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News as Discourse

NEWS AS DISCOURSE

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PREFACE

This book presents a new, interdisciplinary theory of news in the press. Against the background of developments in discourse analysis, it is argued that news should be studied primarily as a form of public discourse. Whereas in much mass communication research, the economic, social, or cultural dimensions of news and news media are addressed, the present study emphasizes the importance of an explicit structural analysis of news reports. Such an analysis should provide a qualitative alternative to traditional methods of content analysis. Also, attention is paid to processes of news production by journalists and news comprehension by readers, in terms of the social cognitions of news participants. In this way news structures can also be explicitly linked to social practices and ideologies of newsmaking and, indirectly, to the institutional and macrosociological contexts of the news media.

After a survey, in Chapter 1, of recent studies of news in different disciplines, both in the United States and Europe, Chapter 2 discusses the respective levels and dimensions of the structures of news reports in the press. Besides the usual linguistic, grammatical analysis of news language, an account is given of the important notions of topic and news schema, which represent the overall content and the conventional form of news reports. Finally, stylistic and rhetorical structures of news are analyzed. It is shown that these various structures of the news are systematically related to

the cognitive and social conditions of news production, as well as to the processes of understanding by the readers. At several levels, the ideological dimensions of news structures are being analyzed.

Chapters 3 and 4 feature the more empirical, cognitive, and social psychological approach to news production and reception. They report results of field studies on everyday news production as source text processing by journalists and on recall of news stories by readers. Their theoretical basis derives from current advances in text processing within cognitive psychology and Artificial Intelligence. At the same time, however, the processes of production and understanding news have an important social dimension, so that they should be accounted for in terms of social cognitions of newsmakers and readers. This also allows the integration of our account into a sociological analysis of news and news media.

This book should be of interest for students and researchers in the fields of mass communication, discourse analysis, linguistics, and cognitive and social psychology. To facilitate comprehension for readers from different disciplines, these chapters also feature an introduction to the respective theoretical notions used in the analysis of news structures and processes.

Originally, this book was planned as part of a larger study, which also included applications and case studies on reporting in the world's press (the coverage of the assassination of Bechir Gemayel of Lebanon in September 1982) as well as studies on the portrayal of ethnic minority groups and squatters in the news. Since such a book would have become too voluminous, it was decided to publish the case studies as a separate book, *News Analysis*, which may be read as a companion volume to the present study, and which is also published in this series. Both books summarize the result of work on news I have been engaged in since the end of the 1970s.

The field studies reported in this book were carried out with the assistance by the following students of the University of Amsterdam: Sjoukje de Bie, Juliette de Bruin, Hellen Claver, Jane Alice Coerts, Gemma Derksen, Barbara Diddens, Jeroen Fabius, Guns Gillard d'Arcy, Michel Gijssels, Karin Greep, Jose Hermans, Dienke Hondius, Kitty Jansman, Nico de Klerk, Liesbeth Klumper, Rie Kromhout, Stan Liebrand, Anja Lok, Marianne Louwes, Ingeborg van Oosterom, Hans Pols, Anke Riem, Patrice Riemens, and Tjil Rood. I would like to thank them all for their contributions and their enthusiasm. I am also indebted to Piet de Geus for his assistance with the usual computer chores related to present-day scholarly work. Finally, I would like to thank Jennings Bryant for his fast and positive advice to publish this book in this series.

THE STUDY OF NEWS

INTRODUCTION: GOALS AND PROBLEMS

A Discourse Approach to Media Analysis

The aim of this book is to propose a new theoretical framework for the study of news in the press. The main feature of our approach is to analyze news primarily as a type of text or discourse. The first major consideration in such an analysis is the structures of news discourse, such as the various levels or dimensions of description and the units or categories used to explicitly characterize such levels or dimensions. This analysis should answer the important question about the structural specifics of news discourse as compared to other types of discourse. For instance, in English we may use the term "news story," and this suggests that news might be a special kind of narrative. Yet, we also know that it differs from the kind of stories we tell in everyday conversations or in children's books or in novels. Hence, we must specify why and how news stories are different. Similarly, news in the press is a specific kind of mass media discourse, which suggests possible family resemblances with news on radio and TV or with other discourse types in the newspaper, such as editorials or advertisements. Such a qualitative approach to the news is typical for the various branches of the new discipline

of discourse analysis, including text linguistics, narrative analysis, stylistics or rhetoric. In the next chapter we address this textual dimension of the news.

Yet, this is only part of the story. Discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary discipline. It is also interested in the analysis of the various contexts of discourse, that is, in the cognitive processes of production and reception and in the sociocultural dimensions of language use and communication. Therefore, the second major question to be answered deals with the processes involved in the production, the understanding and the uses of news in the context of mass-mediated communication. In particular, we are interested in the complex relationships between news text and context: How do cognitive and social constraints determine the structures of news and how are the understanding and the uses of news influenced by its textual structures? Obviously, our approach to news is especially relevant for mass communication research if we are able to specify such relationships. If not, our analysis would at most contribute to a new, and more explicit content analysis of media messages. Although this would certainly be a legitimate aim, we would be unable to place such an analysis within a more interesting explanatory and theoretical framework. We also want to know why news has its particular structure and what role such structures play in mass communication.

A single book cannot possibly answer all of these questions. Our aims must be more restricted. A single monograph could be dedicated to, for instance, the style of news discourse or to the uses of news by the readers. Therefore, we focus on topics that have been neglected in earlier research, that is on news structures and their cognitive processing, both in production and in understanding. For instance, we propose a partial theory of so-called news schemata, that is, of the conventional forms and categories of news articles in the press. From a cognitive point of view, we deal with the memory processes involved in the understanding, representation, and retrieval of news events by the journalist in news gathering and writing and by the reader in processes of reconstructing news events in knowledge and belief updating. This allows us to make explicit the well-known role of news values and ideologies in the production and understanding of news. Since such values and ideologies are also inherently social, we thus hope to build a bridge between the psychological and the sociological studies of news. Indeed, the psychological dimension of our study is not merely cognitive. Rather, it should be called 'sociocognitive'. In this respect, it is also an application and further extension of current developments in the new field of social cognition. At the same time, it provides a more explicit basis for actual work on news production in microsociology, e.g., from an ethnomethodological point of view, which also deals with processes of understanding and representing news events.

This approach seems to imply a critique of other approaches to media

analysis in general and of other research about the news in particular. Yet, this critique requires some qualification. We do find that few approaches pay sufficient attention to the study of news as discourse in its own right. This is particularly true of the macrosociological approaches to news. We also believe that the cognitive dimension of news production and understanding has been neglected. Nevertheless, several studies have been conducted in the past decade that are very relevant for our own analysis, and we have integrated their results into our own theoretical framework.

Much like discourse analysis, the study of mass communication is an interdisciplinary enterprise. Yet, despite influences from several disciplines, especially those of the social sciences, mass communication research has developed as an autonomous and self-contained discipline. Such a development has both advantages and disadvantages. The major advantage, obviously, is that the many phenomena of mass communication will receive specific and expert attention, without being subsumed simply as particular instances of more general phenomena, such as communication, information, discourse, understanding, professional routines, or institutional control. The disadvantage, however, is that such an autonomous discipline does not keep abreast with highly relevant developments in other disciplines and might soon lag behind the development of its own theoretical framework. With an eye on the important insights into the media and news obtained in mass communication research, therefore, we hope that our study will stimulate the interdisciplinary cross-fertilization that may result from our special attention to the structures of news discourse and the processes of social cognition in news production and understanding.

News in the Press

Before we begin the theoretical analysis, we must first explain the concept of news and define our empirical database. However, no a priori definition will suffice; rather the definition must come from the whole theory. We can only try to make explicit our everyday intuitions about news, and then specify approximately what empirical object we want to analyze and theorize about.

The notion of news is ambiguous. First, we have the general notion of news, meaning 'new information', as we find in such everyday sentences as "I have had news for you" or "What is the latest news from your son?" Clearly, the notion of news we are dealing with is both different but also has meaning components in common with this more general notion. Our notion of news, then, is part of a second class of meanings, which involve the media and mass communication. It is used in such expressions as "Have you read the news about the rising interest rate"? or in "Did you watch the news last night"? Even this class of media news notions contains interesting ambiguo-

ity. From the two examples just given, we see that news may be understood as new information or as a news article but also as a TV program in which news is presented, as demonstrated in the phrase "The Ten O'Clock news.- In other words, the notion of media news in everyday usage implies the following concepts:

1. New information about events, things or persons.
2. A (TV or radio) program type in which news items are presented.
3. A news item or news report, i.e., a text or discourse on radio, on TV or in the newspaper, in which new information is given about recent events.

This study will focus on news as presented in 3. That is, we deal with a type of text or discourse as it is expressed, used, or made public in news media or public information carriers such as TV, radio, and the newspaper. Nevertheless, some ambiguity remains. That is, news in that case may refer to a news item or news article in the physical sense—news one can see, read, or clip from the paper. It may also refer to the content or meaning of such an article or item, as when we speak about the latest news about Lebanon. In this case, we do not mean the concrete article or item, of course, but the latest media news information. This distinction is even clearer when we use negation: After all, news may also not appear in the paper or on TV. In other words, there is a notion of media news involving the whole discourse, including its physical shape, and a notion of media news which is close to the first meaning mentioned previously and which has a more semantic nature: new information as given by the media and as expressed in news reports. We will analyze the first of these two notions, and for clarity, *we* will often use the term "news discourse" to avoid ambiguity.

After this brief exercise in conceptual analysis of the everyday notion of news, a specific restriction must be made. We are concerned mostly with news in the press, that is with news discourse or news articles published in daily newspapers. We neglect news items on TV or radio, although we take research results about such news into account. Apart from personal interest, there are several reasons for this choice. First, many studies in the last decade have concentrated on TV news since it usually has a vast public and, therefore, may have a more central role in public information processing. It should be noted, however, that newspaper news also has a crucial role in mass communication, not only in our own western societies but also in societies where TV is still a rare commodity, and few discourse studies have been conducted explicitly of newspaper news. Second, in the course of several case studies, we have obtained specific insights into the structures of news in the press based on a vast collection of newspapers from many countries in the world (van Dijk, 1984b).

Finally, we should also clarify the notion of newspaper news. Although our intuitions seem to be rather clear on that point (we recognize a news article when we see one), the notion is not entirely without problems. In most cases, we can distinguish between a news article and an advertisement, and in many countries the word *ADVERTISEMENT* must be printed above an ad in the paper. But what about the weather report, the lists of radio and TV programs, the comics, the book reviews, or arts and performances sections? Some of these also give new information and therefore are part of the general characterization of news in the press. Yet, we exclude these discourse types from our analyses and focus on news articles in the narrow sense, that is, news discourse about past political, social, or cultural events. This excludes at least all text types that have a programmatic nature (they are about fixture events), although it does not yet rule out reviews of performances or editorials. The latter could be excluded by differentiating between informative and evaluative discourse, but that distinction is notoriously problematic. Genuine news articles may feature opinions, despite the ideological belief of many journalists that news only gives the facts and not opinion. This is even more obvious in background articles, which are a specific type of news article. Finally, we also exclude listings of the stock exchange, international currency change rates, lists with movements of ships, and similar types of practical information about actual states of affairs. From this brief attempt to differentiate between news articles in the strict sense and other types of informative or evaluative texts in the paper, it may already be seen that it is not so easy to make our intuitive notions explicit in clear-cut theoretical categories. A real definition of a news discourse in the paper requires an extensive and explicit theoretical description of structures (both formal and semantic), uses, and functions. This is one of the major aims of this book.

EARLIER STUDIES OF NEWS: A BRIEF REVIEW

From Anecdotal to Sociological Accounts

Many studies of news have an anecdotal nature. They are often written by ex-journalists, who tell about their experiences and who provide either friendly advice or harsh criticism of the media and their news. Such studies make fine reading, and their journalistic approach gives us insights into the everyday life and routines of newsmakers that may be useful as data for more systematic and explicit analyses in the everyday sociology of news production. Typical for such studies is the case approach. That is, the authors deal with an issue by illustrating it on well-known cases of reporting: a presidential election campaign; the race riots of the sixties; Watergate; or

other important social and political problems, issues, and events. From these examples it may be inferred that this approach is popular in the United States (Wicker, 1978). Here, the rather special role of TV anchorpersons has also stimulated quite a few studies (Powers, 1978). Although this work focuses mostly on domestic events, we also find studies that deal with international reporting—though again from a U.S. point of view (Rosenblum, 1981). Thus, in a narrative style, Rosenblum describes how foreign correspondents work, how they gather news, what kind of problems they have (typically censorship in Third World countries), and how much of the news can be characterized as coups and earthquakes. The political philosophy of such work is usually liberal. The press is urged to perform a critical role. Rosenblum ends his book with a statement typical for many of these books about news and reporting (Rosenblum, 1981):

A democracy cannot function without an informed electorate, and this applies no less to foreign affairs than to domestic matters. Foreign policy cannot be left unchecked to a Washington elite, to specialists or to interested lobby groups. World crises, if foreseen in time, sometimes can be avoided. But without reliable reporting from abroad, citizens are vulnerable and weak. If many Americans do not realize this, only reporters and editors—Knickerbocker's madmen—can drive it home to them. (p. 223)

Not all pretheoretical studies are merely anecdotal. In fact, some of them are well-documented and based on extensive research. The MIT News Study Group videotaped and analyzed more than 600 hours of TV news (Diamond, 1978). Yet, their interest remains within the framework of how the press covered political candidates for the respective presidential elections in the United States, the role of anchorpersons, or how the audience is seduced by entertainment on TV. Again, this study emphasizes the role of "responsible journalism", and the need for critical "press watchers" (p. 240). Similarly, in his studies of the press and TV news, Epstein (1973, 1975) shows how the press handled such primary national topics in the United States as the Pentagon Papers, The Vietnam War, the Black Panthers, and Watergate and how TV news is gathered, selected, and presented. The former study (Epstein, 1973), based on fieldwork with the TV network NBC, attempts to show how news depends not only on the facts but also on the structure of the organization of news production. This dependence is discussed in rather informal terms and not by systematic content analysis. Like several other studies written at the end of the 1970s (e.g., Gans, 1979), such an approach provides valuable insights into the journalistic routines, values, and constraints in news production. Here, we witness a transition to a more systematic and theoretically explicit form of news study, which is still lacking in the anecdotal approach or the documentary studies of the news (Barrett, 1978; Abel, 1981). Many of these studies are

interested in how the news is biased and distorts events (Altheide, 1974; Cirino, 1971). Data are usually interview fragments and tables of figures rather than close analysis of news output. Indeed, one hardly ever finds extensive fragments of news text in most of these studies. Conceptually, the analysis of news production focuses on problems of organization, journalistic routines and values, and corporate or political control (Bagdikian, 1971, 1983). These examples represent some of the better known studies of the news on TV and in the press. Yet, as social analysis they remain rather superficial and macrolevel, and as news analysis they are impressionistic. They often tell stories instead of analyzing them. We may call them observer accounts of the news.

From Macrosociology to Microsociology

The organization of news production has several dimensions and levels of description. Some of the studies previously mentioned pay extensive attention to the overall organization of news media institutions, for example, in terms of their public or corporate control structure, their management, the hierarchy of editors and other journalists involved, and the daily routines of newsgathering. Thus, in an influential study, Gans (1979) provides many details about how news is produced both at the networks and with such magazines as *Newsweek* or *Time*. Extensive field work gives us a view of the newsroom, the beats, the professional routines, the news values, and the range of topics that may be covered by the news media. Here we are closer to what news production is actually about, and a relationship is established between the social constraints and actual values and topics that underlie the news. Nevertheless, although Gans' study may be called an exemplary result of sociological fieldwork, observation, and analysis, it remains at the intermediate level of description. We still have no idea exactly how an editorial meeting takes place—who says what and when. The same is true for newsgathering activities during the heat or for the contacts between reporters and their sources. We still ignore how the journalist interprets these news environments and how such interpretations shape his or her reproduction of news events and news discourse. We need a still closer look, a microanalysis of news production processes.

Such a microanalysis can be found in Tuchman (1978a). Her book, perhaps the most interesting and innovating sociological study of news production, takes an ethnomethodological approach. While it has in common with the previously mentioned studies an interest for the daily routines of reporters and editors, such routines are described as everyday accomplishments of reconstructing reality as news and, at the same time, as enactments of the institutional processes in which newsmaking takes place. News is not characterized as a picture of reality, which may be correct or biased, but as a

frame through which the social world is routinely constructed. Thus, reporters operate within a net, which is a strategic organizational device to draw upon news sources as effectively as possible. They are placed with bureaucratic institutions, which guarantee a steady flow of reliable news. At the same time, newsworthiness of events may be negotiated between members of media institutions and the organizations they cover. This also allows the newsmakers to manage the unexpectable and to produce a fixed amount of news, independent of what really happens and within the constraints of deadlines or budget limitations. Classifications of news events allow reporters to assign newsworthiness to such events, while at the same time leaving them the freedom to negotiate upon variation. Coming closer to the eventual product of such newsmaking practices, Tuchman finally pays attention to the "web of facticity" that is spun by newsmakers to create an illusion of credibility, but which ultimately legitimizes the status quo. She shows this by an analysis of film shots and stories, which systematically make different representations of disasters, riots, demonstrations, on the one hand, and of legitimated leaders on the other hand. The women's movement is used as an important illustration of how newsmaking reconstructs social events. Although the emphasis of her book is on the social and ideological dimensions of news construction, this and other examples of analysis show how a close microanalysis also requires systematic descriptions of news as a product of newsmaking practices, even when only a few steps are made toward such a description.

A somewhat similar approach may be found in Fishman (1980). He is also interested in the close sociological analysis of newsmaking and studies how journalists go through several phases where they "detect occurrences, interpret them as meaningful events, investigate their factual nature, and assemble them into stories" (p. 16). He discusses the organizational constraints, the work in the newsroom, the beat, and the methods of verification. Through field work he is able to witness these respective methods of participants in the interpretation and construction of news events, and he shows how many of these events are already predefined by public authorities such as the police. Their documents and information are taken by the reporter on his or her beat to be the definition of the news situation. Fishman concludes that the methods of making news and the dependence on external sources and documents leads to a uniform, ideological picture of the world. This ideology is largely defined in terms of the constraints on the practicalities of newsmaking. Although there are also differences with Tuchman's study, notably on the theoretical level, we find a similar approach to the definition of news ideology in Fishman's study. That is, ideology is not assumed to be rooted in the socioeconomic and cognitive conditions of newsmakers.

From Sociological and Ideological Analysis to Systematic Content Analysis

All the studies discussed so far are the work of Americans. Despite their differences we have grouped them together. Although there is a large distance between the anecdotal approaches that contain nice stories about anchorpersons or personal experiences of journalists, on the one hand, and the much more theoretical approaches from a microsociological point of view, we also find similarities. First, the issues studied are mostly rooted in American political and social life. Second, the sociopolitical stance of these studies is usually liberal and mildly critical of the status quo. Many studies focus on errors or bias in the newsmedia, and make proposals for improvement, usually formulated from the point of view of human and civil rights, and journalistic responsibility.

When we move to the other side of the ocean, we find that many British studies of the last decade have some of these critical points in common but are rather different on other points. First, practically no British work on news has a purely microsociological (ethnomethodological) perspective. In fact, most work is formulated within a tradition of political sociology (or social political science). Second, much of this work has a Marxist orientation and is closely related to work in France or Italy, such as the work of French structuralists like Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Pecheux, or Althusser. This orientation pays more attention to the ideological analysis of the media and of news, especially from a historical and socioeconomic perspective. Third, and related to the previous points, is the interest for the class-defined nature of news, news production, and the media. This means that the topics chosen for closer analysis much more often deal with class struggle. And finally, there is more attention for systematic content or discourse analysis, partly also under the influence of French structuralism. In these respects, this work is an important contribution to the study of news and a necessary supplement to the more empirically and microsociologically-oriented studies previously discussed. On the whole, then, British work is more macrosociologically inspired, but due to its interest in ideological analysis, there are more concrete examples of actual news discourse descriptions. Finally, because more linguists in Britain are interested in news analysis, some beginning interaction can be found between them and researchers in mass communication.

It is impossible to even briefly review all British work on news. Therefore, we mention only some characteristic highlights from different directions of research in Britain. Indeed, it is necessary to stress that such differences exist, despite the general characterization given in the previous paragraph. Not all British media sociologists are Marxists, and not all are

influenced by French structuralism; even within important centers, such as Leicester, Birmingham, Glasgow and London, people and work may be very different.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly the beginnings of these new developments in British media research, although, as usual, the end of the 1960s or the beginning of the 1970s provides a rather obvious break. The political background of this break runs parallel to the one in the United States and Western Europe and can also be found in linguistics and discourse analysis. One influential, political study by the Leicester group (Halloran, Elliott, & Murdock, 1970) examined the media coverage of a large demonstration in London against the presence of the United States in Vietnam. By close observation of the activities of TV crews and newspaper reporters, and through an analysis of content, they found, among other things, how the media redefined an otherwise peaceful demonstration as essentially violent, due to their special attention to one minor incident. Similarly, another event of the sixties, namely the actions of the Mods and the Rockers, led to a very influential study by Cohen (1980), which also paid extensive attention to the role of the news media. His major thesis, reflected in the title of his book, was that the general moral panic, as it was mainly formulated in the (popular, tabloid) press, defined these various groups of youngsters as "folk devils". He showed that the media, along with the authorities (the control structure), work with a model of deviancy amplification. That is, the media account of an initial problem—through various stages of misperception, sensitization, dramatization and escalation—contributes to increased deviance and hence to the confirmation of stereotypes. The orientation of this study is mainly sociological, based on field work and social data, and does not systematically describe media texts. Yet, the categories introduced by Cohen do allow translation into discourse analytical concepts.

This special interest in the media preoccupation with deviance can be found back in several subsequent studies. Cohen & Young (1981) edited a volume in which many general studies about newsmaking were reprinted, of which several specifically dealt with deviance, outgroups, or social problems. Demonstrations, crime waves, drug use, mental illness, violence, and racism are some of these issues. Along with American researchers such as Tuchman, Fishman, and Molotch & Lester (1974), we find in the revised 1981 edition of this volume nearly all those who have set the stage for British media research in the 1970s, such as Chibnall, Hall, Murdock, Cohen, Young, Morley, Husband, and others. The do-it-yourself media sociology proposed by the editors at the end of their book aptly summarizes the kind of questions that underlie much of this work, despite the substantial methodological and theoretical differences between the various authors or schools involved: which are the patterns of selection, which are the ideological and bureaucratic constraints on newsmaking, which events are

not covered, which categories and models of causality are used to explain deviance in the media, what are the dominant and taken-for-granted models presented in the news, or what myths are used by the media. Although these categories are predominantly social, they are based on media content analysis, and it should not be too difficult to find equivalent notions for a systematic discourse analysis of the news, both at the thematic and at the stylistic and rhetorical levels. Much other work in the 1970s remains focused on the coverage of social protest, deviance, crime and law and order in the news (e.g., Chibnall, 1977). Much as in the later study by Fishman (1980), previously discussed, Chibnall shows how the daily contacts of crime reporters with the police leads them to a nearly inevitable reproduction of official and informal police definitions of crime, and conversely, a confirmation through the media of police action.

Most of this work could be categorized as a mixture of macrosociology and microsociology. Although not carried out within an ethnomethodological framework, the interest for interpretation and representation processes in the news runs through all these studies. The macrocomponent in this case is the special interest for the sociopolitical control structure, the organizational constraints, and especially the class dependent nature of news production and news discourse. This is also the characteristic of much of the work done at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham, then directed by Stuart Hall (see e.g., Hall, Hobson, Lowe, & Willis, 1980). Their media analysis is more directly influenced by French structuralist thinkers and Gramsci, and it more explicitly embodies a Marxist perspective on ideologies in news production. Here, we also find the more explicit formulations of the distinction established with dominant American or empirical studies of the news and the media. (Hall, 1980). One of the elements in the break with the dominating empirical, behaviorist media studies was the recognition that media messages are not transparent, as they are treated in quantitative content analysis, but rather they have a complex linguistic and ideological structure. Thus, Connell (1980) shows that TV news should not simply be seen as ideologically biased or distorted. Such a view presupposes that the distorted image can simply be compared to some kind of objective reality or with some kind of neutral or correct image. Yet, this reality represented in or through the news is itself an ideological construct, based on the definitions given by the accredited sources of journalists, such as the government or the union leaders. In other words, the media are not a neutral, common-sensed, or rational mediator of social events, but essentially help reproduce preformulated ideologies. A similar position is illustrated at length in the Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts (1978) study of mugging in the British press. They show that there is not simply a new crime wave of mugging, which the media simply report, whether correctly or in a distorted, exaggerated way. Rather, it is the defini-

tion of mugging as provided by the authorities, such as the police, that is reproduced in the news. This means, for instance, that mugging is preferably attributed to members of ethnic minority groups, viz. young black, West-Indian males.

Well-known in recent British media research are the bad news studies of the Glasgow University Media Group (1976, 1980, 1982). Their work focuses on the strategies used by TV newsmakers in the coverage of strikes or industrial disputes. By a close analysis of news programs, they are able to show that dominant interpretations of such strikes are subtly favored in the news, e.g., by shot length and perspective, interview techniques, or other strategies. This means that the point of view of the workers is seen less on the screen or embedded in less credible circumstances. Thus, strikes are mainly represented as problems for the public (the TV news viewers): they cause delay and inconveniences, while at the same time contributing to the socioeconomic problems of the country. Wage claims in such a construction of strikes can only be interpreted as unreasonable behavior. In their second, follow-up study (Glasgow University Media Group, 1980), the group pays even more attention to the text and the visuals of TV news about industrial disputes. Thus, an analysis of lexical style shows that workers are systematically presented as making demands and industrial managers as making offers. In this and other ways, even the language of the news expresses subtle positive and negative associations with the respective news actors involved.

Downing (1980) shows that similar processes are at work in the representation of women or ethnic minority groups. Much in the same way as the news pays more attention to industrial disputes than to industrial accidents, the news has little systematic attention for negative actions against women (such as rape), or place such actions in a sensational and sexist framework. Also, many other topics are not found at all in the news about women, such as their history, political struggle, or their role as cheap labor in industry, offices, or at home. In this and many other subtle ways, the male dominance in the media reproduces the male dominance in society at large. Ethnic groups or immigrants in the media are presented in a similar way. As was already shown by Hartmann & Husband (1974), the British media, and especially the popular press, represented the immigration of black citizens as an invasion and their presence as a problem for the autochthonous population. Minority groups are often associated with crime (see the mugging wave studied by Hall, et. al. 1978), whereas crimes against them, such as racism or violent attacks, is underrepresented. Much like women, their opinions are not asked: White males (ethnic minority specialists) speak about or for them (van DO, 1983a, 1987d).

Despite theoretical and ideological differences of approach, the studies briefly reviewed above show several common characteristics. They provide a