijackers take planes through violent means; Muslims do not. They cannot be referred to as Muslims because their actions contradict those advocated by Islam. Regardless of this fact, the author fears that because people will see them not as “hijackers” but as “Muslims,” “the consequences and causes of their actions has everything to do with how and where Islam will be going in the 21st century” (lines 8-11). For Muslims, it is clear that the hijackers and other terrorists do not represent Islam. For non-Muslims who carry with them mainstream commonsense understandings of Islam, these violent individuals are the embodiment of Islam. To change this perception of Islam, they must be made aware of peaceful Muslims.

Establishing equivalency

One way to mitigate any difference or disparity in the conduct of people or their public perception is to liken them to any other member of the society, thereby establishing equivalency. If it can be

successfully argued that members of certain groups, Arabs and Muslims, who have been vilified for decades in films and television, that they are, in some significant way, “just like any other American”, then, groundwork can be laid for the possible transformation of public perception of members of those groups. So, how can Arabs and Muslims be likened to any other American? It turns out that there are several ways, some of which we include here in the following excerpts. They can range from invoking justice, to the expression of anger about the attacks on 9/11, to the condemnation of terrorism by Arab governments, to having a family and praying for victims of such attacks and having good neighbors. The concept at work here is that of category membership; that is, if one can demonstrate in some manner that members of a particular category of persons, e.g., American, conduct themselves in certain manners (and this includes activities, attitudes, piety, having a family, having good neighbors, abhorring war and terrorist attacks, etc.) and, if one can demonstrate that those manners of conduct are commensurate with one’s own, then, equivalency can be established and can help mitigate any verbal attacks which presuppose a false or artificial connection to those other activities which are so rightfully criticised. These expressions of disconnection serve to separate one from all those presupposed and artificial attitudes about one’s religion, family values, and other connections to the mainstream culture. We argue, then, that these expressions are part of the process of shedding degradation, thereby establishing grounds for public perception to be altered in favor of a more positive appreciation of Arabs and Muslims.

Expressing sorrow and outrage at September 11th

In the aftermath of September 11th and the ensuing war on terrorism, many Americans

followed the dictum laid out by President Bush on November 6, 2001, “You are either with us or you are against us in the fight against terror.” For Arab and Muslim Americans, there was a pressing need to demonstrate that they are not only *with us*, but that they *are us*. An alliance *with us* is very different from an allegiance *to us* in that alliances can be temporary while allegiances are meant to be lasting. Thus, Arab and Muslim Americans needed to demonstrate their sorrow, anger, outrage, etc. at these attacks similar to the rest of the US. If Arab and Muslim Americans are one of them, they should share in the goals of the terrorists. If they are one of us, they would not. In the following excerpts, we will see how being with us is demonstrated.



Excerpt 11: From *60 Minutes* (CBS). “America’s Arabs.” (November 25, 2001). Ed Bradley Reporting.

- | | | |
|---|--------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Ed Bradley | How do you feel about the |
| 2 | | terrorists who attacked the |
| 3 | | United States? |
| 4 | Unidentified | Just like any other American. |
| 5 | Woman | Any person who commits an |
| 6 | | act like this needs to be |
| 7 | | brought to justice. |

This is an interesting exchange between Ed Bradley, reporter for the television news show *60 Minutes*, and a Muslim American

woman who resides in Dearborn, Michigan (which has one of the highest concentrations of Arab and Muslim Americans in the US). Ed Bradley poses the question “How do you feel about the terrorists who attacked the United States?” The very question itself creates the possibility that this woman may feel differently from everyone else. This was not a common-place question asked of everyone after September 11th. Anecdotally-speaking, one could poll any number of Americans and find virtually no one who was asked this question in such a way that calls into question whether they were shocked, outraged and deeply saddened. Similarly, the same questions are not posed to members of other groups when violence is done in the name of their group. For instance, Irish Americans are not asked how they feel about bombings conducted by the Irish Republican Army; white Christian Americans are not asked how they feel about cross-burnings or other acts of intimidation committed by white supremacist groups; Jewish Americans are not asked how they feel about acts of espionage committed by other Jewish Americans or Israelis against the US. Thus, members of these groups are not (currently) seen to be culpable of the actions committed by members of their membership group. However, Arab and Muslim Americans are put on the defensive and must demonstrate that, in the words of the woman being interviewed, they feel “Just like any other American” (line 4).

Condemnation of the September 11th attacks from Arab and Muslim Americans was widely called for in American society, as if the absence of outright condemnation indicated a tacit approval of the attacks. Countries in the Arab and Islamic Worlds were required to come out with condemnations, as were Arab and Muslim American organizations in the US. This is demonstrated in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 12: From Joint Arab-American, Muslim-American⁷ Press Release. (September 12, 2001).

1 We condemn in no uncertain terms the
2 horrifying attacks on the World Trade
3 Center and the Pentagon on September 11.
4 We are shocked and angered by such
5 brutality and share all the emotions of our
6 fellow citizens about these attacks, which
7 target all Americans without exception. We
8 firmly believe that there can be no
9 justification for such horrible acts. We join
10 with the nation in calling for the
11 perpetrators of this terrible crime to be
12 brought swiftly to justice.

The issue of pointedly condemning the September 11th attacks is clear in this statement, released the day after the attacks. The press release also demonstrates the attempt to establish a sense of us-ness between Arab and Muslim Americans with other Americans. Lines 5-6 speak of sharing “all the emotions of our fellow citizens.” The attacks “target all Americans without exception” (line 7). This was a common refrain after September 11th, with people pointing out that Arab and Muslim Americans were victims of the attacks, thereby establishing a sense of collectivity through shared victimization. The press release addresses the issue of rationalization and justification of the attacks, and firmly rejects it. Finally, the press release shows that Arab and Muslim American “join with the nation” (lines 9-10), further demonstrating that “we are with you.” We see more of this work of transforming the

intergroup to the *intragroup* in the following section.

Transforming *us* and *them* into *we*

This final section addresses the sociological distinction between those who are members of a group and those who are *other*; the *us/them* dichotomy. This is not a frivolous matter: people in all cultures organize their understandings of local, regional, national and global events and issues as well as personal impressions, prejudices, and notions, apart from other socio-cultural-ideological conventions, according to this dichotomy. This is quite correct and natural; all cultural development includes an ethnocentrism which guides members’ conduct according to the values, beliefs, norms, etc. of any culture. However, at times, this can develop into an extreme form which regards anything or anyone who does not have membership can be seen as, not only different, but unwelcome in its milder forms and may involve disdain or hatred or even violence in its more virulent forms. This extreme ethnocentrism is not natural nor correct. Conduct of this nature serves to separate those outsiders from members in inappropriate ways and to establish hostile relations with anyone *sans* membership.

With regard to our investigation, as articulated before, the effects of extreme ethnocentrism are already established in the American culture against Arabs and Muslims, regarded as outsiders. What we are trying to appreciate is the process of reestablishing a civility with those non-members, an attempt to mitigate the degradation already in place, seemingly because of an awareness of the fact that any conduct by anyone is not a result of membership in any one or another culture. Accordingly, if there is something, some practice or attitude, which can be seen as like us, then there could be some basis to

⁷ The organizations that signed onto this press release include the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), Arab American Institute (AAI), American Committee on Jerusalem (ACJ), American Muslim Alliance (AMA), American Muslim Council (AMC), Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine (CPAP), Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), and Islamic Institute.

argue that those non-members should be acceptable to us and able to be integrated into our milieu. As the several excerpts below demonstrate, there are multiple ways to achieve, each with the aim of showing “we are just like everyone else”.

Excerpt 13: From Brian McGrory. “Another Face of Patriotism.” *The Boston Globe*. Pg. B1. (September 18, 2001).

1 He was born in the USA, as Bruce
2 Springsteen would say, a 32-year-old
3 Honda-driving software engineer who lives
4 in a rented apartment in one of those
5 cookie-cutter highway-side developments
6 called Shrewsbury Commons.
7 He's a fully inducted, taxpaying member
8 of this wonderfully inclusive club we call
9 America, where all stripes, all colors, all
10 shapes, and all sizes abound. On paper
11 anyway, he's a regular, ordinary guy.

This story demonstrates in various ways that the subject of the story, Vikrim Chhabra (an Indian Sikh) “is a regular, ordinary guy” (line 11). An outcome of September 11th was the targeting of anyone who bore any resemblance to the Arab or Islamic Worlds. This meant that Indian Sikh men, who wear head coverings and beards, were seen as adherents to or followers of Osama bin Laden (even though bin Laden is a Muslim and Sikhs are neither Arab nor Muslim). To demonstrate that he is “a regular, ordinary guy,” we see numerous American themes and traits, including liking the musician Bruce Springsteen (an American icon), paying taxes (and thereby being a member of “this wonderfully inclusive club we call America”), driving a simple car, and living in non-descript housing. He is therefore no different from anyone else.

We can see the same points being made by Arab and Muslim Americans as well, shown in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 14: From Elizabeth Lorente. “Fear Inhibits U.S. Arabs, Muslims.” *Bergen Record (New Jersey)*. (March 26, 2003).

1 Khalid and other Muslims who have been
2 vocal about their opposition to the war and
3 the post-Sept. 11 arrests have worked
4 tirelessly to convince their community of its
5 rights to speak out.
6 “It is more important now than ever to
7 speak up for our rights,” Akhtar said. “We
8 are taxpayers, we are Americans. We love
9 this country. We care as much as other
10 Americans about safety and security here.”

Excerpt 15: From Robert Knox. “Moving Beyond the Stereotypes of Islam.” *The Boston Globe*. Pg.1 Globe South. (February 3, 2002)

1 “We are just like everybody else,” Al-Zaim
2 said. A member of Duxbury's Planning
3 Board, Al-Zaim said his purpose in taking
4 part in the first “overview” session on Islam
5 was to “let people see me as they will see
6 you or the next-door neighbor. I have
7 nothing to hide. I coach soccer. I go to work
8 like everyone else every morning, I sit in
9 traffic, I pay taxes and I participate in local
10 government. I want to break the lack of
11 knowledge.”

Both excerpts attempt to demonstrate that Arab and Muslim Americans are like other Americans, and in fact *are* American. In Excerpt 14, “Khalid” balances his opposition to “the war” and the arrests of Arab and Muslim Americans after September 11th with his support for America. He states uncategorically “We love this country,” and “We care as much as other Americans about safety about security here” (lines 8-10). Furthermore, we see the recurrent theme of paying taxes as the basis for membership in the category of American (lines 7-8). Being a member of the American club, Khalid feels empowered in “speaking up” for one’s rights (or freedom of speech), which is a well

established American guarantee enshrined in the First Amendment of the US Bill of Rights (notwithstanding the adoption of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the USA PATRIOT Act, the Homeland Security Act, and other acts of Congress in the history of the US which at various times have curtailed the freedom of speech).

In Excerpt 15, Al-Zaim states “I pay taxes and I participate in local government” (lines 9-10). Al-Zaim, in conducting educational seminars on Islam, wants to “let people see me as they will see you or the next-door neighbor.” In establishing that he is in fact like everyone else, he lists a number of behaviors that he enacts on a daily basis, including “I coach soccer. I go to work like everyone else every morning, I sit in traffic, I pay taxes and I participate in local government.” These kinds of expressions and claims are appealing to the common sense faculties of other Americans to see that people are really alike no matter where they come from. The demonstration of integration into American life is critical when making such arguments, to appeal to sameness, or at least similarity. As the saying goes, “It is what you do and not what you say that people pay attention to”. Only then can one make a case for claiming that the ‘us/them’ can be collapsed into the ‘we’.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates attempts to portray Arab and Muslim Americans in a positive way, thereby contradicting the commonsense understandings of Arabs and Muslims in the American mind. As a result of transitivity, category-bound behaviors have been created via prejudicial and stereotypical depictions of the categories Arab and Muslim that by and large depict Arabs and Muslims in intensely negative ways. As a result, persons categorized as Arabs and Muslims are seen as bound to committing negative

behaviors by virtue of their membership of those categories. In order to undo this construct, persons have actively embarked on creating alternative depictions meant to reflect more accurately Arab and Muslim Americans by changing our understanding of the categories Arab and Muslim. We have outlined three primary ways of doing so:

- 1) showing positive behaviors by Arab and Muslim Americans;
- 2) accounting for the presence of negative behaviors committed by Arabs and Muslims;
- 3) establishing categorial equivalency between the categories Arab and Muslim with the category American.

It is not clear how successful these attempts will be because of the entrenched nature of the commonsense understandings of the categories ‘Arab’ and ‘Muslim’. Anyone attempting positive portrayals, dismissing negative examples, or showing that **they** are like **us** is battling against hundreds of years of stereotypical portrayals, which has gained in intensity during the last forty years. These portrayals have been present across all forms of media, and have become nearly ubiquitous due to the increasing number of media outlets. Therefore, there is much to battle against. The stories that we examined are a mere drop in the bucket when compared to the vast array of stories, movies, characters, etc. that support the negative perceptions that dominate American society. As the “war on terrorism” continues, these perceptions continue to receive support.

Furthermore, it is not clear whether you can render visible that which is already there to be seen. It should be obvious that not **all** Muslims and Arabs (and by virtue Muslim and Arab Americans) are terrorists. It should be obvious that Arab and Muslim Americans are law-abiding, tax paying, civic

minded, family oriented, well-educated, productive members of American society. This raises the question as to why all of this needs to be said if it is indeed witnessable to anyone who is willing to look? The primary answer is that the obviousness of all of this is belied by the commonsense categories of Arab and Muslim. As a result, the many positives are rendered virtually invisible, the few negatives are amplified, and the divide between **us** and **them** widens. We are therefore not overly optimistic that these strategies will have their intended effect. Many groups have been rehabilitated in the American mind, including Japanese Americans, Jewish Americans, and Irish Americans. At the same time, African Americans, Native Americans, and Arab Americans still maintain a place of dubious distinctions.

Future research should expand the analysis presented here in both breadth and depth. Given space restraints, we have only been able to scratch the surface of the various strategies presented. More needs to be done to examine them in greater detail, as well as examine whether there is any effect. Also, research should be done to see how these strategies have been used in other locations and periods of history to different groups. It is our belief that these strategies have been similarly employed. A longitudinal and historical analysis may demonstrate how these strategies have and have not worked, and what needs to be done to replace prejudicial with logical connections. Essentially, we are discussing how to reclaim a group's humane-ness, or their re-humanization. By increasing our understanding of this process, we are interested in not only reclaiming the humane nature of othered groups, but in the process developing the latent humane nature (or humanism) of those who are engaged in othering.

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News Headlines: Stating in Brief what is Relevant in Today's World (al-Arabiya, al-Jazeera, al-Manar, BBC World)¹

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Within the endless stream of information available on the media market, television channels make choices which are transmitted through a selection of themes constituting, for them, “the news” of the day or of the hour. This news is presented in the form of various stories organized in a more or less complex sequence, mixing sounds, voices, images, and text. These stories are themselves introduced in different ways: at intervals during the unfolding of the sequence, or at the beginning of the broadcast in the form of a list of contents recapitulating “the main headlines” of the news. In addition, throughout the news program, embedding of various “back-ups” of the stories may be observed. Sometimes the narration comments on the image; sometimes the images illustrate the narration; sometimes, text appears as the heading of the story—sometimes with an explanatory value. The narration may also serve an intertextual function, bringing in various speakers who contribute to the production of a single narrative thread through editing in the studio. All of this production of the news is carried out not only through selection of themes, images and voices, but also through their treatment. Although the news items are presented as objective accounts of actual events of the day, they represent a selection of the news items available on the market (images, reports from correspondents, dispatches) according to criteria of relevance. The choice and the layout of these relevant items, as they are organized in the practical context of the production of television news, constitute the subject of this article.

A series of themes emerges from the observation and careful description of the

lead-in to news broadcasts through the presentation of the headlines. Apart from the linking of sounds and images--and even of multiple voices and written texts--in a sequential framework, we will note the process of selection and hierarchization of relevant information in a context of strong technical and procedural constraint. Furthermore, the news selected and hierarchized becomes the object of subtle lexical categorizations. This is accomplished over the background of a stock of images shared among channels, with the consequence that the identity of the broadcasting channel is communicated through its voice, the tone of the text that it produces, and, when the camera returns to the studio, the body language of the newscaster—but rarely through the image itself.

It should be noted that from now on we situate our description starting from what might be called the natural attitude of the television viewer. We do not take into account anything except what is directly available to the man or woman who turns on the TV in search of the news, or who simply comes upon it by chance while “channel-surfing” during the time that it is on. Specifically, on the evening of December 8, 2004, without any preconceived idea of what would constitute the news menu of that day, we looked at three Arab channels, al-Arabiya, al-Jazeera and al-Manar, and one British channel, BBC World. For the sake of the analysis, we make recordings, which allow us to return as often as necessary to various moments of the television production, but we never depart from the material and what it makes accessible. It is, then, the structure of

intelligibility of the televised text just as it is presented to us upon which we focus our attention. That intelligibility is obvious; it is self-evident, given that the very goal of such texts is to be understood by those whom they address. Following Lena Jayyusi (1998), we may speak of the scenic transparency of the televisual text, by which we mean that the production of the media document does not succeed through its opacity, but, on the contrary, through its immediate accessibility for competent viewers. In other words, we put ourselves in the position of viewers catching the news and analyzing it as a text whose reception and intelligibility are formed from a certain number of possibilities both logical and accessible to understanding.

The presentation of the news of the day is the outcome of an embedded operation of the production of facts. The very concept of a “production of facts” is suggestive of the manufactured character of the activity and its product. As Searle expresses it, we are confronted here with the production of an epistemic objectivity where, by “epistemic,” we mean that which is the result of a subjective activity of the production of meaning and, by “objectivity,” we are signifying that it is a question of “news” toward which viewers orient themselves as toward any factual truths. The very fact that the truth of certain televised news broadcasts becomes the subject of intense debate demonstrates that, in the absence of contradictory proof, the objective, factual character of the raw information is taken for granted by the person watching. To be sure, the interpretation of this information is often controversial; at the very least, it causes reactions, disagreements, affiliations, and disaffiliation. However, in the great majority of cases, it is not the primary factual source of the information (its denotative level) which is called into question, but simply the way of presenting it and drawing inferences from it. In other words, it is not the question of whether such an event has occurred or not that generates controversy, but the moral and normative character of its presentation (its connotative level). If, then, the viewer accepts the objective character of the raw information

conveyed to him, he generally does not fail to take it as a view of the world to which he either subscribes or not. Since he is not a “media idiot,” he thus accepts the stories as a presentation of the news which suits him (and it is, besides, for that reason that he often chooses to follow the news broadcasts on this or that channel). It is here that the channels reach their audiences, in the expression of a world view and the affirmation that it can provide. In considering the relevance of media as it emerges from the presentation of the news headlines, we will begin by describing the general sequence of the television news broadcasts into which they are inserted. We will then concentrate on the segment of that sequence extending from the lead-in announcement of the television news up to the presentation of the first news item. Next we will describe in detail the presentation of the news headlines on four channels, three Arab and one British, paying particular attention to the operations of selection, sequencing, hierarchization, and categorization of pertinent information. In the discussion of this description, we will aim to observe how sounds, voice, images, and text are organized in a sequential framework and to analyze the question of relevance insofar as it is the result of an activity of selection and interpretation inscribed in courses of action oriented toward specific goals.

The general sequence of news broadcasts

Transcription²

- al-Arabiya:

00”

{signature image: lead-in}
{signature music: lead-in}

11”

{close-up of newscaster}
{{voice of newscaster}}

ahlan bi-kum ilâ jawlatin jadida fi al-sâ’a al-thâmina nunâqish fihâ ‘adadan min al-qadâyâ fi jawlati al-layla rutâbi’

19”

{images of news headlines; flashing number “8”}
{{voice of newscaster}}

misr tuqâyid ‘Azzâm ‘Azzâm...

56”

{signature image: lead-in; “8 al- thâmina masâ’an”}
{{signature music; lead-in}}

- 1'00
 {close-up of the newscaster; "al-Arabiya";
 "Muhannid al-Khatîb"; "8 al- thâmina masâ'an"}
 {{voice of newscaster}}
ahlan bi-kum () lam taghib qadiyyat al-jasûs...
- BBC World:
- 00"
 {signature images: lead-in; "BBC World";
 "www.bbcworld.com"}
 {{signature music: lead-in}}
- 02"
 {close-up of newscaster; "BBC World";
 "bbcnews.com"}
 {{voice of newscaster}}
**This is BBC news from BBC world I'm Alistair
 Yates the latest international headlines ()**
- 08"
 {images of news headlines; "BBC World";
 "bbcnews.com"; "headlines"}
 {{voice of newscaster}}
gunmen kill at least seventeen Iraqi...
- 23"
 {image: lead-in; "Iraq violence"; "BBC News";
 "BBC World"}
 {{signature music: lead-in}}
- 36"
 {images of the studio; close-up of newscaster ;
 "BBC World"; "bbcnews.com"; "Alistair Yates"}
 {{voice of newscaster}}
**at least twenty one people have been killed in
 attacks in Iraq US military says seventeen...**
- al-Jazeera:
- 00"
 {Signature images: lead-in}
 {{signature music: lead-in}}
- 03"
 {images: news headlines}
 {{voice of newscaster}}
'Azzâm 'Azzâm yasilu Isrâ'il ba'da...
- 26"
 {signature images: lead-in ; logo "al-Jazeera"; "al-
 akhbâr"}
 {{signature music: lead-in}}
- 36"
 {close-up of newscaster; "al-akhbâr"; "Jamâl
 Rayyân"}
 {{voice of newscaster}}
**nashratu al-akhbâr min qanâti al-Jazîrati fi Qatar ()
 'arafa wazîru al-khârijîyyati al-misrî...**
- al-Manar:
- 00"
 {signature images: lead-in; logo "al-Manar"; "al-
 akhbâr"}
 {{signature music: lead-in}}

- 14"
 {images of news headlines; logo "al-Manar"; "al-
 'anâwîn"}
 {{voice of newscaster; background music for news
 headlines}}
maktabu Sharon...
- 42"
 {close-up of newscaster; logo "al-Manar"; "al-
 akhbâr"}
 {{voice of newscaster}}
**al-salâmu 'alaykum wa ahlan bi-kum ilâ nashratin
 mufassala li-l-akhbâr**
- 47"
 {close-up of newscaster; "al-akhbâr"; "'Abbâs
 Shufayr"}
 {{voice of newscaster}}
**a'lana maktab ra'is wizarâ' al-'adû Ariel Sharon
 anna...**

The script

The scripts of the introductory segments of televised news broadcasts follow two schemes. In the first of these (al-Arabiya and BBC World), the lead-in is followed by a close-up of the newscaster which situates the program and then cuts to the presentation of the headlines before returning to the close-up of the newscaster which begins, properly speaking, the presentation of the news broadcast. In the second scheme (al-Jazeera and al-Manar), the headlines immediately follow the lead-in and it is not until the end of the headlines that we arrive at the close-up of the newscaster which situates the program and launches it into the presentation of the news.

The lead-in

The lead-in of the television news conforms to a similar pattern on each of the four channels. It consists of the juxtaposition of images of composition and synthesis--counting down, explicitly or not, the seconds separating it from the beginning of the news stories and of music evoking the mounting suspense which leads up to the broadcast itself.

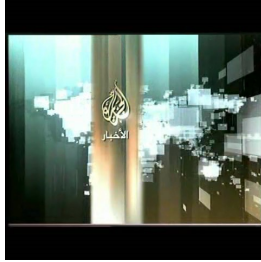
al-Arabiya



BBC World



al-Jazeera



al-Manar



We note that all of these lead-in images represent the world, either in the form of a globe or planisphere, on which the logo of the channel is superimposed. This conventional use of a representation of the world unambiguously announces the imminence of the television news. It possibly communicates, besides, the intention of a global and complete coverage of news as the sum of facts whose objectivity is as well-established as that of the earth on which they are produced. It is notable that only lead-in on al-Jazeera singles out one part of the world (the Arab world and its African extension).

Presentation

The presentation of the program and its newscaster demands particular attention. Similarly to the lead-in, the presentation is largely standardized. The symbols, the flow of images and their organization, the newscaster's manner of speaking and moving, and the context of the studio are elements of presentation common to all the channels. However, variations on this theme may be observed. Apart from the fact that the presentation comes in at different junctures according to the channel, it is possible to discern various non-neutral details affirming a televisual identity. Such details include the décor of the studio where the newscaster is located, his physical appearance and gestures, as well as the choice of words with which he addresses the viewer.

- al-Arabiya:

On al-Arabiya, as we have seen, the news headlines appear after the lead-in and the newscaster's beginning to speak. In fact, once the visual lead-in is over and in the continuation of the musical lead-in, the camera zooms in, beginning with a shot of the entire studio (1-2) and ending with a close-up of the newscaster (4-5). He, who was absorbed in reading the documents placed in front of him (3), then looks at the camera and begins to speak (4). The modernized aesthetic of the studio (1-2) demands emphasis because, evidently, it is that which justifies the camera work which moves from the context of the studio to the journalist working in this context. This gives the impression of a complex activity at whose center one finds the newscaster, who addresses himself to the public with a double hook—that of the glance, which passes from the documents placed on the desk (3) to the viewer situated behind the screen (4), and that of beginning to speak, which breaks into the musical lead-in.

1.



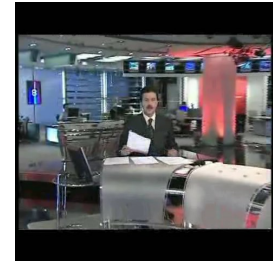
2.



3.



4.



5.

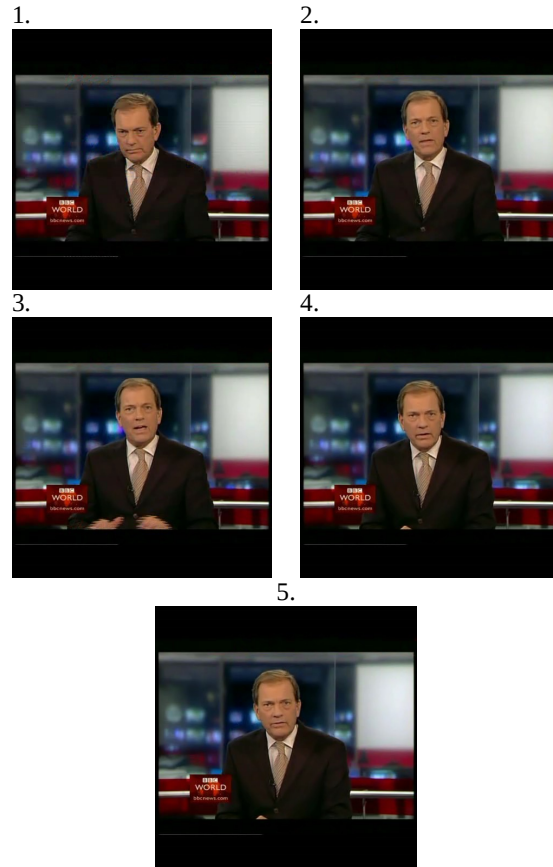


The newscaster, in suit and tie, proceeds in two stages. First of all, he produces a formula of welcome (“ahlan bi-kum ilâ jawlatin jadîda fî al-sâ’a al-thâmina” - “we welcome you to the latest edition of the Eight o’clock. news”) which permits him to introduce the program as being, on the one hand, dedicated to guests that are surrounded with kindness (“welcome you”) and, on the other, that day’s installment of a continuing series (“latest edition of the 8 o’clock news”). Thus he explicitly inscribes the news broadcast in continuity, that of the channel and of its programs, and in fidelity, that of an audience familiar with both. The nature of the activity, at once professional and routine, is suggested by the very organization of the audiovisual sequence—with a newscaster engaged in the normal course of his work and whose appearance is taken for granted by the public. Without interruption, in a second segment, the newscaster introduces the sequence of news headlines, repeating a part of his preceding words (“fî jawlati al-layla” - “in the evening edition”), which is a practical means of conveying the transitional function of his words and opening the presentation of the menu (“nutâbi” - “we will follow”). At this moment, a brief pause in his narration, a return to his glance at the documents placed in front of him (5) and, following, a passage to images illustrating the main headlines, with the number eight flashing in the background, has an effect of punctuation similar to that of the colon in written text—namely, the opening of an enumerative list.

- BBC World

On BBC World, the news headlines also follow an introduction by the newscaster. After the visual lead-in, the camera goes immediately to a close-up of the newscaster. He is wearing a suit and tie. His glance passes from an object which he appears to be following attentively (since his glance travels to the front, obliquely to the right side and down, it is very likely a screen) to the camera. This attitude produces an impression of seriousness, precision and professionalism. The hook is threefold: first, through the glance, then through movement, and finally through speech. To this end, the newscaster

simultaneously looks at the camera, moves his hands closer to each other, joins them, and begins to speak.



Verbally, he situates the broadcast and identifies it as a broadcast of the channel (“This is BBC news from BBC world”. In a second segment, he introduces himself (“I’m Alistair Yates”). We should note that this is the only one of the four channels where the journalist introduces himself, which is resonant of the direct Anglo-Saxon style that one encounters in telephone communications. In a third segment, without interruption, the newscaster introduces the presentation of the news headlines (“the latest international headlines”). The close-up of the newscaster is then interrupted by images illustrating these headlines, with a pause of a half second marking the transition and having an effect of punctuation.

- al-Jazeera

As we have stated, on al-Jazeera as on al-Manar the introductory sequence follows the presentation of the main headlines. In a

dissolve from the lead-in which effects a transition (1) the camera shows the newscaster, in suit and tie, in close-up. His glance is directed towards some documents on the desk which he consults, pen in hand (1-2). Here, once again, we note this introductory technique which consists of showing the newscaster in the act of “taking up his duties,” that is to say, passing from a preparatory stage (1-2) to the stage of presentation (3-4). After having introduced the broadcast (3), which he does by means of movement as well, in bringing his hands close together and joining them (3-4), the newscaster returns to his papers and breaks off briefly (5) thus marking the transition to the treatment of the first news story.



Launching directly into the news stories with the main headlines allows elimination of one step of the transition. That is why, between the presentation of the headlines and the beginning of the detailed treatment of the news, the newscaster limits himself to situating the broadcast, the broadcaster, and the originating place of the broadcast

(“nashratu al-akhbâr min qanâti al-Jazeera fi Qatar” - “edition of the news of the channel al-Jazeera in Qatar”). Besides, a banner appears at the bottom of the screen (5) upon which appear the words “al-akhbâr” - “the news” and Jamâl Rayyân (the name of the newscaster). As the transition from the introduction to the treatment of the first news story does not involve a change of framing, the pause marked by the newscaster in his narration and the orientation of his glance, back and forth between the camera and the papers spread out on his desk, function as punctuation. This time, however, it does not have the effect of a colon introducing an enumerative list, but of a mark at the line indicating the beginning of a new paragraph.

- al-Manar

After the presentation of the headlines, the newscaster on al-Manar appears immediately in a dissolve, on a set that situates him at his desk (1). At the moment that he is picked up by the camera, he is consulting a screen situated to his left. He remains behind his desk, pen in hand, with documents spread out in front of him (1-2). The hook is double, through his beginning to speak and through the change of orientation of his glance, which passes from his screen to the camera (3). The transition from the introduction to the treatment of the first news story is marked by a slight pause in its narration at the same time as a change of frame, slightly faded, which accentuates the zoom on the newscaster (4-5). This transition is prefaced by a slight movement of the journalist, who, after having looked at a camera for a first frame, begins to orient himself toward a second camera just before the change of view (4). We should note that this journalist is the only one in the group of newscasters of the four channels who does not wear a tie, even though he does wear a jacket, and who sports a beard cut very short (5). For the competent viewer, this is not insignificant and immediately signals a modulation of ideological register.



At the end of the presentation of the headlines, the journalist introduces the program with a twofold greeting, one properly Islamic (“al-salâmu ‘alaykum” - “peace be with you”; al-Manar is the only one of the four channels to use a formula with religious connotations); the other more general (“ahlan bi-kum” - “welcome”), the latter permitting the situating of the broadcast (“ilâ nashratin mufasssala li-l-akhbâr” - “for a detailed reporting of the news”). At the moment of beginning the narration of the first of these news items, two phrases are added, one confirming the purpose of the journalist (“al-akhbâr” - “the news”), the other introducing the latter (“Abbâs Shufayr”). Identification of the channel is continuous through the superimposition of the channel’s logo on the upper right of the screen.

The banner headlines of the news

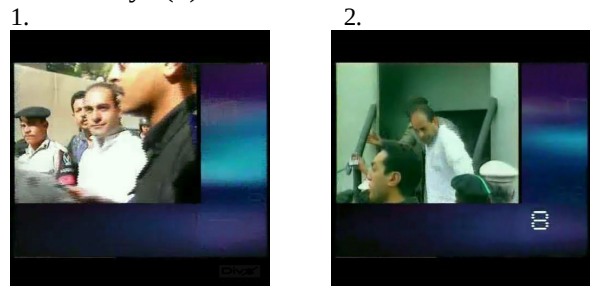
The banner headlines are placed at the forefront of the presentation of the news as a selection of that which, in the entire spectrum of the day’s news, occupies a particular place and, with this headline, merits special

attention. They are also story headings announced in a preliminary summary. They constitute, then, a selection of relevant news items which are showcased, and arranged sequentially, hierarchically, and substantively within the lexical and categorical systems.

Al-Arabiya

The headline news on the channel al-Arabiya comprises four items. The first concerns the liberation of Azzam Azzam, the second concerns the violence in Iraq, the third, the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and the fourth deals with the question of street children in Sudan. The positioning of each title is inscribed in a hierarchy of importance. Thus the freeing of Azzam constitutes the principal news of the day and is to be found at the head of the list. The violence in Iraq, in the context of the current electoral process, appears in the second position, because, at a general level (the violence in Iraq), its recurring nature diminishes its relevance from the point of view of uniqueness (today’s violence in Iraq). In the same way, the recurring nature of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations justifies their relegation to third place in the ranking of headlines. The newsworthiness of the day’s updates is not sufficient to transcend the general redundancy of the theme of the negotiations. Finally, the story on the Sudanese street children is presented as a change of pace from the first three, having more of the character of a documentary than that of news. We note that all four headlines concern the Arab world. They form a progressive diminution of intensity, passing from the news of the day (breaking news) to acts of daily violence, then to an ongoing political negotiation and, finally, to the reporting of a societal problem.

- al-Arabiya (1):



3.



{3 views: 'Azzam + police officers; leaving prison; entering the courtroom}

{{voice of the newscaster}}

Misr tuqâyid 'Azzâm 'Azzâm bi-sittati min talabâtihâ kânû mu'taqalîn fî Isrâ'îl fa'l al-safqati baqiyya

//Egypt exchanges 'Azzam 'Azzam for six of its students who have been imprisoned in Israel. The transaction follows live//

This first headline, which represents *the* news of the day, appears in the form of a double personalization--pictorial (the face of Azzam) and nominal (the name of Azzam)--of the news story's protagonist. The association of a face and a name, without any other information about the identity of the person, gives one to understand that what he is and who he is emerges from background evidence. The fact that Azzam is shown flanked by police officers (1), leaving prison (2), entering a courtroom (3), coherently illustrates the narration which speaks of the exchange of Azzam for the students imprisoned in Israel. The pictorial focus on Azzam suggests that this exchange is asymmetrical in the sense that Azzam is the significant participant in the transaction for which the students are only a pretext, all confirmed by narration that speaks of an agreement whose details are yet to be revealed. The news appears to be firsthand, and seems to be covered live, judging by the images suggesting a release in progress (1, 2), thus projecting an impression of immediacy and conformity of the image to the narration—all of which has the effect of authenticating the story. At the same time, the third shot of the main headline connects Azzam and the occasion of his release to the historic moment of his conviction (the image corresponds to the entry of Azzam into the interior of the courtroom), thus confirming his status as a prisoner who is eligible for an exchange and a person likely to justify a political transaction of the highest level, all

the while underscoring that the channel's reporting of the story is documented and therefore credible. Finally, we underscore the elliptical organization of this headline, first in the narration (since it does not directly state who Azzam is) and in the following image, since it only illustrates part of the narration. This is no doubt because of the structure of headlines, which must serve two functions: saying something new and intelligible in the most concise manner possible, and arousing sufficient interest on the part of the viewer to induce him to continue following the stories in order to know more about them.

- al-Arabiya (2):

1.



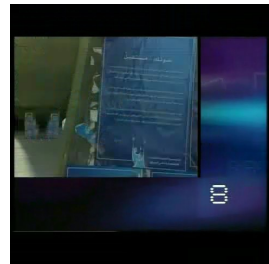
3.



2.



4.



{4 views: armed men posing in front of photographers; office of registration; electoral signs}

{{voice of the newscaster}}

tahdîrâtun min harbin ahliyya wa 'unfin mutazâ mutâzâyid fî hâl ijra'at al-intikhâbat al-'irâqiyya fî maw'idihâ

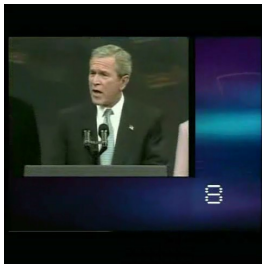
//Placed on guard against a civil war and spillover violence in the context of the holding of Iraqi elections on the scheduled date//

The second headline suggests a parallel between armed violence and the Iraqi elections. A pictorial representation corresponds to each of these narrative elements, of armed men posing for the cameras, on the one hand (1), and of electoral signs, on the other (2, 3, 4). The correspondence between narration and images is literal, inasmuch as the juxtaposition of two elements of the story contributes to the creation of a contrasting narrative pair opposing and associating, within the same

context, the permanence of the violence and the electoral process. The incongruity thus created is not without an inferential aspect (how could one imagine that the electoral process could succeed in the conditions prevailing at the time the information is being reported?). It is noteworthy, as well, that nothing clearly indicates the association of the armed militants and the Iraqi elections, which shows that the illustrative and semantic correspondence of the images with the narration does not necessarily imply a factual correspondence of these same images and the reported information. Here the viewer finds himself forced into a reading through the association of ideas, even though the filmed event may be fictive, erroneous or simulated (Bjelic, 1999).

- al-Arabiya (3):

1.



2.



{2 shots: Bush at a press conference; Powell-Abbas handshake}

{{voice of the newscaster}}

Washington tuhaddid silsila min al-ijrâ'ât li-tanfîdh ta'ahhudi Bush bi-l-'amali 'alâ qiyâmi dawlatin filastîniyya

//Washington outlines a series of measures to carry out Bush's promise to work for the founding of a Palestinian state//

In this third news headline on al-Arabiya, the images illustrate the narration in a manner both personalized and literal. The United States, verbally invoked through mention of their capital and pictorially through the person of their president, is outlining measures, pictorially invoked by the meeting of Secretary of State Powell with Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas, to carry out a promise of President Bush, represented pictorially through his person and verbally by his name, to support the creation of a Palestinian State, invoked pictorially by the most important person in the political hierarchy following the death of Yasser Arafat. Once again it is not possible to determine if the images

correspond factually to the narration (which concerns a speech in which Bush made this promise), since they illustrate it by association of ideas. It is, to a certain extent, their familiar aspect (the names and the faces, the places and institutions, the persons and the activities) which permits them to converge in the production of an intelligible news story. This relies, however, on background knowledge by the minimally competent viewer of historically difficult relations between the United States and the Palestinian Authority. It emerges, then, from a contrast between the formerly prevailing situation (tensions between the United States and Palestine) and the new situation (a Powell-Abbas handshake, which leads one to think that there is a will for agreement and cooperation), which represents a break with the past and—for this very reason—constitutes, strictly speaking, “news”.

- al-Arabiya (4):

1.



2.



3.



{3 shots: a group of children; gathered together; soliciting a driver}

{{voice of the newscaster}}

wa ba'da nuzûh ayyâm jarrâ al-jaffâfi wa-l-harb al-alâf min al-atfâl al-sudâniyyîn yaftarishûn al-arda wa-l-samâ' fi shawâri' al-bilâd

//And after a journey of many days to flee the drought and the war, thousands of Sudanese children wander aimlessly in the streets of the city//

The fourth and final headline is clearly set off from the previous ones. It does not relate, strictly speaking, to a news story, but rather to a documentary account of a current, ongoing

phenomenon. The first part of the narration about this headline story has no accompanying image, no pictorial illustration to support the words that speak of flight, drought, and war. This headline is constructed as a mystery, in that we do not know of whom or of what place the narrator is speaking—except we do know that the images represent black children, which seems to suggest the African continent. In the middle of the narration “Sudanese children” are mentioned, the narration thus converging with the images, producing an effect of agreement and resolving the mystery. From this point on, the images illustrate the words, whether literally (children, aimlessness, and wandering), or connotatively (association of place, the Sudan, and a supposed phenotype, the Sudanese). We should add that, if the first part of the narration is elliptical (to what drought, what war, what exodus does it refer?), it does not create any disjunction because it rests upon shared background knowledge (Sudan is a country of drought, wars, and a people in exodus).

Each of the four news headlines on al-Arabiya is the object of intense work of categorization. This work relies upon a layer of background knowledge possessed by every normally competent viewer who watches the news on this channel. Thus, the countries and places (Egypt, Israel, Iraq, Washington, Palestine, Sudan), the proper names (Azzam, Bush, but also Powell and Abbas), the events of the news (the trial of Azzam, war in Iraq, peace process), the societal phenomena (drought and war) can be evoked without any need to define, situate, explain, or interpret. If the viewer is ever unable to understand what he is watching, it is his own incompetence which is responsible—not the opacity of the news story conveyed by the channel. Every production of news headlines, because it must be very concise and rapid, functions by association of words and images within a framework that is implicit but taken as obvious. The background of shared knowledge is put into play through the mobilization of categorical systems (political agreement, settling of conflicts, peace process, human misery) with which individuals are associated (Azzam/students,

militia /voters, Powell/Abbas), often organized into pairs, just like certain activities (negotiating, exchanging, fighting, voting, carrying out, meeting, shaking hands, fleeing, wandering) and their implications (differences tend to be settled by means of negotiation and compromise, armed men are generally opposed to any electoral process, a superpower is involved in the settling of conflicts, catastrophes cause misery). The evocation of a categorical system, the narrative or pictorial designation of a pair or an activity which is associated with it, activates a mechanism of involvement through which the elements of the categorical system, the other part of the pair, the categorical system itself, and its components are naturally drawn into the description of the event, even though they may very well not have been explicitly mentioned. Thus the face of Azzam suggests the idea of being convicted for espionage and that this conviction justifies the signing of a political agreement, and even the exchange of prisoners. In the same way, the evocation of violence suggests the idea of civil war, just as evoking the elections suggests civil peace. The juxtaposition of the two creates a contrast from which we may infer the risk of a setback. Or again, mentioning Bush and Washington in relation to the creation of a Palestinian State suggests the United States in the role of intermediary, even though controversial, in the peace process, and the resolution of the stalemate which was justifying, in their view, not becoming involved. Let us add that a whole system of description and selection of vocabulary plays a part in this categorical mechanism. Exchanging prisoners is not equivalent to releasing a prisoner; mentioning someone by name (Azzam, Bush) is not equivalent to making him bear the weight of moral and legal condemnation (a spy) or to speaking of a function (President, Chief Executive); choosing an occupation (that of students) is not equivalent to choosing another (that of terrorists); describing a situation of civil war does not amount to describing the actions of terrorists. The choice of descriptors is directly consistent with the constitution of the categorical systems and, therefore, with the

categories, their paired elements, the activities linked to them, the rights and duties attaching to their members, as well as the inferences which may be made on this basis. All of this, simply stated, amounts to the fact that the channel is going to deal with the following themes in its news program: the negotiations that surround the extradition of the spy Azzam to Israel; the impossibility of successfully carrying out fair and transparent elections in Iraq in the context of occupation and civil war; the change of the United States' position with regard to Palestine after the death of Arafat; and the miserable existence of the Sudanese children who are the chief victims of the war and the drought.

BBC World

The main headlines on BBC World feature three items. The first concerns Iraq, the second, the exchange of prisoners between Egypt and Israel and the third, an initiative for promoting peace in Thailand. If we compare this sequence with that of al-Arabiya, we immediately notice an inversion of the ranking of headlines, with Iraq moving to the top and the exchange of prisoners to second. As for the third headline, which the BBC alone elevates to this position, it represents a change of register from the two others and functions sequentially as a sort of respite and whiff of optimism in the news within the somber group. The release of Azzam is deemed less important than the recurring violence in Iraq, and the introduction of an upbeat news item is deemed more important than the developments in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In other words, the breaking news is not sufficiently important, in the eyes of those responsible for the channel's news broadcast, to supersede the news stories reporting on violence from the news hotspot of the moment.

- BBC World (1):

1.



{1shot:truck removing corpses; text: Iraq violence/17 civilians killed}

{{voice of the newscaster}}

gunmen kill at least seventeen Iraqi civilians working for the Americans in Tikrit

In this first headline, we observe a direct correspondence between the narration, which speaks of civilians killed, the image, which shows in a single shot the removal of bodies on a truck, and the text. (The BBC is the only channel of those analyzed here to accompany its news headlines with a superimposed text). However, the image is poor, qualitatively (it is not possible to determine clearly what it is documenting) as well as semantically (nothing about the identity of the victims can be deduced from it, and particularly about the reference to "civilians working for the Americans"). We note that, even though the image illustrates the narration by association of ideas (without which the viewer does not have any means of knowing if it even corresponds to the reported event), the text, on its part, serves to paraphrase the narration and summarize it briefly. Two aspects of this headline need to be emphasized. The first is the role of numbers, which might be called the practical grammar of numbers. When the narration speaks of "at least 17 civilians" and the text reports "17 civilians," the image shows us several bodies. This is a sort of practical grammar of expression available to analysis when the preciseness of the text makes it difficult to fall back on generalities. In such a case, the verbal narration provides the means of using a quantitative formula of the type "at least," which indicates a large number and admits the possibility of a heavier toll, and the image connotes a large number, indicating the materiality without being exact. This brings us to the equally grammatical role of the image in this headline. In this case, the image of the bodies clearly lends authenticity

to the story, even though nothing attests to an exact correlation between the filmed event and the narration.

- BBC World (2):

1.



{1shot: convoy; text: prisoner exchange/spy for student conspirators}

{{voice of the newscaster}}

Jerusalem and Cairo exchange prisoners, one of them sentenced as an Israeli spy

The second BBC headline is presented similarly to the first. A single shot, rather poor and not very explicit, which only makes sense as support to the narration (the image of the convoy is not in itself significant), although it is not problematic since it backs up this narration (the convoy of police vehicles clearly must be the one accompanying the exchange of prisoners) with a superimposed text which summarizes (a prisoner “convicted as a spy” becomes “a spy”) but also, this time, amplifies the narration (“prisoners” becoming, apart from the “spy”, “student conspirators”).

- BBC World (3):

1.



{2 shots: planes;release; text: Thailand/birds of peace}

{{voice of the newscaster}}

and Thailand drops millions of paper birds in the Muslim South as a message of peace

This third news headline acquires emphasis through its relation to the two previous ones. If it is really a news story (and not essentially a documentary as in the case of the fourth

headline on al-Arabiya), it is difficult to see why it ranks as a major headline; it seems more to fit the category of a miscellaneous news item. Possibly it has been chosen precisely because of its anecdotal character, which allows it to function as a diversion and change of pace in a context that is otherwise very somber. We note that the images are the literal illustration of the narration (they could not be understood independently of it) and at the same time exclude any simulation (how could a deluge of millions of paper birds be anything but unique?). The superimposed text, for its part, simply summarizes the narration without any elaboration.

If we turn our attention to the work of categorization evident in the presentation of the news headlines on the BBC World, we notice first of all the extent to which it relies on background knowledge (Iraq, Americans, Tikrit, Jerusalem, Cairo, Thailand, Muslim South), to the exclusion of any personalization. One might well ask whether this presumption of background knowledge does not sometimes exceed the viewer’s actual competence (for example, not everyone could be expected to know that a Muslim rebellion is in progress in the South of Thailand). In this particular instance, the last headline acquires its meaning within a purely categorical system, opposing Thailand to Muslims (even though it deals with the Muslim South of Thailand) and opposing Muslims to peace (since Thailand needs to convey a message of peace to the Muslims of the South). The categorical systems in play are the “armed conflicts,” the “exchange of prisoners” and the “message of peace”, and each one in turn leads to (or has itself been preceded by) a series of membership categories organized in pairs (armed men/civilians, armed resistance/conspirators, Egypt/Israel, prisoners/prisoners, Thailand/Muslim South, Buddhism/Islam). Various activities are linked to these categories (armed men kill, civilians work and/or are victims, spying can lead to a prison sentence, prisoners are released or exchanged, neighboring countries maintain relations, Buddhists promote non-violence, Muslims resist with arms), with the rights, duties and diverse

consequences they entail: (working for the Americans is a cause of death, spying for the Israelis is a cause of imprisonment, being Muslim is a source of violence, etc.). Here, as elsewhere, we underscore the importance of word choice: “working for the Americans” is not “collaborating with the Americans,” “to kill” is not “to execute,” “to convict” is not “to wrongly accuse of a crime”. From this point of view, the BBC shows a preference for terms of a more neutral tone.

Al-Jazeera

The sequence of news headlines on al-Jazeera follows the same model as on al-Arabiya. In its exclusive focus on the Arab world, the news concerning Azzam is in the forefront, followed by violence in Iraq, and, in the third place, Fischer’s declaration on the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. The “breaking news” thus moves to the head of the list, preceding the recurring violence and the re-opening of a political process. There is no respite at the end, as on the BBC, to make the atmosphere less tense or divert the viewer.

- al-Jazeera (1):

1.



{1 shot: Azzam Azzam}

{{voice of the newscaster}}

‘Azzâm ‘Azzâm yâsilu Isrâ’îl ba‘da ifrâji al-Qâhirati ‘anhu muqâbila sittati talabatin masrî

//Azzam Azzam arrives in Israel after having been released by Cairo in exchange for six Egyptian students//

After the lead-in, the news stories on al-Jazeera begin immediately with the image of Azzam speaking with journalists from a car in which he is seated next to a person who seems to have a kind attitude toward him, giving the impression that he is already in Israel and no longer in Egypt. To certain extent, the narration confirms this, speaking of the arrival of Azzam in Israel. Images and narration are personalized in the extreme, since it is the

face and name of Azzam which serve as entry point to the statement of the headlines, in such a way that one is able to affirm that the pictorial and narrative presentations mutually cohere (one may infer from the mention of the name the face of the person and the inverse). Heard in the background, the voice of Azzam adds to this effect of personalization and immediacy, even though at this stage it is not possible to understand what he is saying. As on the other channels, the second party to the exchange, namely the Egyptian students, is not the subject of any pictorial documentation.

- al-Jazeera (2):

1.



{shot: soldier uncovering corpses}

{{voice of the newscaster}}

maqtalu ‘ashrîna ‘Irâqiyyan wa ‘arba‘ati junûdin amîrikiyyîn fi ‘amali ‘unfin fi al-‘Irâq

//Murder of twenty Iraqis and four American soldiers in an armed operation in Iraq//

The shot of this second headline on al-Jazeera relates directly to the narration, without which it would not be possible to determine that it definitely corresponds to the reported event (aside from the fact that the soldier discovering the bodies wears an American uniform which suggests the occupation of Iraq). In fact, the image covers the result of the action (the bodies) while the narration deals more with the action itself (the attack). The image is illustrative and literal, but partial, since it documents neither the number of victims nor their identity. As on the BBC, one observes the deployment of a practical grammar of numbers, with the difference that the narration here gives an exact toll, while the image suggests, as on the other channel, a large number. We note, as well, the indirectly illustrative character of the uniform which not only leads one to think of Iraq, but also establishes a relation with the death of American soldiers.

- al-Jazeera (3):

1.



{shot: Fischer's press conference}

{{voice of the newscaster

yu'akkidu fī Rāmallāh anna al-fursata al-âna târîkhiyyatun li-ihyâ'i 'amaliyyati al-salâm

//Fischer confirms at Ramallah today the historic occasion of the reopening of the peace process

The third headline on al-Jazeera, equally sober, presents the image of a press conference held jointly by Joschka Fischer and Mahmoud Abbas to illustrate in a very explicit way the declaration of the German Foreign Minister concerning the reopening of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The information is personalized through mention of Fischer's name and the place of the declaration, as well as the image of Fischer, of Abbas, and, on a poster in the background, Arafat. We note how the narration and the image are mutually supportive, the identification of a specific place (Ramallah, official capital of the Palestinian Authority in the narration) occurring conjointly with that of the official representatives (Abbas and Arafat for the Palestinian people) in the image.

On al-Jazeera, as on the other channels, the work of categorization is fundamental. The whole economy of news headlines rests upon the ability to rely on the denotative and the connotative to convey, in as few words and images as possible, what has been selected as the significant news of the day. This is the reason that background knowledge is so much relied upon. The editing of television news must bet that names of people, names of places (Israel, Cairo, Egypt, Iraq, Ramallah) or geopolitical situations (Israeli-Egyptian relations, the war in Iraq, the peace process) form part of the knowledge shared by those who watch the news, so that there is no need to explain and define everything. Thus the

invocation of a word, a name, or an expression is enough to make the statement of a new fact intelligible. Beyond the presentation of a new fact, a whole series of ramifications is put into play through the single deployment of a categorical mechanism, whether it is a categorical system (exchange of prisoners, civil war, peace process), relational pairs (Egypt-Israel, prisoners-prisoners, murder-victim, Palestine-Israel), category-linked activities (a spy is extradited, political prisoners are exchanged, to kill or be killed in a civil war, to make declarations as Foreign Minister), category-linked obligations (a soldier deals with life and death, a minister negotiates) or of the choice of lexical descriptives (Azzam/spy, students/terrorists, to kill/to execute, violent actions/terrorism, American soldiers/ forces of occupation, Fischer/German Minister, opportunity/constraint, peace process/normalization).

Al-Manar

While devoting its main headlines to the Arab world alone, al-Manar presents a sequence slightly different from that of its two Arab sister-channels. Namely, the exchange of Azzam is the actual headline news, with Palestine the subject of the second headline and Iraq appearing only in the third position. Furthermore we observe a tendency to use headlines that combine two news stories in one. The release of Azzam is also the announcement of increased cooperation between Egypt and Israel; the declarations regarding the peace process are counterbalanced by Hamas' refusal of the truce; the violence in Iraq is presented along with the atrocities of the American forces. The news headlines become, in a way, general themes subdivided into different items.

- al-Manar (1):

1.



{1 shot: escort}

{{voice of the newscaster}}

***maktabu Sharon yatahaddath ‘ani ittifâqin ma’a Mubarak
‘alâ mazîdin min al-ta‘âwun ba’da ‘amaliyyati itlâq Mîs
‘alâ al-jâsûs al-isrâ’îlî ‘Azzâm ‘Azzâm***

//The Sharon cabinet speaks of an agreement with Mubarak to increase cooperation after the agreement which led to the release of Israeli spy Azzam Azzam//

The image in the single shot of this first headline does not make sense until the end of the statement concerning it. Even though it is a literal illustration, this image is poor, above all when it is put into perspective with the narration (see below). It is notable that this image is identical to the image on the BBC that served to illustrate the same story. This suggests that the iconography used by the channels is not the property of each one, but rather has been acquired from a common source that markets television images.

- al-Manar (2):

1.



2.



3.



4.



{4 shots: Moratinos and Mubarak; Fischer (press conference); Zahar (press conference)}

{{voice of the newscaster}}

***Moratinos wa Fischer yad‘awâni li-l-istifâda min al-fursa
li-ihyâ’ ‘amaliyyati al-taswiya wa Hamâs tarfudu ayy hadîth
‘an al-hudna***

//Moratinos and Fischer call for the Hamas leadership to take advantage of the opportunity to reopen the peace process and Hamas refuses to discuss a ceasefire// in the context of the holding of Iraqi elections on the scheduled date//

After the relative visual poverty of the preceding headline, this one appears rich, even though the images are semantically poor in the absence of the narration they support. We note the extreme personalization of the story, which speaks of Moratinos and Fischer and shows them, and speaks also of a political movement (Hamas), accompanying this statement with the image of one of its leaders (al-Zahar). The image is thus the literal support of the narration, in a relation of strict correspondence between a proper name and its representation. We should emphasize, besides, the narrative duality of this headline; the story concerns both the peace process and the refusal to discuss a ceasefire, without the two things being directly linked to each other. It is the headline itself, by opposing the European politicians to Hamas, which constructs the unity of the story through contrast. We should note that al-Manar is the only one of the four channels to mention Hamas. Aside from this, we also underscore that among the microphones extended toward al-Zahar, the one bearing the logo of al-Manar figures prominently, giving the impression that the importance given to this second part of the story grows out of a deliberate and engaged choice on the part of the channel.

- al-Manar (3):

1.



2.



3.



{3 shots: corpses; mosque;ransacked place}
 {{voice of the newscaster}}

***aktharu min ‘ashrîn ‘Irâqiyyan qada’û fî hajâmâtin
 mutafarriqa wa quwâtu al-ihlâl ta’taqil mandûban li-l-
 tansîq al-intikhâbî li-l-marja’ al-Sistânî***

//More than 20 Iraqis have fallen in various skirmishes and the occupation forces imprison the election coordinator of marja al-Sistani//

The third headline on al-Manar likewise shows a double structure. It deals with both the Iraqi victims of the conflict and the arrest of a Shiite dignitary by the American forces. This structure is not contrastive, however, but simply cumulative; one story is simply added to another concerning the same country. If the image is illustrative and literal for the first part of the headline (the bodies of the Iraqi victims), it is allusive and connotative for the second. The viewer is expected to find, in the image of the mosque, the representation of the place of a Shiite cult, which, in its turn, alludes to the narration which speaks of the arrest of a dignitary of whom one may infer, by the reference which has been made to Sistani and to his religious title of *marja’*, that the arrestee himself is Shiite. The third shot is, at the stage of news headlines, even more difficult to read. It represents a ransacked site, which one may interpret as a sort of deserted battlefield, the place of the arrest of this deputy of Sistani. This example allows us to underscore the inferential power of images, the wrecked place suggesting violence (that of the “forces of occupation”) against religious spaces (the mosque) and religious figures (“marja’ al-Sistani”). As in the corresponding headline on the BBC, we should note the deployment of the practical grammar of numbers, the image suggesting a large number, but not a precise one, and the narration supplying an approximate, open-ended figure (“more than 20”).

The work of the categories is even more important on al-Manar than elsewhere. It relies upon background knowledge permitting the mention of names, titles and events without further explanation (Sharon, Mubarak, Moratinos, Fischer, Hamas, Sistani, *marja’*). It is based as well on categorical systems (cooperation, war and peace, army of occupation), on relational pairs (Sharon-Mubarak, European Union-Hamas, forces of

occupation-Iraqi citizens) and activities linked to the categories (negotiation under the table, supporting or opposing normalization, being a victim of the occupation). Still more, it rests upon a powerful lexical and semantic system. Each name carries with it a certain number of implications. The mere mention of Sharon invokes the Zionist enemy; of Mubarak, the traitor to the Arab cause; of Azzam, the spy in the pay of Israel; of Moratinos and Fischer, encouraging an unjust normalization; of Hamas, the legitimate resistance to the occupation; and of Iraqis, the victims of the American forces. The choice of descriptive terms operates in the same way. It is not neutral to speak of Sharon and not the Israeli Prime Minister, of Mubarak and not the Egyptian President, of a spy and not a person sentenced on the basis of his alleged spying, of Moratinos and Fischer and not Foreign Ministers, of Hamas and not an activist Palestinian movement, of combat and not terrorist acts, of forces of occupation and not Americans, of *marja’* al-Sistani and not just Sistani.

The production of relevance on television

It would now be appropriate to enumerate some of the salient qualities specific to the type of televisual production that news headlines are and to look at them analytically. More specifically, we will concentrate on the function of punctuation, the body, and the voice in capturing the attention of the viewer, and the role of image and text as support of the narration. In addition, we will consider televisual relevance as the actual product of the semantic manufacture of objectivity.

The body, the voice, and the image as support of the narration

The attention of the viewer is not in itself guaranteed and for this reason it is important to imbue the televisual sequence with a rhythm that captures, orients, and holds the viewer’s interest. With that in mind, the movements, sounds and images are arranged in the context of an editorial system that is complex and yet unobtrusive (so familiar has it become today) and transparent (it is its immediate intelligibility that justifies it).

The lead-in is the first element put into play to capture the viewer's attention. It constitutes a break from the previous program and announces the program that is to come. Its style makes that announcement easy to understand. The countdown of the seconds separating the beginning of the new broadcast and the image of the world, in the form of a globe or a stylized map, belong to the globally conventional repertoire of introductory sequences to television news programs. The news headlines constitute the second element, whether they appear before or after the introductory appearance of the newscaster. We note that it is actually because the lead-in is understood in its role of announcement that the headlines may be inserted before that introductory appearance. The format "television news" having been announced, the grammatical function of these headlines (their relational position in the general phrasing) becomes clear and their position at the beginning increases their ability to capture immediately the attention of the viewers.

Movement and intonation form a second element in the capturing and holding of attention. They perform actual work of editing the narration by cataloguing and punctuating it. The close-up of the newscaster focuses the program directly on the presentation. To mark the transition, the newscaster reorients his body and his glance toward the viewer, drawing him in and inviting him to turn his attention to the program. He folds his hands, thus communicating his "taking up his function" and his transition from the work of gathering together his journalistic resources to the work of synthesized presentation. After reorientation of his body and his glance, his voice comes in portentously. Without hesitation, without preliminary, he launches directly into speech. He proceeds to what is called the "hook." Inversely, the newscaster accomplishes his work of introduction while turning away from the camera, indicating the beginning of a new activity, which leads the viewer to expect a transition from the introductory sequence to a thematic sequence. Through movement, tone, and rhythm, the newscaster punctuates the whole of the sequence. On the BBC, for example, a simple

silence of a half second marks a transition and produces the effect of punctuation. In the case of the newscaster on al-Arabiya, the mounting tone leading to a pause, while reorienting his glance and separating his hands, signals the opening of an enumerative list (compared above to the use of the colon in written text). In the case of al-Jazeera, the pause in the narration and the orientation of the glance, going back and forth between the camera and the papers spread out on the newscaster's desk, function like the transition to a new paragraph. Likewise on al-Manar, a slight pause in the narration, the reorientation of the journalist towards another camera and his subsequent change of position, punctuate the transition to the treatment of the first news story.

Along with movements and positions of the body and the intonations and inflections of the voice, the image plays a part as support to the narration. First and foremost, we have been able to observe the recurring nature of the images, most of which seem to come from a sort of common source accessible to the television market. More importantly, we notice that the images function in an essentially literal manner, associating the figure of a person with the mention of his name or the view of bodies with the evocation of acts of violence, or by simple association of ideas, of armed and masked men personifying the civil war or a mosque symbolizing an important figure of Shiite Islam.

Relevance and objectivity

If, then, sound, voice, images and text are joined in a sequential and intertextual framework in order to produce the news, it is generally the case that preeminence is given to the verbal narration.³ The image is found to be confined to the role of paraphrase and commentary on the narration, and the written text to the role of summarizing or complementing it. This also brings up the question of the role of the image, apart from its aesthetic and entertaining aspect (certainly not negligible). The technically ancillary status of the image in no way detracts from the fact that it plays a fundamental role in the

news, which is that of confirmation and accreditation of the stories related by the narration. As we stated in our introduction, the presentation of the news of the day is an artifact, but an artifact epistemically conceived as objective. It is the image which, above all, contributes to the production of this objectivity. There is a fundamental perceptual difference between hearsay and eyewitness, namely that the first is the product of rumor and the second has a quasi-legal, testimonial aspect.

Apart from the difference between the actual view and the hearsay account, it is also the “model of the recorder” (Dulong, 1998) on which the audiovisual media functions, which gives the television news its objective aspect. The original image and sound relayed by the camera attain the status of proof. This power comes from that fact that, even though they may be biased, incomplete, or even erroneous or falsified, these backups come onscreen with the documentary headline to shore up the position of the verbal narration. Because they produce the correspondence, they are witness to the veracity. Because they confirm—even if it is actually by association of ideas or by simulation of events—what the narration claims, they create the impression of authenticity. Besides this, they allow one to see and listen to something concrete. Original sounds and images seem to come in directly, without mediation, so that our senses are able to perceive things as if we were in the location and in the place of the camera. The technology which supports every filming operation tends to erase the conditions endogenous to its production, so much and so well that the document produced appears, finally, as natural, obvious, and self-validating.

According to Schutz (1990: 5), “Relevance is not inherent in nature as such, it is the result of the selective and interpretative activity of man within nature or observing nature.” Neither is televisual relevance simply a matter of evidence, and the ability to read it is not “a transparent and ‘natural’ ability, but very much a socially organized element of culture that is instantiated within, and sustained by, a community of practice” (Goodwin &

Goodwin, 1996: 69). Television news stories, as well, are the product of an activity of selection, production, ordering and hierarchization of “facts of the day.” Various techniques are mobilized for this purpose: the time allotted to covering the story, its place in the program, the type of treatment (report, briefs, interview, investigation), the lexicon upon which it draws, are so many ways of producing relevance. The main headlines of the news are another, choosing three or four items deemed the most relevant of the day’s news, summarizing them in one short, elliptical sentence, verbally categorizing and visually illustrating them. In other words, the news headlines are an instructed relevance, an order imposed in such a way that they seem to proceed from the factual objectivity of natural current events. To be sure, this relevance can only operate in the context of a background of understanding shared by the channel and its viewers. At the same time, it is the channel itself which, by means of continuing news programs, produces this background. Previous news items are the referent of the news of the moment, they comprise the archives upon which the news story of the day is indexed.

It would not be wrong to say, in conclusion, that if the news is presented in such a way that it corresponds to the world and to facts identifying the news of the day, it is also a way of ensuring that the world corresponds to the ideological orientation given to it by the channel, to the technological framework which surrounds their production-- and, above all, to the specific conditions which the format “television news” has assigned to itself.

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³ This is the origin of the "No Comment" sequence on
Euronews.

Endnotes

¹ Translated from French by Rosemary Miller.

² Translation from Arabic:

Al-Arabiya

11"

we welcome you to the latest edition of the Eight
o'clock News in the evening edition we will follow

19"

Egypt exchanges Azzam Azzam...

56"

{ "eight pm" }

1'00

{ newscaster's name; "eight pm" }
welcome to you the case of the spy...

al-Jazeera

03"

Azzam Azzam arrives in Israel...

26"

{ "the news" }

36"

{ "the news"; newscaster's name }
edition of the news of the channel al-Jazeera in
Qatar the Egyptian foreign minister...

al-Manar

00"

{ "the news" }

14"

{ "the headlines" }
Sharon's office...

42"

{ "the news" }
peace be with you and welcome to you for a detailed
reporting of the news

47"

{ "the news"; newscaster's name }
the cabinet of the enemy's Prime Minister Ariel
Sharon announces...

The “Listening Shot” as a Collaborative Practice for Categorizing Studio Participants in a Live TV-Production

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This text considers the ways in which a crew of TV-professionals work in order to transform an interaction taking place in a studio into an intelligible programme. Basing my analyses on a video recording of the production of a programme having as its central theme the conflict in the Middle East between Palestinians and Israeli, I will particularly focus on the specific ways in which the crew manages to make these two national categories relevant in their interaction and in their communication with the audience of viewers.

In Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis, there has been a long-standing interest in “membership categorizations” (Sacks 1972, Bonu *et al.* 1994). These two fields respecify the notion of “identity” as a members’ phenomenon, and demonstrate, basing their analyses on naturally occurring interactions, the emergent and dynamic character of social identities. Identity is thus seen as an interactional accomplishment, rather than something static that could exist outside any specific context (see e.g. Antaki and Widdicombe 1998, Broth 2002, Garfinkel 1967, Mondada 2002, Hester and Eglin 1997, Sacks 1979). To a large extent, this research has traditionally studied identities as constituting different forms of “institutional interaction” (see e.g. Drew and Heritage 1992), but more recently there has also been some work on membership categories and national identity (Hester and Housley 2002).

There is currently also a growing interest in video production as a situated practice. Macbeth (1999) has studied the reflexive relation between shooting practices and

what is being filmed: the person who operates the camera simultaneously creates a sequential and categorical analysis of what is happening. The camera operator’s orientations are preserved in the film, which can be seen as a record of what was seen as relevant at the moment of the shooting (see also Mondada 2003 and 2007). Concerning the editing practices, whereby different shots are organized in a sequence, Jayyusi (1988) has shown that they respond to a visual “socio-logic” that allows editors and viewers alike to produce the meaning of sequences of film shots.

These observations have been taken into account in some analyses of TV-communication (Broth 2004, Mondada 2007, Relieu 1999). Consequently, these studies do not see the images of TV broadcasts as direct and neutral representations of what is happening in the television studio, but rather as reflecting a sequential and categorical analysis by the team working to put it on the air as an intelligible sequence of shots. This analysis is not only interactional, but also professional. For interviews, the choice regarding who to shoot, by camera operators, and who to put on the air, by the director, is made both in relation to an understanding of what is happening in the studio interaction and an orientation to the particular team member’s professional task within the team¹. In their work, the team can, for instance, choose to broadcast an image of the speaker or, alternatively, of one of those who listen to the speaker, thus (re)producing the relevance of, or “highlighting” (*cf.* Goodwin 1994), the particular “discourse identity” (Zimmerman 1998) of the filmed participant.

The present paper will particularly concern itself with what is known by the members of the team as “*plans d’écoute*”, translated here as “listening shots”. The listening shot is a close-up shot of one of the participants in the studio who is not talking, but listening to what the current speaker is talking about.² As we shall see, this visual relevance-making, identifying the addressee, can be seen as a method for producing a particular understanding of the filmed studio reality. Indeed, the listening shot accomplishes, upon its insertion in the sequence of shots constituting the TV-programme, a unique and single addressee of the current speaker’s talk. This addressee can, among other things, be categorized as representing a particular nationality.³

Both the actual programme as it was broadcast and (aspects of) the TV-production were video-recorded during the full 90 minutes of the programme. The recordings of the TV-production were made by three different cameras, producing three different perspectives. A first view produced a long shot of the studio (Image 1); a second view shows the screens communicating the camera operators’ shots in the control room and the personnel working in front of these screens (Image 2); and a third view focused exclusively on only the screens, in order to get a better view of what the control room personnel could actually see in them (Image 3).



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3

Before considering the importance of the listening shot for visually representing national categories, I will try to demonstrate analytically that the members of this team may orientate to the listening shot as a particular kind of shot, i.e. as a professional member’s phenomenon.

The listening shot as a professional category

The “close-up shot” is without doubt the most frequently used kind of shot in broadcast TV-interviews. This particular type of shot accomplishes effectively a focalization on only part of the emerging studio interaction, most often one of the participants. As a result, the close-up shot excludes, at least for the moment, all the other participants from the TV-audience’s view. Whereas a close-up shot of the current speaker underscores, visually, the relevance of the discursive identity of this participant, a “listening” close-up shot shows one of the participants listening, and makes visually available, for the audience of TV-viewers, how this participant takes or reacts to what she or he – as well as the audience – hears.

Close-up shots of the speaker and listening shots are frequently combined to form an unfolding sequence of shots that visually categorizes one of the participants as speaker and one of the others present as recipient of the speaker’s turn. In order to present the two interacting parties as being placed opposite one another and not side by side – which is particularly important regarding shots alternating between the interviewer and the interviewee – they are

filmed from complementary angles. If the interacting parties are filmed from the same angle (“*faux raccord*”), this will lead to an understanding that they are placed side-by-side. An orientation to this logic of the visual representation of the studio interaction can be seen already in the preparatory stages of the show, for example when deciding where the moderator, the guests and the camera operators should be placed relative one to another⁴.

One could ask whether the listening shot is indeed a particular kind of shot from the point of view of the professional member producing a TV-programme. To establish this, a number of excerpts have been collected, where it is possible to observe a manifest orientation to this type of shot by

the production crew. Listening shots can show someone who is talked to or talked about, but also of some other participant to the studio interaction, which is then visually extracted of this interaction in order to be shown to the viewers. Thus, listening shots can be produced, and inserted in the broadcast sequence of shots, in relation to different categorizations and relevancies concerning non-speaking parties in the studio.

Introducing a new interviewee

Let's now have a look at a first excerpt (1), where the studio talk is marked in grey and the control room talk in black; the translation of contributions to both interactions is put in italics⁵:

(1) RR030610 [22.49:39 – 22.49:50] *

1. IEE: .hhh alors que l'administration américaine,=
 whereas the american administration

2. IEE: =compte (.) BEAUcoup su[r lui. }
 counts heavily on him

3. Scr: {mais::}
 but euh

4. Mod: {(0.4) *{.HHHH mon}sieur ratzon:.
 mister ratzon

5. Scr: {bon pour l'in*{stant: :,}
 well for the time being

6. Sw: (9)*4

7. Mod: vous êtes euh: { membre du:: du likou:d+, }
 You are euh a member of the Likud

8. Ca2: (CU Zvili).

9. Scr: {ra-(.) ratzon+. d'accord:.
 ra- ratzon okay

10. Mod: {(0.2).hhh} est-ce qu'il y a pas de[ux li*koud+..
 aren't there two Likud

11. Ca2:(CU Ratzon) +R

12. Scr: {(.) c'est pour toi.} {léonard la deux.}
 it's for you léonard camera two

13. Sw: 4*2



Image 4.



Image 5. 2

* The numbers within square brackets refer to actual clock time as it could be read from the clock in the control room (visible in images 2 and 3 above).

At line 4, the moderator passes from one interviewee to start interviewing another one, and several members of the team are

busy producing a close-up shot of the new guest to be interviewed: the camera operator is the first to act by beginning a

camera pan, and immediately after this the script utters “ra- (.) ratzon+”, which makes the name of the new guest available to the entire crew. As soon as the operator has accomplished a stable listening shot of this person in the studio, the director puts it on the air. As this happens while the moderator is still elaborating on his question, the listening shot shows the recipient of the question, listening carefully (Image 4 and Image 5).

This first extract shows how the production crew produces this shot through close collaboration. It is not before the camera operator has achieved a stable and “broadcastable” shot (Broth 2004) that the director puts it on the air. Inserting an image of the new guest at this precise point in time is also something that is treated as particularly relevant by the members of the crew. The camera operator and the script collaborate in producing it, and they can also be considered to assist the director in establishing the relevant camera (the panning that is observable on monitor two can be understood as projecting the

production of a close-up shot of the new guest, and the script also formulates this verbally (“léonard la deux”). The way in which camera operator two modifies his shot displays an orientation to the locally relevant contingencies of the situation in which he acts (i.e. the studio interaction and his role in producing images of it for the TV-production). His action has important consequences for the control room context, where the panning movement makes visible studio phenomena that were invisible just before.⁶

Mentioning a co-present participant

Another situation in which the team treats the insertion of a listening shot as the proper thing to do is when the current speaker refers to someone who is likewise present in the studio. After such a mentioning, a listening shot is regularly put on the air. See extract (2) for an example of this systematic and recurrent practice in the collaborative work of producing ***Rideau Rouge***:

(2) RR030610 [22.58:31 – 22.58:35]

1. IEE: (0.2) euh:: (0.5) (tsk)
2. IEE: (0.2) comme l'a dit monsieur erekat,
as monsieur Erekat said
3. IEE: (0.4) il fa{ut espérer},=
we have to hope
4. Scr: {erekat (.)}
Erekat
5. IEE: ={que* cela} ne ne ne fasse pas TROP de mal
that this doesn't have too many bad effects
6. Scr: { U:*N E +}
(Camera) one
7. Sw: [4]*[1]



Image 6. [4]



At line 2, the interviewee explicitly names one of the other participants to the studio interaction. In the distant control room, this action is immediately followed by an identification of this participant (Saeb Erekat) among those who are visible on the monitors, and, immediately thereafter, the

shot of this participant is put on the air (Image 6 and Image 7).

For the team to be able to put a shot of a participant in the studio on the air ***immediately***, at least two conditions need to be fulfilled: 1) that the team knows what

the named person looks like, and can identify him; 2) that this person is already filmed by one of the camera operators, and

thus made visible on one of the monitors in the control room. By way of contrast, in (3), neither of these conditions is fulfilled:

(3) RR030610 [23.27:36 – 23.27:53]

1. IEE: on pourra jamais faire la paix,
it will never be possible to make peace
2. IEE: .hh entre palestin- et israéliens.
between palestin- and israelis
3. IEE: .hhhhh euh::: saE::B,
SaEB
4. IEE: et::: (.) et bo:b, ils étaient:--
and and Bob they were
5. IEE: .hhhh euh:: (.) à camp da:{ v i d , }
at camp david
6. Scr: {(attends)}
wait
7. IEE: {ket- euh::: }{(.) saeb ét}a{it à à taba:??}
ket- Saeb was at at Taba
8. Scr: {bob c'est qui:::}¿
Bob that's who
9. Dir: { (qui c'est) bob}.
who is that Bob
10. Scr: {c'est robert malley}.
it's Robert Malley
11. Ca2: (CU Ratzon)
12. IEE: (0.4) on a {(0.3) d}écidé:,
it was decided
13. Scr: {on l'a pas:::}
we don't have him
14. Ca2: _____
15. IEE: { (.) °euh° } donner en .hh{ h au au au au = }
to give to to to to
16. Dir: {°ouais°.= {putain ils s'appellent comment: ils}=
yeah shit how do they call one another they
17. Scr: =ouais.}
yeah
18. Ca2: < < < < < < < < < < < < < < < <
19. IEE: {=aux collaborateu:rs, }
to the collaborators
20. Dir: {=bouffent tous xxxx }
swallow all xxxx
21. Ca2: < < (CU Malley)
22. IEE: {déjà* (le jeune) collaborateurs} palestino-israéliens,
already the young palestino-israeli collaborators
23. Scr: {ah:: (.) c'est des copains}.
oh they're all friends
24. Ca2: _____ +R
25. Sw: 3*2

At the beginning of this extract, the guest currently speaking (Miguel-Angel Moratinos) utters two first names, “saE:b” and “bo:b”. As these verbal objects for

referring to persons are accompanied by gestures (not shown in transcript) pointing in different directions, the participants to the studio interaction can immediately

identify who these persons are (and maybe also learn at that particular moment that these two persons can be verbally identified using these verbal forms). However, as the people in the control room do not have direct access to the studio's spatial ecology (Broth 2006 and forthcoming, see also Heath and Luff 1993), they can't understand who the guest was talking about. The screen in the control room in which Moratinos can be seen displays a close-up shot that only shows that participant. The shot of Moratinos thus cuts the visual continuity between his gestures (visible in the shot) and the people that these gestures referred to (invisible in the shot). However, the gestures nevertheless indicate that the visually inaccessible participants are present and thus to be searched for in the studio.

In stead of announcing the identity of the person of whom it is now relevant to produce a listening shot, the script first says "attend" (wait), and shortly thereafter "bob c'est qui::ç" (Bob that's who), a question that is immediately repeated by the director "qui c'est bob" (who is that, Bob). This question is answered rather quickly by the script, just after having looked at one of the papers in front of her: Bob turns out to be the same person as Robert Malley, one of the former president Bill Clinton's advisers, and who is indeed present among the people in the studio.

Roughly 0,6 seconds later, now looking at the screens in front of her, the script says "on l'a pas::" (we don't have him), thus affirming that there is currently no shot of Robert Malley and that, consequently, the director could not put that participant on the air immediately. However, as the script begins this unit of talk, one of the five cameras, whose shots are visible in the monitors in the control room, starts to move to the left. The movement by camera 2 is at first quite slow, but soon very quick, producing a very imprecise and blurred

image. In the midst of this quick movement, the director and the script both say "°ouais°." (yeah), one right after the other. From this point onward, the problem of the missing participant is no longer relevant. Clearly, the team understands what the camera operator is going to show even before he has completed his panning movement. The panning thus acquires its local meaning as an action in the reflexive relationship between the panning and the conversational logic of the interaction that is being filmed. A couple of moments later, when the operator has stopped panning and now zooms in on Robert Malley, the director comments on the way the participants call each other, thus shifting from an activity focused on producing a close-up shot of a participant not yet accessible to the control room personnel, to a joking one.

The three extracts that we have seen so far show how different relevancies in the studio interaction can be (re)produced in and for the team's work of filming and editing it. If someone is made relevant in the talk of one of the participants in the studio – as a recipient to a question or merely happens to be mentioned in the talk of the current speaker – the relevant operator will shoot that participant and the control room will orient to putting her or him on the air as soon as possible. If the director already has a close-up of the person made relevant, he can put that participant on the air without delay. If not, i.e. if no operator currently produces a shot of the relevant participant, the situation is treated as in need of repair.⁷ These observations can thus be seen as some first arguments in favour of the local and endogenous relevance (for professionals of TV-production) of the category "listening shot".

"Free" listening shots

The editing of shots in a sequence is underpinned by ordinary sense-making practices. Thus, the director could not, in

all of the cases that we have already seen, show a close-up of anybody else than the particular participant that was made relevant in the studio interaction. If he did, the viewer – that is looking for, and presupposing, the logic (Garfinkel 1967) that would produce the sequence of shots that he encounters (Jarry 1988) – would **wrongly** understand that the person he can see is also the participant that was made relevant.

The fact that the viewer naturally looks for the link (“Why that now?”, Schegloff

1996:112) between a first and a second shot is also what makes a more independent kind of relevance-making by the team possible. In fact, the team frequently exploits this logic when showing listening shots of participants that are neither addressed nor mentioned.

In the following extract (4), the accomplishment of a listening shot is tied to the categorization of participants in the studio:

(4) RR030610 [23.56:59 – 23.57:09]

- [illegible]



Image 8. 1



Image 9. 2

22. IEE: {=e u h : : d e : : , }
 23. of
 24. Dir: {rité de femmes. (.) RESTE}
 rity between women Stay
 25. Scr: { deux palestiniens }
 two Palestinians
 26. Ca1: < < < < < < < , , , , ,
 27. Ca2: =R

28. IEE: .h h} h h h h h h h h} j'en perds mes mots.
 I don't know what to say
 29. Dir: sur}} la femme °là::°}.
 with the woman there
 30. Scr: ::.]] (°ouais°)
 yeah
 31. Ca1: / / / / / / / / /
 32. Ca2: =R

During the whole extract, camera 2 is producing a stable shot of the current interviewee (France Lebéé-Nadav, Image 9). At line 3, the shot of camera 1 is stabilized to produce a listening shot of one of the participants in the studio (Diana Buttu, Image 8). The director puts this shot on the air shortly afterwards, and he then also says “c’est BIEN” (it’s good), most likely addressing camera 1.⁸ When camera 1 is once again off the air, a couple of seconds later, that camera’s operator initiates a change of shots. However, the director attempts to stop him, almost from the very beginning of the camera movement, but as the operator does not immediately stop his movement, the director makes his reasons for wanting the operator to keep the previous shot explicit. This account involves a categorization uniting the participant shown in the shot and the current speaker in the studio “c’est une solidarité de femmes” (it’s a solidarity between women). These two participants are thus treated as “femmes” by the director at that particular moment in his work of putting the studio interaction into images.

Interestingly, the woman that is listening is simultaneously categorized by the script in terms of a completely different categorization device.⁹ Looking at the current set of shots that are produced by the camera operators and that are thus

possible to broadcast, the script proposes another reason for keeping the earlier shot of the female guest. As she completes the turn constructional unit (or TCU, Sacks et al. 1974) that was started by the director by “c’est les deux palestiniens” (lines 18-19 and 24-25), she makes relevant the categorization device that might be referred to as “the principal antagonists in the Middle East conflict” and its category collection “Palestinian” and “Israeli”. We will shortly see that, very frequently, it is precisely this last categorical opposition that is carefully maintained and oriented to by the members of the team throughout the production of the show.¹⁰

Contrary to the shots of participants who are already made relevant (as addressed or mentioned) in the studio interaction and then shown by the team, in this last case the relevance of the participant in the broadcast show is produced by the team in a more autonomous way. Even if it is not possible to demonstrate just how TV-viewers understand the subsequent appearance of the woman that is shot by camera 1 (as “woman”, “Palestinian”, or maybe something else), the last extract shows how the people in the control room publicly categorize, differently, that particular listening shot.

Showing the “principal antagonists in the Middle East conflict”

The studied show is exclusively organized around the political situation in the Middle East, which makes the categorization device “the principal antagonists in the Middle East conflict” along with its categories “Palestinians” and “Israelis” omni-relevant. (see Jayyusi 1984, Hester and Fitzgerald 1999). In this section, I will first describe the publicly displayed orientations to the device by the members of the crew, after which I will consider two important issues for the visual presentation of the unfolding studio interaction:

presenting that interaction as a “confrontation”, and maintaining a balance between Palestinians and Israelis as recipients of a third party’s talk.

Categorizing the participants in the studio

The show is introduced by the moderator, standing by himself in front of the camera in the studio. After having reintroduced some essential elements of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he hands over the turn to a journalist in the control room, who presents the invited guests for this night’s show. This presentation is transcribed as extract (5) (translation in footnote¹¹):

(5) RR030610 [22.28:24 – 22.29:05]

Jou: Saeb (.) Erekat. (.) ancien ministre (.) de l'autorité palestinienne+. (0.3) .hhh Nissim (.) Zvili:. (.) ambassadeur d'Israël (.) en France:. (0.3) .hhh Diana (.) Butto:. (.) collaboratrice du premier ministre palestinien Mahmoud Abass:. (0.4) .hh Michael Ratzon. député du Likoud, (.) Israël. (1.0) .hh Miguel-Angel Moratinos:. (.) représentant de l'Union Européenne au proche-orient. (0.6) .hhhh Robert (.) Malley. (.) ancien conseiller de Bill Clinton (.) pour le proche-orient. (0.7) .hh France (.) Lebeé-Nada:v. (.) association fenêtres ouvertes (.) Israël. (0.6) .hh Gilles Darmon. (0.2) président de l'o en gé la tête, (.) Israël:. (0.9) .hhh et en duplex+ de Jérusalem, Charles Enderlin, journaliste. (.) auteur du rêve: brisé.

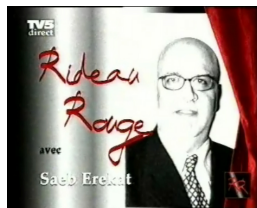


Image 10



Image 11



Image 12



Image 13

In this presentation, each guest is verbally described by her or his name and the role he or she plays or has played regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The name of each guest is visible in white letters at the bottom of the image showing a black-and-white photo of their face (Images 10-13 show the two Israeli guests and the two Palestinian ones). The way in which this presentation is done thus affords the viewer not only the first possibility to learn who each guest is, but also to learn how to categorize the guests in relation to the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There are two guests representing Israel, two Palestinians, two commentators from countries not directly involved in the conflict, and two representatives from voluntary organizations.¹²

The members of the production crew often publicly orientate to the nationality of the invited Israeli and Palestinian guests. This can be seen in the two extracts that are to follow. Let’s first consider (6):

(6) RR030610 [22.50:24 – 22.50:29]

1. Rea: donc ÇA c'est:: is[r a ë l=]
So that is Israël
1. Scr: [pour la tr]=
For camera thr-
2. Rea: [tu me] GARdes elina,=
Keep that for me Elina
3. Scr: =[ois:]
ee
4. Rea: =t'es bien là:.
You're fine there
5. Scr: (0.4) erekat c'est: >ouais<.
Erekat it's yeah
6. Dir: (0.2) °°ouais°° (0.2) [c'est bien la qua]tre.
Yeah that's good four
7. Scr: [I s r a ë l]



Image 14

These words are spoken during the first turn of a newly introduced guest in the studio, Michael Ratzon. At line 1, the director first identifies – using a deictic pronoun, “ÇA” (that) – the current speaker in the studio and that can be seen in a close-up shot that is visible in the monitor of camera 2 (Image 14). He ties this identification by “c’est” (it’s) to the name of the state of Israel. The director thus categorizes the current speaker as “Israel”,¹³ which in fact makes this participant the very incarnation of that country. The establishment of the relevance of the categorization device “the principal antagonists in the conflict in the Middle

East” by mentioning one of its omni-relevant categories, also permits an understanding of why the director considers that Elina is currently in a good place. By “tu me GARdes elina, t’es bien là:.”, the director assures that he has access to a listening shot of a participant representing the opposing omni-relevant category of the device.¹⁴

Extract (7) underscores that the visual categorization of participants in the studio is also an interactional achievement. In this extract, the camera operator produces the relevant shot, without having been asked to do it.

(7) RR030610 [23.01:01 – 23.01:14]. During the greater part of the extract, no one is speaking in the control room. One of the invited guests, Miguel-Angel Moratinos, is in the middle of a lengthy turn:

8. IEE: mais il fallait donner,
But it was necessary to give
9. IEE: (0.5) de la confian:ce
10. IEE: (0.6)*(0.1) à l'autorité palestinienne,=
to the Palestinian authority
11. Ca2: +R(CU Erekat)
12. Sw: 3*2

13.IEE: =au premier ministre palesti*nien::,
to the Palestine prime minister

14.Ca2: =R -R

15.Sw: 2*1

16.IEE: (0.7) du temps,
time,

17.IEE: (0.5) et des moyens:.
and means

18.IEE: (0.6) confiance israélienne,
Israeli confidence,

19.IEE: (0.5) TEMPS,
time

20.Ca2: _____, , ,

21.IEE: (0.4) et moyen:s.
and means

22.Ca2:

23.IEE: (0.4) et je CROIS qu'on a {pas donNÉ},=
And I think that we haven't given

24.Ca2: , , (CU Zvili)

25.Dir: {AH- VOILÀ}
Oh that's it

26.IEE: {=NI la conf}*iance ni le temps.
neither confidence nor time

27.Ca2: +R

28.Dir: {C'EST BIEN:}.
That's fine

29.Sw: 1*2

Camera operator 2 goes on the air at line 4 with a listening shot of Saeb Erekat. After getting off the air a little later, he first keeps his shot stable, but shortly thereafter quickly redirects his camera to propose a shot of Nissim Zvili. The timing of the beginning of his movement – just after having heard the phrase “confiance israélienne” (Israeli confidence) – indicates that the operator takes an active part in the collaborative work of (re)categorizing the participants in the studio in terms of their national identities. By producing his new shot at that very moment, he creates a visual link between the image of a particular person (Zvili) and a verbal description comprising a national category (“confiance israélienne”). The operator thus participates in the creation and maintenance of this tying of persons to national categories, that is crucial for the categorical logic of the show.

The director shows that he appreciates the camera operator’s work,¹⁵ and puts that shot on the air shortly after the panning has stopped (line 22). The listening shot that the TV-viewer can observe is thus manifestly the outcome of collaborative work. The shot stands in a reflexive relationship to the unfolding events in the studio: the shot of an Israeli as a listening participant is introduced right after an Israeli categorization in the current speaker’s turn, and, by inserting the shot at that very moment of the broadcast, the team can visually present the shown participant to the viewers as linked to that category.

The team also orients to particular ways of presenting the relation between the two omni-relevant national identities, Israel and Palestinian, which I will consider in the following sections.

Creating “confrontation”

Through their interaction, the participants in the studio often make the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis relevant. The crew can then visually (re)produce this conflict, at the level of the broadcast show, by inserting alternating shots of the opposing parties. However, there are also moments when this conflict is not directly and locally relevant in the studio, in which

case the team still has the possibility to make it relevant for the viewers by the insertion of listening shots of the principal antagonists.

Extract (8) shows the transcription of what is said in the studio just before, during, and after the part of the control room interaction that has already been presented as extract (6) (the part that overlaps with extract (6) is framed at lines 15 and 16):

(8) RR030610 [22.49:42 – 22.50:38]

1. Mod: .HHHH monsieur ratzon. vous Êtes euh membre du: (.) du likOU:D+,
Mister Ratzon. You are a member of the Likud party
2. Mod: (0.2) .hh est-ce qu'il y a pas DEUX likoud+.
Aren't there really two Likud parties
3. Mod: (0.5) un likoud qui: euh:: (.) est pour la paix: ,=
One Likud that is for peace
4. Mod: =et qui: euh: fait un discours euh: .hhhh à akaba: ,=
and that makes a discourse at Akaba
5. Mod: et:: un likoud, qui:: euh:: non seulement: , euh supporte les colons: ,=
and one Likud that not only accepts the settlers
6. Mod: =mais: surtout? .h euh VEUT qu'il y AIT une suite aux assassinats ciblés.
but more importantly really wants a continuation of the assassinations.
7. IEE: (2.9) ((Begins answer in Hebrew, simplified transcript of interpreter))
8. Int: bonsoir
Good evening
9. Int: (2.0) bonsoir à tous+
Good evening to all
10. Int: (1.4) il n'y a pas deux likoud il n'y a qu'un likoud
There are not two Likud parties, there's only one
11. Int: (0.6) le likoud c'est le parti majoritaire
Likud is the majority party
12. Int: (0.5) leader en israël
leader in Israel
13. Int: (1.5) le premier ministre est (.) le: (0.5) leader du likoud
The prime minister is the leader of the Likud party
14. Int: (0.5) et naturellement la décision qui a été prise+
and of course the decision that has been taken
15. Int: (0.6) au gouvernement (0.5) est très difficile
by the government is very difficult
16. Int: (2.7) c'est un changement (0.5) de conception (0.3) historique
It is a historical change of understanding
17. Int: (3.0) euh:: la 2*1 décision est une décision (.) historique
the decision is a historical decision



Image 15. 2



Image 16. 1

From line 8 onwards, Michael Ratzon (Image 15) answers the moderator's question regarding the possibility of there being “two Likud parties”. At line 17, a listening shot of the Palestinian Saeb Erekat is introduced (Image 16), thus making this participant, and the national category that he represents, relevant as

recipient of Ratzon's turn. Even if what Ratzon says is of course to be understood in relation to the conflict between Palestinians and Israeli, this listening shot is **not** introduced in response to a direct relevance-making of that participant in the studio interaction. Rather, it is the very insertion of the listening shot of Erekat that

makes him relevant at the level of the broadcast programme. The director, publicly orienting at this moment to the device of the “antagonists” (see extract 6), shows Saeb Erekat, as long as he chooses to broadcast the listening shot of him, as unique recipient of Ratzon’s turn.

The following extract (9) rapidly illustrates another instance of this same phenomenon of visually opposing the two nationalities, but where the roles of speaker and hearer are inversed compared to the previous extract:

(9) RR030610 [23.26:09 – 23.26:12]. Diana Buttu is in the middle of a lengthy turn:

1. Int: { c'est la paix avec } israéli.
It's peace with Israel
2. Dir: {fais-moi un gros plan léonard sur l'am{bassadeur}
Do me a close-up shot Leonard of the ambassador
3. Ca2: (MS) < < <<<<<<<<<<<<<
4. Int: {(0.3) {voi}là.
that's it
5. Dir: {(0.2)}°mer{ci°}.
Thanks
6. Ca2: <<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<
7. Int: (0.8) c'est ÇA qui est impo*rtant.
That is the important thing
8. Ca2: < . . . (CU NS) +R
9. Cmn: 1*2

Diana Buttu, Palestinian, is speaking. At this moment there is no close-up shot of any of the two Israelis visible on the monitors in the control room. This situation is treated by the director as in need of repair, because he asks one of the camera operators to produce a close-up shot of the “ambassador” (Nissim Zvili, that everyone can, at this point in the show, recognize as Israel’s ambassador to France). When he puts this shot on the air,

it is once more as the representative of the opposed nationality to that of the current speaker.

The following extract (10) – which is the last one documenting an orientation towards reproducing an opposition between Palestinians and Israelis through the unfolding shots in a sequence – is particularly explicit:

(10) RR030610 [23.15:31 – 23.15:37]

1. Dir: il faut toujours un peu la confrontation:
We still need a bit of confrontation
2. Dir: euh palestinien: euh israélienne évidemment?:
between Palestinians and Israeli of course
3. Dir: (1.3) faut toujours que j'aie un contre-champ, °quoi°.
(By this I mean that) I still need to have an opposite view.

During a break in the live sequencing of shots – due to the insertion of a pre-recorded video clip in the broadcast – the director prepares his team for the upcoming on-air situation by giving them

an instruction that is general and prospective (that at the same time is also formulated as a reminder). We can observe what the director says that he wants to accomplish (“a bit of confrontation

between Palestinians and Israeli”) as well as what it will take for him to be able to accomplish it (that he has “an opposite view”). The very fact that he produces such an instruction would indicate that this confrontation between Palestinians and Israeli is not something that passes automatically and directly from the studio to the viewers. Rather, it is something that needs to be produced and maintained by the team in their work of putting the studio interaction into images.

Orienting to a balanced visual presentation

The following extract (11) also shows an orientation to the categories “Palestinian” and “Israeli” as distinct and complementary categories of the device of the “antagonists”. This time however, the focus will be on the relation of these categories towards other participants than Palestinians and Israeli.

(11) RR030610 [22.57:21 – 22.58:04]. Robert Malley is speaking (not transcribed) while the following is uttered in the control room:

1. Dir: euh:: la cinq,
Camera five
2. Dir: tu me couvres un peu le:: l'ambassadeur,
Cover (for me) a bit the ambassador
3. Dir: de:: d'israël.
of of Israel
4. Dir: (0.6) .hhhh parce que là j'ai le palestinien (moi).
because here I have the Palestinian.
5. Ca5: ((Doesn't move from the wide angle shot he is producing))
6. Dir: (8.4) il faut le: faut l'ambassadeu:r+.
We need the we need the ambassador
7. Dir: (0.4) °quelque part°
somewhere
8. Scr: (0.9) eh ben: eh oui () coincé,
Well yeah caught up
9. Scr: parce que c'est sur le:: deux au[ssich hein].
Because that is on camera two as well right
10. Dir: [la même+]
The same
11. Scr: (0.7) ouais.
yeah
12. Dir: (0.5) euh: il faut la cinq,
I need camera five
13. Dir: que: tu (.) t'aïlles me couvrir du [c ô t é : :]
that you go cover for me at the side
14. Scr: [monsieur zvil]i:
Mister Zvili
15. Ca5: ((starts to move and to change positions))
16. Scr: (1.6) celui qui est au milieu: euh::
The one who is in the middle,
17. Scr: (1.0) °côté jardin:°
left hand side
18. Dir: (0.2) le même rang que lui:
The same row as him
19. Ca5: ((finds Zvili and zooms in on him))
20. Scr: (2.4) >ouais (.) ouais (.) ouais (.) ouais<.
Yeah yeah yeah yeah
21. Dir: (0.2) voilà (.) c'est bien.
That's it that's fine
22. Scr: (1.1) avec la colom[:be]?
With the pigeon
23. Dir: [ouA]IS, c'est bien:.
Yeah that's good

24. Dir: (0.4) reste+ large c'est bien.
Stay wide that's good
25. Dir: (1.0) bouge plus.
Don't move (anymore)
26. Scr: (1.1) ÇA c'est Israël+.
That is Israel
27. Dir: (0.4) 2*5 (shot of Zvili)
28. Scr: (0.6) °voilà°
that's it

In this extract, the director asks camera 5 to produce a shot of the ambassador of Israel (lines 2-3). This time, he manifestly orients to the device of the “antagonists” in the specific way in which he continues his turn. By saying “palestinien” (line 4), he completes the device’s category collection. The remainder of the extract shows that this orientation indeed underpins, during these moments, the work of broadcasting shots of the studio interaction in a particular sequence. The team works for quite some time to produce a listening shot of Zvili, and as soon as that shot is accessible, the director puts it on the air. This time, the insertion of this particular shot categorizes the Israeli participant (Zvili) as (unique) recipient of Robert Malley’s turn.

One might ask why the director would need a shot of “l’ambassadeur” at this particular point and what kind of practical problem he could resolve if he had access

to such a shot. When considering what happens just before the current extract, it is discovered that the last listening shot to go on the air was a shot of Diana Buttu, who represents the Palestinian side. Among the shots that are available to the director at the time he asks camera 5 to find the ambassador one finds a shot of Saeb Erekat, also a Palestinian, but no sign of any of the two Israeli representatives. It would thus seem that the director, by asking for a shot of the missing category, orients to accomplishing a kind of balance in the visual presentation of the two national categories as listening to a third party’s turn.

Much later in the show, we find what will be our second example of the director’s orientation towards such a balanced visual presentation of the two national categories, (12):

(12) RR030610 [23.41:42 – 23.42:03]. Gilles Darmon, president of the voluntary organization “La Tête” is in the middle of an extended turn:

1. IEE: dans la région, tout le monde utilise après }
In the region everyone uses after-
2. Dir: {il me faut le- il faut}-
I need the we need
3. IEE: { . h h h h c h a c u n m e t } sa définition {derrière le mot paix}
Everyone puts their definition behind the word peace
4. Dir: {il (me) faut l’a[massadeu:r]}.
I need the ambassador
5. Scr: { [d’acco::rd]}. {>c’est pour léonard<}
All right it’s for Léonard
6. IEE: il y a une une une VO:lonté de de Vi:vre:--
There is a a a desire to to live
7. IEE: (0.1)*(0.3) NORMalement, de vivre: dans le bonheu:r }=
normally to live in happiness

8. Cmn: 1*2
9. IEE: =>et {j*e crois que c'est l'attente de tout le monde<},=
and I think that this is what everyone is waiting for
10. Cmn: 2*1
11. Dir: { il me faut : euh le : : : le : : }=
I need the the
12. IEE: =>et c'est ce que veulent les deux} populations<,
and this is what the two populations want
13. Dir: = { : [e r e k a t] }
 14. Scr: { [x x x] : °xx° }

At line 4, le director asks for a shot of the ambassador (of Israel). As soon as this shot gets stabilized, the director puts it on the air, thus making the person that is visible in the shot relevant as recipient to the current speaker's talk. Immediately after putting the shot of the ambassador off the air again, the director asks for a shot of Erekat, who represents the opposite nationality, thus projecting an upcoming insertion of a shot of that participant. Interestingly, he begins the description of the next participant using the definite article, and thus grammatically projects a title or a national category, but not a personal name. Even if the director finally identifies Erekat by naming him, he manifestly orients to broadcasting alternative shots of the participants representing the two opposing categories in the Middle East conflict, and to put these participants on the air in a balanced and equal way.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have described the work of a TV-production team as it is live broadcasting an interview taking place in a TV-studio. In the studied show there were eight participants in the studio interaction, invited as representatives of different interested parties in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I have tried to show how the members of the team collaborate in producing so called listening shots of particular participants in the studio, and thus also demonstrate the listening shot as

a professional member's phenomenon in TV-production.

The listening shot is treated by the members of the team as a resource for shaping, at the level of the broadcast programme, the understanding of the studio interaction. As we have seen, this understanding can concern the relations between different participant identities. The ways in which the team produces listening shots, and puts these on the air, displays, for this particular show, a recurrent orientation to a specific device for categorizing participants in the studio interaction: "the principal antagonists in the Middle East conflict", and its national categories "Palestinian" and "Israeli". Inserting listening shots of the opposed national category to that of the current speaker is treated as (re)producing the relevance of the opposition between them for the TV-viewers. The team thus works systematically to be able to show a Palestinian in a listening shot when the current speaker is an Israel, and vice versa. In those of the analyzed extracts where the current speaker is neither a Palestinian nor an Israeli but representing a third party, the director orients to a balanced visual presentation of the two opposing national categories. In that situation, the director alternates between broadcasting listening shots of Palestinians and Israelis.

The orientations to such national categories and considerations are thus manifestly what underpins how the crew producing this particular programme choose to frame

and sequentially organize the shots that they put on the air. In the sense that what is shown of a studio interview is also exploited by TV-viewers for understanding what they see (using ordinary sense-making practices), this study has described some situated practices through which the members of a television crew can use their power over how reality is understood, when this reality is broadcast on television.

Appendix: Transcription conventions

Mod:	moderator
IEE:	interviewee
Int:	interpreter
Ca(n):	camera operator(n)
Dir:	director
Scr:	script
Jou:	journalist
Com:	transcriber's comment
Sw:	director's switch
(.)	micro pause (0.1 seconds or less)
(n.n)	timed pause in seconds and tenths of seconds
=	latching between two lines (no pause and no overlap)
[]	overlapping speech
{ }	simultaneous events in the studio and in the control room
.	falling intonation
,	slightly rising intonation
¿	clearly rising intonation
?	high rise
--	unfinished intonation unit
°words°	words pronounced more silently than surrounding speech
<words>	words pronounced more slowly than surrounding speech
>words<	words pronounced more quickly than surrounding speech
WORDS	words pronounced louder than surrounding speech
.hh	breathing in, each "h" corresponding to 0.1 seconds.
:	lengthening of sound
(words)	uncertain hearing
*	exact location of switch in relation to ongoing talk or other action
n*n	switch from camera (n) to camera (n)
n*[]	the framed number refers to an image that is also shown in the text.
=R	"le Rouge" (red light), image on the air at the beginning of an extract
+/-R	image that goes on, or leaves, the air
—	steady shot

...	camera movement towards person/object (high/slow speed is marked by high/low density of characters)
'''	camera movement away from person/object
<<<	zooming in
>>>	zooming out
CU	close-up shot
MS	medium shot
(Mod)	filmed participant

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Notes

¹ The members of the production crew are distributed in different places. A technological

system is thus necessary both for communicating within the team and for perceiving the studio interaction in the control room. See Broth (2004) for a study on the mediated interaction within this particular team.

² TV-viewers "naturally" relate a shot of a person who is not talking and the talk that an invisible person produces during that shot. This method of interpretation can be exploited in editing work for accomplishing a temporal connection between a sequence of shots that were in fact recorded at different times. Putting a continuous sound track over the discontinuous sequence of shots often does the trick!

³ National identities can of course also be made relevant in the categorizing activity of the studio interaction (cf. Hester and Housley 2002). Even if this activity does not interest us primarily in the present study, it is nevertheless of crucial importance, because of the reflexive relation between the studio interaction and the ways in which that interaction is put into images.

⁴ The relative position of the moderator, the invited guests and the camera operators in this particular show can be seen in image 1 above.

⁵ See Appendix for transcription conventions.

⁶ These phenomena are of course not observable in the TV-programme that is broadcast. Even if the data used for the present study make it possible to observe some phenomena that were not broadcast, they cannot give access to the "whole" situation. As the decision was made to record in the control room, the view of a great many participants to the interaction within the crew is very limited. The camera operators, for instance, can only be seen at some distance in the "contextual" recording of the studio.

⁷ "Repair" is thus here used to refer to an activity that aims at normalizing the set of shots that the director has at his disposal. The video recordings that make up the corpus for the present study contain some very long searches for appropriate but missing shots. Unfortunately, it is not possible to reproduce transcriptions of these within the space limits of this paper.

⁸ See Broth (2004) on the importance of timing in the accomplishment of mutually recognizable actions in this particular context.

⁹ A categorization device consists of a category collection and a set of rules for the application of these categories (Sacks 1972, see also Bonu et al. 1994, Hester and Eglin 1997).

¹⁰ See Bovet and Terzi (2007) for a study proposing a "polarized situation" as one of the hallmarks of mediated political discourse.

¹¹ Translation of extract (5): "Saeb Erekat, former minister of the Palestinian authority; Nissim Zvili, Israel's ambassador to France; Diana Buttu, working with Palestine's Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas; Michael Ratzon, Likud member of

parliament, Israel; Miguel-Angel Moratinos, representative of the European Union in the Middle East; Robert Malley, former councillor to Bill Clinton regarding the Middle East; France Lebé-Nadav, association Fenêtres ouvertes, Israel; Gilles Darmon, president of NGO La Tête, Israel; and with us live from Jerusalem, Charles Enderlin, journalist, author of *Le Rêve brisé*.”

¹² It is also interesting to observe the sequential order in which the guests are introduced: first the two Palestinians and the two Israeli in mixed and alternating order, second the two state officials, third the two voluntary workers, and last the journalist, participating via technology from Jerusalem.

¹³ The script, on the other hand, orients to another categorization device when continuing the director’s turn. The device she is orienting to groups together different shooting angles (“seen from left”, “seen from right”), and she identifies the camera that should be used for the moderator – out of the two that are currently producing close-ups of him – to show him from a complementary angle of that of the currently speaking guest.

¹⁴ See Watson (1997) for considerations of the sequential and categorical aspects of interaction, and of their reflexive relation.

¹⁵ By his pan, the camera operator also returns to the guests that he should cover according to the plan for the show, among whom is not Saeb Erekat, that he had been shooting until then. According to the subsequent action within the team (not shown in transcript), the director’s positive evaluation also responds to this fact.

Reception-in-Action in a Panel Interview: The Interactional Production of Several Kinds of “Public in Relation with a Problem”

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Democratic societies have given to themselves many means of depicting in a realistic manner the state of their public opinion about recurrent societal issues and current affairs. Ethnographic inquiries - the interviews, surveys and quantitative studies - are tools and techniques that allow, either separately or in combination and for each issue investigated, a broad picture to be painted, a picture of the opposing positions and of the balance of power between them. These inquiries, be they qualitative or quantitative, share the assumption that members of a community have individual opinions on issues of general interest, which they share with others. Their assimilation to particular classification standards transforms them into social objects that both opinion inquiries and polls and the methodologies of social sciences have to elaborate so as to deliver results significant on the scale of the community concerned. The complex and varied operations that extend from the definition of an issue to data collection and analysis are not themselves accessible in the published results. In other words, we cannot expect going from the final research results back to the operations through which the results have been produced. In other words, the local and temporal organisation of the analytic process vanishes in its final object. This absolutely does not invalidate research results or their interpretation by their recipients (professional commentators and general audience). On the contrary, those results are commonly taken to be a genuine

representation of the state of the public opinion on a particular topic.

But the quest for knowledge on the state of the opinion regarding a topic may take on other, more interactional shapes, after the fashion of panel discussions, to which the present study will be devoted. This situation exhibits significant differences from those mentioned previously. I will mention two of these. Firstly, if the panellists of a televised debate are supposed to talk on the topic of the broadcast to the exclusion of any other topic, the methods and the precise way they do so consist in conversational and interactional practices that are locally accomplished, accountable and acknowledged for all practical purposes by the persons taking part to the broadcast, as well as by the TV viewers, without the mediation of any external interpretative devices. Secondly, these operations through which the persons taking part in a televised discussion come to specify their stand on a given issue and possibly do so on the basis of their membership in a community affected by the situation concerned, are not distinct from the methodical and coordinated ways they take part in the discussion. The speakers are their own practical analysts and their analyses are immediately available to the audience to which they are directed.¹

¹ Naturally, the sequential resources that spread from the operations relative to the unfolding of the broadcast are not available on the same mode to the speakers; to them they constitute resources to act at the right time and contribute, by the same token,

The present study intends to develop an approach to the public opinion of a community as it appears and can be acknowledged in and through the accomplishment of discursive activities. The phenomenon gains its objectification as a broadcast program unfolds through the different sorts of public concerned with the topic at hand. Panellists talk on behalf of these publics, treat them as having an independent existence and this is acknowledged by themselves or identified by others.

My paper will be focused neither on Arab media nor Arab public opinion. Nevertheless the core of it will meet the thematic of this issue. It is relative to the interactional production of interrelated kinds of public of an international political problem – the war in Iraq - that has created a strain in the relationship between two countries, The United-States and France. More specifically, the question I will address is concerned with the way in which persons, who are French speaking Americans, who participate in a panel interview on a French broadcast, render mutually available the kind of public they belong to and on behalf of whom they express themselves in relation to the topic of the broadcast and their different stances toward it.

The aim of this study is to analyse in detail the endogenous interactional work through which speakers identify themselves and are identified by the others as taking such and such stand on the topic at stake, through the activation of different kinds of public in order to make their standpoint explicit. This analytic approach is based on the description of the practical methods routinely used by

through their action to give shape and meaning to their concerted activity, and to the television viewers, to whom they are common sense tools and methods for understanding which are mixed in the setting and grasped in its unfolding.

members in order to understand each other in the course of their activity. Within this framework, the panel interview under study appears as an instance of a “reception-in-action” concerning a topic abundantly addressed by media in this period of time, June 2003 which gave rise to divergent, even opposed views from the media themselves and from commentators and audiences as well. Our main focus will be the way in which the broadcast’s guests show their concern with the media and political aspects of the topic, not just as a personal interest, but as members of a public they outline in the way they take part in the sequential and topical organization of the panel interview.

Overall presentation of the program

The data are excerpts of a French weekly programme entitled “Arrêt sur Images” (“Freeze frame”). This was broadcast at that time on Sundays afternoons on France 5, a cultural public channel². Beside its founder, Daniel Schneidermann (DaS) and his collaborator, Candice Mahout (CM), external journalists occasionally appear on the programme. A different topic is investigated every week. This programme aims to present, in a way understandable for the general audience, a critical analysis of the way in which media address news items.

It is a recorded programme on which guests, who may be professionals of the media, academic commentators, politicians, journalists, spin doctors, etc., are confronted with television programme excerpts, and these then fuel a discussion on the topic of the day.

The case in point, the broadcast of June 2003, is entitled “Lafayette: there we are again?”. It is composed of several short

² Since 2007 this programme has moved on Internet at <http://www.arretsimages.net/index.php>

reportages where several French speaking people of Louisiana are interviewed about their opinions about the war in Iraq, and the conflict it has created between the US and France. We will focus on the last part of this broadcast, which consists of a panel interview. It brought together the team of programme journalists and three guests from Louisiana.³ They examined the way American and French media addressed the issue of the disagreement between their countries.⁴

This paper is divided into three parts, each of which focuses on the way in which each guest elaborates his stance on the topic. In particular, we will focus on the modalities through which the guests come to express and maintain in the broadcast divergent or alternative categories of a “public” as part of their concerted activity in the debate on the topic of the day. We will first analyse the way in which one of the guests was led to take a stand representing the citizens of the United States and for whom the French government’s attitude toward the United States on the war has indeed strained the relationship between the two countries. Secondly, we will address the modalities and resources the second guest used to set up the conditions of an acknowledgment of existing divergent views on the same issue among the American people. We will conclude by examining the stance of the third guest who suggested an alternative solution to allow participants to transcend the bilateral and

bipartite opposition the two other participants imposed on the debate.

First then, we consider the initial sequence of the TV programme in which D. Schneidermann introduces the main topic of the debate. Subsequently we will examine the sequence in which C. Mahout introduces the two new guests on this part of the broadcast.

The introduction of the main topic of the programme

Excerpt 1⁵

1. DaS: Good morning:\ For the last broadcast of the season “Arrêt Sur Images”
2. has RELOCATED . We- we wished to go to the UNITED-STATES to CONFRONT our
3. views with some Americans\ to SEE with them how THEIR media THEIR
4. television channels talked about France to their audience the pictures of France they displayed and
5. to show them the pictures that THEY/OUR media OUR television channels er have shown us
6. about the: United-States and we’ll see that it’s not ALWAYS er necessarily going
7. to please:/ them so in the United-States and more precisely in LOUISIANA in Lafayette/ Louisiana
8. which is the most FRENCH-SPEAKING state in the United-States as everybody knows\ but not
9. necessarily the most FRANCOPHILE\ We’ll also see that during the broadcast (...)

This introduction underlines at least four main issues. First, it specifies two “unusual”

³ These persons are : Elmo Authement (EA), Earlene Broussard (EB) and Barry Ancelet (BA).

⁴ A previous issue gathered D. Schneidermann, C. Mahout and two guests, B. Ancelet and E. Lafleur, a Louisiana MP from the Democrat Party. They mainly addressed issues relative to the French-speaking world and on the threats that press on it, particularly by the reduction of the time allotted to French-language Programmes on New-Orleans local broadcasts.

⁵ **Conversation transcript symbols**

[] overlapping (more than one speaker at a time)
 & quick sequence of words between two speakers, or continuing talk of the same speaker
 . pause
 : prolongation of the sound preceding colons
 - truncating, interruption inside a word
 Capital Letter accentuation
 / raising intonation
 \ falling intonation

audiences for the media concerned. The “Americans” are forming an occasional audience for the French media, an audience constituted by the broadcast and for the practical ends of dealing with the topic at hand. Similarly, it composes the audience of the French TV viewers, the usual audience of the broadcast, as a fortuitous audience for the US television broadcasts. The difference between these two audiences convoked by ASI’s staff lies in the fact that only the American guests on the broadcast have the opportunity to express their feelings, comments and criticisms with regard to the excerpts of a selection of French TV programmes. In his introduction the anchor underlines the topic to which the broadcast is devoted, that is the interactional work of reacting to and investigating selected pieces of news done collaboratively by the host and his guests.

The second aspect concerns the definition of the “public” to which the persons interviewed belong. They are members of the public of the media, TV viewers, and so in the first place they are ordinary people and citizens. As such, they are informed by the media of the happenings in the world and build up their own opinion on the basis of those news items. Thirdly, this public is named using its national membership category: “Americans”. Those two last features are relevant in that they determine the persons who, in this broadcast, are going to be called upon to express a view on a topic of foreign affairs. These people are guests who are invited to express a view on an item of current affairs or on an issue of public interest, on the ground of their belonging to a national community and not according to a specific expertise or specialty. The fourth point is Americans’ rather negative judgment of France, which expresses itself in two ways. First, in the unfavourable reception by the Americans of the picture of the United-States that French

broadcasts displayed to the French audience. Second, in the mixed picture that France enjoys in the State described as the most French-speaking one of the United-States, (and the one where this broadcast took place). A final point worth mentioning which is missing in the introduction but transparent to the viewers of the broadcast, at the time of its broadcasting (June 2003), and which relates clearly to its topic: the strained relationships between the governments of France and the United States concerning the war led by the latter in Iraq and contested by the former.

Excerpt 2

10. **DaS** : And two more guests have joined us Candice\
11. yes so first Elmo\ in fact Elmo
- Authement/Well: the thing that makes us
12. happy/ is that we have also the SECOND GREAT star of the local French speaking communities
13. because Elmo Each week you present a tv programme in which you
14. try to make the telev viewers learn new words You have a guest you
15. host a guest you teach new words the viewers call and
16. that’s it/ and we learn some more things in French\ So accessorially you are
17. a Republican a fervent Republican you are going to tell us a bit what did you think about
18. the stance of France these latest months in the Iraqi conflict and then we also have with
19. us Earlene Broussard so Earlene knows Elmo pretty well hum they are they
20. know each other but nevertheless they do not always agree with each other all the time but it’s
21. not serious
22. **DaS**: they never agree because Earlene belongs to the opposite side
23. **CM**: OK so we’ll say never I didn’t want to start too hard but OK we are going
24. to say never because you are rather a Democrat and a great pacifist and also
25. accessorially you are a great militant of the French speaking cause of the preservation
26. of the Cajun culture and you teach at the University of Bâton-Rouge the Cajun culture

27. this Cajun culture that's it

Introducing the guests and their divergent opinions

C. Mahout introduces Elmo A. first, by mentioning his profession as a presenter of a television programme concerned with French language, and then by noting his political affiliation. It is in pursuance of this twofold membership, that is, first, the fact of being a French speaking person and working for the development of the French culture in Louisiana and, second, his political affiliation, that he is going to be interviewed on his opinion about “the stance of France” on the war in Iraq. From the first membership we can infer that Elmo is pro French. From the second membership, we can anticipate an opposite standpoint congruent with that of the American (Republican) administration. Any other particular authority or competence of his own in relation with the subject is not mentioned. So, the panel interview will probably not be a debate between specialists. Then C. Mahout introduces Earlene B., in relation to Elmo and to the fact that, in general, they do not share the same opinions on things they happen to discuss together (lines 18-21). D. Schneidermann's comment (line 22) clarifies and strengthens the point on which Elmo and Earlene disagree - political matters. It makes us think that this tendency to disagree is also going to be the case for the topic of the broadcast that C. Mahout previously mentioned (line 18).

The precise source of the divergence on the topic of the broadcast between EA and EB is divided into three stages in a cooperative way by the two journalists of “Arrêt sur Images”, C. Mahout and D. Schneidermann, rather than the guests themselves.

Firstly, Elmo's political membership (“*a fervent Republican*”; “*what you've thought*

about France's stance”); secondly, the political nature of the issue on which those two people disagree (“*they never agree because Earlene belongs to the opposite side*”); finally, the locally accomplished linkage between political membership and the dissent on the issue of the military intervention in Iraq.

Thus, “*rather a Democrat and a great pacifist*” are identifying features of one of the guests. These may be true characterisations of this person, but their relevance here is locally established by the topic of the broadcast and contrastively with the opposite stance which is represented by the other guest. Each stance can be examined in order to define better its opposite. Thus, if Earlene is explicitly portrayed as “*a Democrat and a pacifist*”, whereas Elmo is described as a “*Republican*”, then we could infer from that that Elmo is probably in favor of the American military intervention in Iraq. On the other hand, in so far as Earlene is opposed to it, then she is closer to the official French stance.

As a result, on the ground of this unambiguous bipolarity, we can expect to be faced with divergent points of view from the guests on the issue of the dissent between the USA and France, in spite of the fact that all of them are American citizens. In the framework of this investigation we will examine the issue of the mutual elaboration of those two dimensions – the national and the political bipolarities – and the modalities of their relationship in the unfolding of the debate.

We will start with an excerpt of a sequence that took place before the debate began. The excerpt is from an interview with the French ambassador in the USA on ABC. It contains relevant information for understanding what

the first question of the forthcoming discussion is about:

Excerpt 3

(The opinion of the French ambassador in the United States concerning anti-French jokes - interview excerpts with the French ambassador in the United States, on ABC, 310503)

- 3a:

Ambassador: When I first saw at the cafeteria of the House of Representatives signposts on which was written “Freedom Fries” instead of “French fries” or “Freedom toast” instead of “French toast” I said well: stop/

- 3b:

Ambassador: When you insult French people simply because they are French well it’s a racist campaign

- 3c:

Journalist: What do you feel when watching the television you come upon Jay Leno or David Lettermann who make some jokes on the French/

(an extract of a Jay Leno’s program is displayed while he is making fun of the stance of the French government at the UNO by describing it as the expression of their support to Saddam Hussein)

Ambassador: It is not funny because it fuels resentment people in France who happen to watch this say they don’t understand how such a big democracy as the United States are can use so absurd and petty attacks we can have divergent views on war and peace but for pity’s sake French fries are French fries

Now we can have a look at the first question of the panel interview:

Excerpt 4

(The French-American controversy)

28. **DaS:** So we’ve just heard the French ambassador telling his feeling to the
29. anti-French jokes on the American television the Jay Leno the Lettermann
30. who these last weeks have truly treated us the French roughly

31. do you feel like the French ambassador are you offended
32. do you think that this is that these are jokes that badly affects the quality of the relationship
33. between the two countries or do you say that or first does it quite
34. simply make you laugh
35. **EA:** {under his picture there’s a caption mentioning: Republican militant} Well hum
36. I am I am not offended I know this is the Americans who does their things er
37. who do their things er this has started that er with a person named er O’Reilly
38. **DaS:** Bill O’Reilly a Fox News’s anchorman yes
39. **EA:** [from Fox News] he get angry with Chirac I think with good reason
(laughs)
CM: [hum hum]
(laughs)
41. **DaS:** According to you
(laughs)
42. **EA:** And then and then he is the one who started the boycott affair all the French
43. products and he has he is at on the television all over the United States and then what
44. happened it’s that a lot of people have followed his er what he wished to do
45. and then at the moment there are lots of people who they are they boycott the French
46. products

The first question the presenter of “Arrêt sur Images” asks his guest, and the answer the latter provides, collaboratively set up the conditions of a local configuration of a possible “reception” of the French American disagreement. I will shortly define “reception” by the set of modalities through which a “public” receives an account about a situation, how it is affected by it and reacts to it. What I call “reception” is the shape of this reaction. It includes the local production of the practical identity under which the public concerned is directly acknowledged. Hence the phrase “reception in action”.⁶ The public concerned is not a collection of people gathered on the ground of shared

⁶ Adapted from Hester & Eglin (1997)

common features. It is more precisely related to a stand in a public controversy, which may be adapted, assumed, supported and defended by whoever subscribes to it and makes use of it to examine critically and criticise the “stances” of opposing publics constituted around a topical issue that initiates and sustains a debate. This “public” is then both a stance of a patient and of an agent that shapes up in activities carried out in public⁷ and can be assumed, in each specific occasion, even by one person only who acts in the name of a specified group or community who opposes others on the same issue. The way in which the much debated question has been constituted by its participants is particularly relevant. Their actions and motives are diversely assessed by those who are affected by the outcomes of their initiatives and constitute themselves in a public called to judge its effects⁸.

In the remainder of this article I will attempt to show how the very way the televised debate is locally, temporally and interactionally organised reflexively generates the possibility of a place for a concerned public to arise, for the practical ends of the constitution of the topic of the broadcast, a place that one of the guests is going to assume.

First of all, in the preface to his question, D. Schneidermann depicts a setting constituted by the authors of the anti-French jokes on American television. When he says “**who have treated us us the French roughly**” he designates the intended public and counts himself a member of it. Thus the scene for a dissent between the American media and

their victims, the French, has been introduced through the reaction of the French ambassador.

The question Schneidermann asks of Elmo immediately after that affords three possible answers. In the first case (A1 = “**do you feel like the French ambassador are you offended**” (line 31)), the emphasis is put on the diplomatic consequences of those jokes once their content is taken seriously. From this point of view they represent for their “victims” – those who identify themselves with them or who speak on their behalf – a deliberate mockery of their country, its inhabitants and their authorities; in this case, France is taunted by comics on the American television broadcasts.

The second possibility (A2 = “**or do you say that**” (line 33)) initiates the opportunity for expressing a stance that is opposite to the ambassador’s, as it appears to be the case in the contrast drawn between “**do you feel like the ambassador**” and “**OR do you say**”?

The first two options (A1 and A2) express mutually exclusive stances; the third one (A3 = “**or first does it quite simply make you laugh**” (lines 33, 34)) offers to the person interviewed the possibility of a safe exit out of the clear-cut choice. As a matter of fact here the issue only is to know whether these jokes achieve their aims, which is to make their audience laugh, innocently so to speak.

Elmo’s answer “**I’m not offended**” (lines 35-6) expresses a disagreement with the first stance and, as a result, shows his distance from the stance of the target who reacts to the blow endured, which is the stance represented by the French ambassador. On the contrary, Elmo aligns with the American standpoint: “**it’s the Americans who do their things**” (lines 36-7). In the absence of an answer to the third option (the laughing jokes) this answer is concerned with the task

⁷ This is congruent with the perspective that Louis Quéré, among others, promotes. An approach which tends “to favor the adverbial use (“in public”) instead of the nominal one (“the public”)” (Quéré, 2003: 129).

⁸ This is close to what Joseph Gusfield defines as the starting point of a “public problem” (Gusfield, 1981).

of providing a content to the second, unfinished, option: “**or do you say that**” (line 33).

The two pair parts, constituted by D. Schneidermann’s question and Elmo’s answer jointly work out the field of the French-American dissent. Consequently we may look at, and follow this configuration as the realisation of a cooperative activity, a concrete “thing” the speakers elaborate in a methodic and interactional way. What Elmo said gives an objective existence to it, by making of it a problematic situation created by the French administration which affects the United States. The reaction of the latter has been shaped and relayed by the American media and finally expressed in the American public opinion. In his answer, Elmo reverts the order of priorities of the responsibilities as initially stated in the question concerning the kind of thing “**that badly affects the quality of the relationship between the two countries**” (lines 32-3). By doing this, he plainly determines the second option as the American version of the overall problem. He does not use the third option through which he could have avoided the alignment with the French stance – cautiously leaving this issue undecided, without being forced to align with the American standpoint. As a matter of fact his answer locally sets up “THE American version” which had not been stated before by anybody else in the context of this broadcast.

Now let us consider the reply D. Schneidermann offers to Elmo’s answer:

Excerpt 5

- 47. **DaS:** but is there really a big boycott or could it be the media who
- 48. have exaggerated because David Abiker reported us but I can testify myself we go
- 49. to any restaurant and we order “French fries” because fries
- 50. in America are called like that “French fries” I mean al al we

- 51. always have had fries [never]
- 52. **EA:** [but]
- 53. **DaS:** nobody has told us “wow we do not serve French fries”
- 54. **EA:** But here it is it is a French speaking country Lafayette
- 55. **DaS:** yes

D. Schneidermann’s argument, that follows Elmo’s answer, emphasizes a possible “exaggeration” from the media regarding the seriousness of the boycott. A noticeable consequence of this critique of the media is that it amounts to contest the reality of the large number of people supposedly committed in this retaliation movement against France and reported by Elmo. The point raised by Schneidermann makes Elmo potentially appear not as reporting an objective fact, but as acting like the spokesman of a possible dubious version produced and spread by the media and spontaneously taken by the general public as a faithful description of the situation. This remark by Schneidermann incriminates, not Elmo’s sincerity, but the appropriateness of his description with, if not the reality of the collective anti-French movement in the United States, at least, its scope.

Notice that the case Schneidermann has chosen in support of his objection, does not mention the boycott itself but refers to a former issue, that was mentioned just before the debate starts. Which was the substitution of the designation of “French fries” by “Freedom fries” as reprisals against France. The point is based on the investigation made by David Abiker in the “Lafayette’s restaurants” and the outcome of which he mentioned previously. Schneidermann prefaces his own testimony with it. He presents it in general terms, as an empirical rule which gives a high level of generality to it: “**we go to any restaurant and we order “French fries”**” (48-9); “**we always have**

had fries” (50-1); “nobody has never told us: **“wow we do not serve French fries”** (51-3).

The relationship Schneidermann has implicitly set up between the case of the boycott at a national scale and the “French fries” case, is relevant only if the place where the reported observation done by Abiker and Schneidermann in Louisiana, the city of Lafayette, can be heard as a place like any other place in the United States. This implies that this experience could be reproduced elsewhere, in any other State of the US.

In his reply, **“But here it is it is a French speaking country Lafayette”** (54) Elmo provides a local signification to the journalists’ account. It singles out the place where they had their experience. Its effect is to restrictively delimit the strength of the objection raised by Schneidermann regarding the actual scope of the anti-French movement in the US, expressed here by the change in the way “fries” are designated in restaurants. He does so by formulating the particular geographic, cultural and linguistic context within which the reported event possibly makes sense. Thus, this account can be heard as a way of saying that this area, characterized by its cultural and linguistic specificities, is an exception in the United States.

This sequence makes visible the relevance for the debate of the issue of “which context are we talking about”, through the topicalization of the local/global distinction and its use, be it for establishing a standpoint or to undermine it.

Now, in the second part of this study, we are going to look at the way Earlene B. expresses her own point of view:

Excerpt 6

(The constitution of a divergence of opinion between the American interviewees)

57. **EA:** er I myself have friends in France a lot and then hum mhm more or less we

58. we like French people we don’t like the French government at the moment but

59. we like French people and I believe that it is this

60. **DaS:** OK and in any case Leno and Lettermann they make you laugh when they laugh at

61. France

62. **EA :** Well yes yes

63. **DaS:** the French who lose every war in which they are engaged the French who are

64. cowards they make you laugh

65. **EA:** Well yes

66. **DaS:** and you too Earlene

67. **EB:** Well yes it’s yes the the aim is to make people laugh that’s the point they rather

68. are comedians in a way mhm but that is to say that I don’t totally agree with the fact that

69. the people of Louisiana the French speaking people of Louisiana dislike the French government

70. most of the French speaking people of Louisiana don’t even know what is the French

71. administration, but as a matter of fact I am myself a person who is completely happy with

72. France and Mr Chirac having decided to talk against war because me I am against

73. the war and I thought there was no other there were not many heads of state

74. who committed themselves to express the ideas that, for instance, I had myself so

75. **DaS:** Right, you you are a Chirac sympathizer of Lafayette (laughs)

76. **EA:** That’s it (laughs)

In that sequence, in a collective judgment made by an indexical “we” to whom he affiliates himself (that is, in **“I have friends in France”** (line 57) followed by **“we like French people”** (lines 58-59)), Elmo distinguishes a positive part (the French people) from a negative one (the French government).

Now, in her answer to Schneidermann's question, Earlene considers at first the issue of the jokes. After that, she undertakes to specify the referent of the pronoun ("**we**") formerly used by Elmo, by giving it a noun ("**the people of Louisiana the French speaking people of Louisiana**" - line 69). It describes it in relation to a geographic, cultural, and linguistic area circumscribed on a strictly local scale. By tying the pronoun "we" to the category "French speaking people of Louisiana", Earlene blocks the inference that this deictic term could refer to "the Americans". This was a possible understanding of the term in Elmo's account, especially since D. Schneidermann has asked him his opinion on particular programs broadcast on American TV networks CBS and NBC – and not on local TV – that taunted France and the French (lines 61; 63). Thus, the preferred tacit a priori opposition made relevant by this question is between France and United States (and not Louisiana only) on the one hand, and French and Americans (excluding the people of Louisiana), on the other. Earlene therefore, disambiguates the pronoun locally by replacing it with an objective expression and through this method she refutes the point made by Elmo. (Elmo asserted a global negative feeling toward the French government felt by a collective left unspecified by this pronoun ("**most of the French speaking people of Louisiana don't even know what is the French administration**" - lines 70-1). It is obvious that the same operation could not be done with the collective "the Americans", supposed to be predominantly hostile to the stance taken by France on the war in Iraq. But the local perspective of Earlene's talk is itself grounded on Elmo's former talk, who was the first to establish a local standpoint in contrast with a broader point of view (when he argued: "**but here it's a French speaking country Lafayette**"). However, there is a noticeable difference between the two.

Elmo used this contrast at a national scale in order to secure his argument from an objection that has been raised against it.

Earlene, on the other hand, focuses on the part she has first circumscribed – "**the people of Louisiana the French speaking people of Louisiana**" – before transforming this part into the whole. She considers it then, in retrospect, as the population to which Elmo also referred in the last part of his talk. Thus, "we" designates the "French speaking people of Louisiana" as being the type of "people of Louisiana" in regard to whom it is adequate to say that "Lafayette" is a "French speaking country" in proportion to the linguistic and cultural specificity of this population on the ground of which Elmo explained its alleged benevolence to France (line 59: "**and I believe that it is this**"). Earlene's account establishes then a link between the categorization of the place, and the categorization of the population living in this place. She adds to this depiction a categorization of the speakers, that is Elmo and herself, in order to determine the appropriate scale and context of the topic they are just talking about in relation with their membership to this community. Thus, in the circumstances of the talk, according to Earlene, "we" is accountable as the indexical way through which a French speaking inhabitant of Louisiana indicates that he or she is talking on behalf of all those who share the same linguistic specificity. This certainly does not refer to the American people in general.

As a matter of fact, Earlene borrows part of the same material that was used by Elmo, that is Louisiana's cultural particularism, in view to transforming it and to adjusting it for the setting up of her own perspective within this framework. She then presents her point of view as an alternative to the perspective which is built, in Elmo's view, on the basis of the desire to see a frontal opposition on

this political issue between France and the United States, between French people and Americans and between their respective governments. The alternative is realised through the focus on “I”: “***But as a matter of fact I am myself a person who...***” (line 71), that we can understand as a self-categorization by Earlene as a member of the subgroup of these French speaking people of Louisiana who not only “***know what is the French administration***” (lines 70-71), but moreover approve its action and share its view of things. This contributes to ruin even more the scope of Elmo’s argument: “***we don’t like the French government***” (line 58). Earlene’s account has the consequence that “we” could only be understood, from then on, as a synonym of “some” (Americans, Louisiana people, French speaking people of Louisiana, etc.) whatever their number was; they could even be a majority – but, even so, not “all of us” could be part of it, seeing that one “I” rises up against this inclusion. According to Earlene there is no incompatibility nor hostility between her point of view on the war in Iraq and France’s on the same topic. On the contrary, the two of them are concordant in their shared disagreement with the stance of the American administration and those who support them. However, this opinion is presented by her as her own, even if it is the stance of a French speaking woman of Louisiana who disagree with another French speaking person of Louisiana. At last, Schneidermann’s formulation : “***the Chirac sympathizer of Louisiana***” (line 77) glosses this particular local ***and*** international dimension Earlene reached in the end of her turn. Then the anchor gives the floor to Barry Ancelet. The latter evades a direct affiliation by focusing back on the former topic Earlene talked about:

Excerpt 7

77. **DaS**: THE Chirac sympathiser of Louisiana or er: may be two/ including you\ Barry Ancelet\
 78. **BA** {a caption under his name reads: Head of the Linguistic Department University of
 79. Lafayette}: Me I would er the er . say a couple of things\ . it is obvious that
 80. David Lettermann and Jay Leno are jokers

The third and last part of this paper will be devoted to the study of the way in which the third guest makes his own stance accountable.

The following excerpt is worthwhile mentioning inasmuch as it shows a direct confrontation between EA on the one hand, and EB and BA, on the other hand. It also permits to examine the principle upon which BA elaborates a public who differs from EB’s and is alternative to EA’s:

Excerpt 8

357. **DaS**: there is one inhabitant in the city of Scot who wishes to stop all the relations with its French
 358. city partner and there is a news item on this at the local television and there are 500 demonstrators
 359. in New-Orleans and there’s no news item on it. well then is it censorship
 360. **EA**: But I doubt I doubt they were 500 what must be understood is that the persons
 361. who share the same opinion as madam and also mister but madam is one of my
 362. good friends mhm in the United States I’ll say there perhaps among the 300 million of
 363. people in the United States there are perhaps three four millions who share their
 364. who agree with them
 365. **DaS**: well yes but it’s a lot three four millions
 366. **EB**: Oh no
 367. **EA**: Not in a country of 300 millions it’s not
 368. **DaS**: yes but one inhabitant of Scot who wants to stop any relation with
 369. **BA**: as for me I don’t accept his count
 370. **EB**: I don’t accept his count either
 371. **BA**: I don’t accept the count

372. EB: (laughs)
 373. DaS: yes
 374. BA: no that this is that this a count of Fox News
 (laughs)
 375. EB: that's it and as for me and I beware of it
 376. DaS: Well it's normal he's watching Fox News
 377. EB: and I beware of it
 378. BA: If we ask if we asked the question more generally I think there will be more
 379. people than that but as for me I'd also like to know when is it the case that the discourse
 380. that examines that that questions has necessarily become an anti-patriotic one I have
 381. the right of expressing myself of asking to myself why the President does such and such thing
 382. EB: Exactly
 383. BA: why the congress does such and such thing our country is based on that
 384. EA: It is what Bill O'Reilly does yes
 385. BA: from the principles established by the Conservatives anyway

The sequence above first makes observable the modes of definition of the problem and the related population from the positions of each of the panellists, both dimensions (the definition of the problem and the stance of the speaker) being mutually and interactionally worked out.

In that sequence EA considers the issue of the differences in the points of view concerning the opportunity of the military intervention in Iraq in terms of the countable populations who are for or against this operation. According to him the issue is settled by the overwhelming majority in favor of the intervention. This argument, the format of which is considered at the scale of the United States, establishes a continuum with the former one. The former opposed the local media covering offered to a single inhabitant of the city of Scot suggesting to break their ties with their correspondent, a French city, to the absence of media

covering of a demonstration that gathered 500 opponents to the war in New Orleans. Compared with the populations configured at this local stage, by EB and BA, the national scale in which Elmo's comparison is located contributes to reducing the significance of the peace demonstration with respect to the representativeness of such a peace movement within the United States as a whole.

Elmo's stance in that sequence has to be compared with the one adopted in a previous stage of the panel discussion, in which the topic of the demonstration was introduced. I quote it for information:

Excerpt 9

- => 320. EB: Yes but there were a lot of other Americans here in the United States who didn't want
 => 321. to have a war either\ {emphatic gesture of denial by Elmo} and all those people there
 322. even those who took part to the demonstration they haven't- they haven't had a lot of
 323. they haven't had a lot of seconds of minutes at the at the TV
 => 324. BA: You can do this but there is one here {he points at him} there is another there
 325. {he points at Earlene}
 326. EA: I know that
 => 327. EB: and there had had a peace demonstration in the New-Orleans/ there was there was no
 => 328. media that DARED to broadcast this here in Lafayette/ I mean . it's [that is]

It is also in the same sequence that Barry explicitly tells which "camp" he supports: the war opponents's (lines 324-5). We will notice that Earlene initiates this part of the discussion on the basis of a consideration on a federal scope (lines 320-1) before she quotes a case pertaining to Louisiana, that is a local scale example (lines 327-8).

Barry and the constitution of an alternative public to the majority principle

Reacting to Elmo's figures, Barry first indicates his refusal (line 369) and justifies it afterwards in mentioning the name of the TV channel (line 374) where, according to him, those figures come from. This is the channel where the presentator who initiated the boycott of the French products, and who was first mentioned by Elmo, works. Thus, assessing the majority/minority ratio on the issue of the war in Iraq on the basis of the figures reported by a channel in favor of the war provides enough ground to contest them. We will notice in passing that the identification of the TV channel as having a pro-republican and therefore pro-governmental orientation is fully afforded here by the features made available in the talk.

According to Barry (lines 378-9) the results would be different if they came from other sources. Immediately after having said this, he initiates (lines 379-85) a way of considering the issue that differs from the one which consists in the confrontation between two partisan groups constituted by countable populations. He proceeds to suggest an argument that delimits another kind of public whose legitimacy emanates from a superior principle grounded in a fundamental right acknowledged by the founding texts of the United States that have established it as a political community. In the framework of the debate it is an argument that aims to contest the one used by Elmo. The difference is expressed in the fact that, according to Elmo, the legitimacy of a political standpoint against another is settled by the majority principle and the actual balance of power on a particular issue.

The point of constructing the "public of a problem" on a different basis to the one that

more or less prevailed in the debate till this moment becomes obvious in the last part of the discussion:

Excerpt 10

418. **DaS:** hadn't you got the impression even in the hardest period of the war hadn't you
 419. got the feeling of watching a bit the same news everywhere
 420. **BA:** There was an hesitation I noticed an hesitation of contradicting or
 421. despising the government action most of all when the war began because
 422. as Earlene said we didn't want we didn't want to put we didn't want to criticize
 423. the war while the soldiers came to start the battle that this is this is two
 424. different things but now that we see that it begins to take some
 425. conclusions and resolutions we begin to ask ourselves where are the weapons where are
 426. mhm we begin to ask questions
 427. **EB:** that's the evidence
 428. **DaS:** yes then but as Philippe said before we asked it to ourselves but we
 429. ask it not as loud as we talk about Rudolph the great news it's
 430. the arrest of the culprit of the Atlanta's attacks do you think it's normal in a word
 431. since rain is about to fall
 432. **EB:** yes it's true
 433. **BA:** yes but yes but when the Watergate affair broke out it wasn't on the first
 434. page

The public configured by Barry is a public separate from power and lobbies. It is a public constituted not by prior membership, but by the freely exercising their faculty of judgment on each situation that requires it (lines 423-6) and, among other things, in terms of who has a legitimacy to question the relationship between the authorities' alledged motives for their actions and the witnessable facts. An autonomous perspective such as this can lead to the incrimination of the government (lines 433-4). This public of investigators is composed by the media and by the citizens. It has been

constituted in the present case through the reception of a decision taken by the government in Foreign policy (***“but now that we see that it begins to take some conclusions and resolutions we begin to ask ourselves where are the weapons where are mhm we begin to ask questions”*** (lines 424-6)) and of the investigation of its outcomes.

In this framework, the French-American dissent, the core point of the “affected public” depicted by Elmo, loses its relevance. What makes Barry’s stance distinct from that of the two other guests in the panel interview appears mostly at that point. Elmo and Earlene have acted as opposite poles of one another. BA is elsewhere, even if his personal convictions are clearly asserted.

Conclusion

Two main points derive from the data analysis.

First, if we consider the sociological analysis of the notion of a “public”, and especially the study of the public of the media, first of all as a topic of theorisation and formal representations, we lose the sight of the heterogeneity of the circumstances, embodied practices in and through which the familiar accountability of a public is a members’ phenomenon. When considered this way, the “public” is the preliminary condition and the outcome of the methodic accomplishment of a local population busied with its production as a social fact. That is as a social reality provided with characteristics that are independent to those who are engaged in its production and acknowledgment “first time through”.

In this respect, what the participants of the panel interview provide lies in the constitution of various kinds of a public through their practical theorization of the

media in relation to the issue of the French American disagreement, which is the topic of the broadcast. This topic takes shape while they reflexively apply it to their local activity and situation.

As a matter of fact, Elmo preserves his stance based on the majority principle all along. The two other guests demonstrate the existence of a plurality of perspectives on the same issue within the American society and media. The consequence of this is the interactionally produced relativisation of Elmo’s stance. It appears as an opinion among other opinions, even if it is the opinion of the majority in the United States.

The final point I wish to emphasise is that this plurality of perspectives within the American public opinion on a topic of Foreign policy that divides the American and the French governments, is one of the main outcomes of the broadcast, obtained through the confrontation of different and divergent points of view that it has solicited and maintained all along. An established fact of the broadcast for its French audience to whom it is dedicated is, however, the fact that it can be considered to highlight the state of the American public opinion towards France with respect to the Iraqi affair.

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Appendix – The original French transcripts

Excerpt 1

1. **DaS** : Bonjour\ Pour cette dernière émission de la saison « Arrêt Sur Images » s'est
2. DELOCALISEE . Nous- nous avons voulu venir aux ÉTATS-UNIS pour CROISER nos
3. regards avec des Américains\ pour VOIR avec eux la manière dont LEURS médias LEURS
4. télévisions leur ont parlé de la France les images qu'ils leur ont montrées DE LA France/ et
5. pour leur apporter les images que NOUS/ NOS médias NOS télévisions euh nous ont
6. montrées des: Etats-Unis et on va voir que ça va pas TOUJOURS euh leur faire forcément
7. plaisir:/ alors aux Etats-Unis et plus précisément en LOUISIANE à Lafayette/ La Louisiane
8. qui est l'État des Etats-Unis le plus FRANCOPHONE comme chacun sait\ mais pas
9. forcément le plus FRANCPHILE\ Ça on le verra aussi dans l'émission (...)

Excerpt 2

10. **DaS** : Et deux nouveaux invités nous ont rejoints Candice\
11. **CM** : Oui\ alors d'abord Elmo\ en fait Elmo Authentement/ quand même: ce qui nous fait
12. plaisir/ c'est qu'on a aussi la DEUXIEME GRANDE star de la francophonie LOCALE\
13. parce que Elmo vous animez chaque semaine\ une émission:/ pendant laquelle vous
14. essayez d'apprendre aux téléspectateurs de nouveaux mots . vous avez un invité vous
15. recevez un invité vous apprenez de nouveaux mots les téléspectateurs vous appellent et
16. voilà/ et on en apprend un peu plus sur le français\ alors accessoirement vous êtes
17. républicain/ fervent républicain/ vous allez nous dire un peu ce que vous avez pensé des
18. positions de la France ces derniers mois: dans le conflit irakien\ et puis on a aussi avec
19. nous euh Earlene Broussard\ alors Earlene: connaît bien Elmo\ euh ils sont- ils se
20. connaissent bien mais ils sont pas toujours d'accord pour autant tout le temps mais c'est

21. pas grave/
22. **DaS** : Ils sont jamais d'accord puisque Earlene [elle est du bord opposé hein/
23. **CM** : [Bon\ on va dire jamais\] Je voulais pas commencer trop dur mais voilà on va dire
24. jamais\ parce que vous êtes plutôt DEMOCRATE et grande pacifiste et puis
25. accessoirement vous êtes une grande militante euh de la cause euh francophone de la
26. préservation de la culture cajun et vous enseignez à l'université de Bâton-Rouge la culture
27. cajun cette culture cajun voilà\

Excerpt 3

(extrait d'interview avec l'ambassadeur de France, ABC, 31/05/03)

- 3a:

Ambassadeur : quand j'ai vu par exemple à la cafétéria de la Chambre des représentants des panneaux sur lesquels il était écrit « Freedom fries » plutôt que « French fries » ou encore « Freedom toast » au lieu de « French toast » j'ai dit hé: stop/

- 3b:

Ambassadeur : quand vous insultez les Français simplement parce qu'ils sont Français eh bien c'est une sorte de campagne raciste

- 3c:

Journaliste : quel est votre sentiment quand vous regardez la télévision et que vous tombez sur Jay Leno ou David Lettermann qui font des blagues sur les Français/

(extrait d'une émission en public de Jay Leno se moquant de la position des autorités françaises à l'ONU en la décrivant comme l'expression d'un soutien apporté à Saddam Hussein)

Ambassadeur : ce n'est pas drôle parce que cela nourrit le ressentiment les gens en France qui voient ça disent qu'ils ne comprennent pas comment une grande démocratie comme l'Amérique peut procéder à des attaques aussi basses et absurdes nous pouvons avoir des points de vue différents sur la guerre et la paix mais de grâce les frites restent des frites

Excerpt 4

28. **DaS** : Alors on vient d'entendre la réaction de l'ambassadeur de France euh: aux- aux
29. blagues ANTI-FRANCAISES de la télévision américaine . les Jay Leno les Lettermann
30. qui c'est vrai ces dernières semaines ne nous ont pas ménagés euh nous nous les Français\
31. est-ce que vous êtes comme l'ambassadeur de France\ est-ce que vous êtes CHOQUÉ/

32. est-ce que vous pensez que c'est- ce sont des blagues qui font du mal à la relation entre les
33. deux pays/ ou est-ce que vous dites euh- ou d'abord est-ce que ça vous fait rire/ tout
34. simplement/
35. **EA** {en sous-titre, son nom suivi de la mention : militant républicain} : Eh bien euh je
36. suis- je suis pas choqué\ Je sais que c'est- c'est les Américains qui font leurs choses euh
37. qui font leurs choses\ euh ça a commencé ça euh avec un nommé euh . O'Reilly/
38. **DaS** : Bill O'Reilly un présentateur de Fox News oui
39. **EA** : [de Fox News:] . I: s'est fâché contre Chirac . je crois avec bonnes raisons\
(rires)
40. **CM** :[hum hum]
(rires)
41. **DaS** : Selon vous /
(rires)
42. **EA** : Et puis et puis c'est lui qu'a commencé l'affaire de BOYCOTT tous les produits
43. français\ Et: il a- il est- il est sur- à la télévision partout aux Etats-Unis/ Et puis ce qui est
44. arrivé/ c'est qu'y a beaucoup de des personnes qui ont sui- son- euh ce qu'il voulait faire/
45. et puis aujourd'hui y a beaucoup des personnes qui . ils sont- ils boycottent les les produits
46. français\

Excerpt 5

47. **DaS** : Mais il y a vraiment un gros boycott ou ou est-ce que c'est pas les médias qui
48. exagèrent/ puisque David Abiker euh nous racontait mais moi j'peux le confirmer/ on va
49. dans n'importe quel restaurant et on demande des « French fries »/ parce que les frites en
50. Amérique on- ça s'appelle comme ça\ des « frites françaises »\ j'veux dire tou- tou- on a
51. toujours eu des des frites/ Personne ne nous [a jamais]&
52. **EA** : [Mais]
53. **DaS** : &dit : « Oh la la/ on sert plus de frites françaises\ »
54. **EA** : Mais ici c'est c'est c'est un pays FRANCOPHONE/ Lafayette\
55. **DaS** : Oui

Excerpt 6

- * 57. **EA** : euh moi j'ai des amis en France\ Beaucoup\ Et puis euh . euh . PLUS OU MOINS on
58. on aime les Français/ on n'aime pas le gouvernement français en c't instant présent\ mais
59. on aime les FRANÇAIS/ et: je crois que c'est ça\
60. **DaS** : D'accord\ et en tous cas Leno et Lettermann ils vous font rire quand ils se moquent

61. de la France&
62. **EA** : Mais oui oui
63. **DaS** : &des Français qui perdent tout le temps les guerres/ des Français qui sont
64. froussards: ils vous font rire/
65. **EA** : Mais oui/
66. **DaS** : Et vous aussi Earlene/
67. **EB** : Mais: c'est: oui/ Le le but c'est de faire rire\
C'est ça\ C'est plutôt euh des
68. comédiens/ en sorte\ euh mais: c'est à dire que je suis pas tout à fait d'accord que les
69. Louisianais les franco-louisianais DETESTENT le gouvernement français\ La plupart des
70. franco-louisianais ici connaissent MEME PAS euh ce que c'est le gouvernement de
71. France . Mais EN EFFET moi j'suis une personne qui était tout à fait contente que la
72. France\ et M. Chirac aient décidé de parler contre la guerre/ Parce que\ moi/ je suis contre
73. la guerre\ et je trouvais qu'il y avait aucun autre- y avait pas beaucoup de de de chefs
74. d'État qui se qui s'avançaient à exprimer p.e. les idées que moi/ je- j'avais . Alors/
75. **DaS** : Voilà\ vous vous êtes une chiraquienne de Lafayette
(rires)
76. **EB** : Voilà/ (rires)

Excerpt 7

77. **DaS** : LA chiraquienne de Lafayette ou euh: peut-être deux/ avec vous\ Barry Ancelet\
78. **BA** {sous son nom on peut lire : directeur du département des langues Université de
79. Lafayette} : Moi j'voudrais euh le euh . dire deux ou trois choses\ . Une chose est que
80. David lettermann et Jay Leno sont des farceurs

Excerpt 8

357. **DaS** : il y a UN habitant de Scot qui veut déjumeler et ça fait un sujet à la télévision
358. locale Et y a cinq cents: manifestants à la Nouvelle Orléans et ça fait pas de sujet . Alors
359. c'est de la censure/
360. **EA** : mais j'doute je doute qu'il y avait 500\ Ce qu'il faut comprendre que les personnes
361. qui sont . de l'opinion de madame euh et et aussi monsieur . mais madame est d'mes
=> 362. bons amis euh dans les Etats-Unis je dirais qu'il y a peut-être . dans les 300 millions de
=> 363. personnes aux Etats-Unis y a peut-être euh trois quatre millions qui sont de leur de leur-
=> 364. d'accord avec eux
365. **DaS** : ben oui mais c'est beaucoup/ trois quatre millions
366. **EB** : [Mais non:]

367. **EA** : [Pas dans un pays] de 300 millions\ c'est pas/
 368. **DaS** : oui mais un habitant de Scot [qui veut déjumeler]
 => 369. **BA** : [Moi j'accepte pas] son compte
 370. **EB** : Moi j'accepte pas son compte non plus
 371. **BA** : J'accepte pas le compte\
 372. **EB** : (rires)
 373. **DaS** : oui
 => 374. **BA** : non ça c'est ça c'est un compte de Fox News
 (rires)
 375. **EB** : Voilà/ . Et moi j'me MEFIE
 376. **DaS** : C'est normal/ il regarde Fox News\
 377. **EB** : [et j'me méfie/]
 378. **BA** : si on pose [si on posait] la question plus généralement j'crois qu'il y aurait plus de
 => 379. personnes que ça/. mais moi je veux savoir aussi\ quand/ est-ce que le discours qui .
 => 380. examine qui qui questionne est devenu NECESSAIREMENT anti-patriotique/ . moi j'ai
 => 381. le droit de m'exprimer de me demander pourquoi mon président fait telle ou telle chose&
 382. **EB** : exactement/
 => 383. **BA** : &pourquoi le congrès fait telle et telle chose . notre pays est BASE là-d'ssus
 384. **EA** : [C'est ce que Bill O'Reilly fait] . oui
 385. **BA** : [d'après les principes des Conservateurs d'ailleurs]

Excerpt 9

=> 320. **EB** : oui mais il y avait beaucoup d'autres Américains ici aux Etats-Unis qui voulaient
 => 321. pas la guerre non plus\ {geste de dénégarion appuyé de la part d'Elmo}et tous ces gens là
 322. même les gens qui ont fait de la manifestation on les a pas- ils ont eu pas beaucoup de-
 323. ils ont pas eu beaucoup de secondes de minutes à la à la télévision
 => 324. **BA** : tu peux faire ça mais y en a un ici {il se montre du doigt} y en a un autre là
 325. {il montre Earlene du doigt}
 326. **EA** : j'connais ça
 => 327. **EB** : et il y a eu une manifestation pour la paix à la Nouvelle Orléans/ y a pas y a pas eu
 => 328. de de média qui a OSE envoyer ça ici à Lafayette/ J'veux dire . c'est [c'est à dire]

Excerpt 10

418. **DaS** : vous n'aviez pas l'impression même AU PLUS FORT de la guerre vous n'aviez
 419. pas eu l'impression de voir UN PEU [la même information partout/]
 420. **BA** : [Y avait une hésitation] Moi j'ai constaté une hésitation de de de contredire ou de

421. de de mépriser l'action du gouvernement surtout quand la guerre a commencé parce que
 422. comme Earlene avait dit on voulait pas on voulait pas mettre on voulait pas critiquer la
 423. guerre tandis que les soldats venaient de commencer à se battre\ Ça c'est ça c'est deux
 => 424. choses différentes mais à c't heure que on voit que ça commence à à à prendre des
 => 425. conclusions et des résolutions on commence à se demander OÙ SONT les armes où sont
 => 426. euh . on commence à poser des questions
 427. **EB** : la preuve/
 428. **DaS** : oui alors mais comme le disait Philippe tout à l'heure on se le demande mais on se
 429. le demande moins fort que on ne parle de Rudolph hein euh la GRANDE affaire c'est
 430. l'arrestation du coupable des attentats d'Atlanta . ça vous [paraît normal]/ en un mot
 431. parce que la pluie arrive
 432. **EB** : [oui c'est ça
 => 433. **BA** : oui mais oui mais quand l'affaire de Watergate a éclaté c'était pas sur la première
 => 434. page

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